

Kings Road Primary School



‘Learners for Life’

School Dog Policy

Certified as reviewed and approved by the Local Governing Committee: Autumn 2021

Next review date: Autumn 2023

Kings Road School is a founding member of the HERA Primary Academy Trust a company registered in England and Wales. Company Number: 10571943

Introduction

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

Is there a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment?

Of course there is, though there are a variety of accidents which can happen within the school environment which far exceed the number of injuries or incidents caused by a dog. Therefore, it is just another risk that needs to be managed.

School Policy

- The dog will be owned by Mrs Riches and is named Xena.
- The dog is a miniature Schnauzer chosen for its very mild temperament and non-moulting coat.
- Mrs Baker CEO of the HERA trust, Mrs Goater the Chair of Governors, and Mrs Bailey the Chair of the HERA Trust have all agreed that the school can have a dog.
- Staff have been informed, through staff briefing, that the school will have a dog.
- Parents have been informed by letter that a dog will be in school. At the start of each academic year, the children will receive lessons about Xena and take home leaflets from the Dogs Trust. It is part of their homework that they share these leaflets along with their classroom learning with their parents/carers. Parents are given an opportunity to speak with Mrs Riches if they have a concern.
- A risk assessment has been written and this will be reviewed annually.
- Staff, visitors and Pupils known to have allergic reactions to dogs (animals) must remain at a manageable distance. Parents are asked to inform the school of any animal allergies on admission to the school.
- Staff, visitors and Pupils will be made aware of this policy and of appropriate behaviour around the dog.
- Pupils should be routinely reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog.
- If the dog is ill she will not be allowed into school.
- The dog will be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of an adult.
- There may be occasions where the dog is working off lead but this will only happen in an enclosed space and under the control of an adult. Before removing the dog from the lead all those present will be consulted.
- Pupils must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times when the dog is present.
- Pupils should remain calm around the dog. They should not make sudden movements and must never stare into a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog. Pupils should not put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up.
- Pupils should never go near or disturb the dog that is sleeping or eating.
- Pupils must not be allowed to play too roughly with the dog.
- If the dog is surrounded by a large number of Pupils, the dog could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that s/he monitors the situation.
- Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring of teeth indicate that the dog is feeling angry or threatened. Flattened ears, tail lowered or between their legs, hiding behind their owner, whining or growling are signs that the dog is frightened or nervous. If the dog is displaying any of these warning signs she should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
- Children should not feed, or eat close to the dog. (Under strict supervision children are allowed to treat the dog's obedient behaviour. This does not have to involve a child placing a treat to the dog's mouth. Instead it can be a child placing a treat on the floor which the dog can then enjoy once commanded)

- Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in School.

The Head of School is responsible for implementing this policy. The Head of School may delegate this responsibility to the adult who is caring for the dog at any given time.

Teachers, staff and children are required to abide by this policy.

Appendix 1 - Reasons to have a dog in school

Bullying can be a problem in all schools with Pupils anxious about school for fear of taunting and abuse. But in some schools, and here at Kings Road dogs will make a difference in the fight against bullies. Researchers report that Pupils can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel.

Attendance

It is hoped that having a dog in school will further help to improve attendance and reduce Persistent absenteeism. We will be hoping to improve attendance through a reading club at which Xena will be present.

Behaviour problems occur in school and these can interfere with learning. Some schools are using dogs to improve behaviour problems by promoting positive behaviour in Pupils. Pupils' behaviour has improved towards teachers, and Pupils also have showed more confidence and responsibility. Additionally, parents report that children seem more interested in school as a result of having a dog at school.

Reading programmes with dogs are doing wonders for some Pupils. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even adults are likely to be less scared to read to a dog. "It might be less stressful for a child to read aloud to a dog than to a teacher or a peer. After all, a dog won't judge or correct you." Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud. With the presence of a "calm and well-trained dog," Pupils find social support and peer interaction. Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have Pupil read to them or join a group of children in the library whilst they are having a book reading session. Dogs give unconditional acceptance, as they are non-judgmental, which is especially crucial to struggling, emerging readers. The dogs also provide confidence to children as they do not make fun of them when they read, but above all they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. Research has proved that Pupils who read to dogs show an increase in reading levels, word recognition, a higher desire to read and write, and an increase in intra and interpersonal skills among the Pupils they mix with.

Social Development

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching Pupils social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help older Pupils build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Older Pupils use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower Pupils.

With a dog in the classroom, Pupils have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving Pupils in the daily care of classroom dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The Pupils

also learn about responsibility, caring, and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school.

As a reward

Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the Pupils. Those Pupils who have performed incredibly well during the week or those who have made progress in a certain subject, or those who have achieved tasks set for them, will be rewarded with spending time during lunch or break, golden time to interact with these dogs. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities Pupils will be allowed to undertake. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem.

Support Dogs can work with Pupils on a one-one basis and will especially help those Pupils who have been bullied, abused, going through upsetting/difficult times or even scared/phobic of dogs. The dog will bring much joy and help to all the Pupils they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the Pupils they are spending time with. Pupils who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

The wider community: Dogs can be a great way to help Pupils to interact with members of the wider community. For example, Pupils may take the dog to visit other schools, sporting events, hospitals or care homes and help others to benefit from this therapeutic support.

It is important to note that the dog has also had a significant positive impact on the staff and parents in our community with many taking pleasure in seeing and spending time with the dog.

Xena will attend sports events with the children and be part of work in the local community, including visits to Oakley Care Home.

Appendix 2 – Risk Assessment