



Solefield School

School Dog Policy

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 a great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

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

Yes 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. A thorough risk assessment has been carried out and this is included in this document (see appendix 3).

Dogs are not allowed anywhere on the school site at any time unless specifically authorised by the Headmistress. This includes drop off and collection times. This policy outlines measures put in place to allow the school dogs to be present.

School Policy

The dogs will be owned by Mrs Goodwin and Mrs Cramp.

- The Governors have the right to refuse entry to the dog.
- Only the school dogs are allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog, and the Headmistress has been informed beforehand.
- The dogs are a Cavapoo and Goldador which are intelligent breeds who respond well to training, are sociable and friendly.

- Governors agree that having school dogs will benefit the children and staff of Solefield School.
- Staff, parents and children have been informed by letter that dogs will be in school. Mrs Goodwin and Mrs Cramp have produced a risk assessment, and this will be reviewed twice, termly.
- Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dogs. All visitors will be informed on arrival that there are dogs in school.
- If the dogs are ill, they will not be allowed in school.
- The dogs will be kept on leads when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of a trained adult.
- Children must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Children should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dogs. Children should remain calm around the dogs. They should not make sudden movements and startle the dogs. Children should not put their faces near a dog and should always approach it standing up.
- Children should never go near or disturb the dogs when they are sleeping or eating.
- Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.
- Everyone must wait until the dogs are sitting or lying down before touching or stroking them.
- The dogs must be on all fours before anyone interacts with them.
- If the dogs are surrounded by a large number of children, the dogs could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dogs must ensure that they monitor 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 the owner, whining or growling are signs that the dog is frightened or nervous. If the dogs are displaying any of these warning signs they should immediately be removed from that particular situation or environment.
- Children should not eat close to the dogs.
- Children should be careful to stroke the dogs on their body, chest, back and not by their faces or tops of their heads.

- Children should always wash their hands before and after handling a dog.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.
- Parents will be consulted on allowing their children access to the dog.
- All visitors will be informed about the dog related protocols on arrival and office staff will relay visitor to dog handlers asap.
- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure.
- The dog will go to the toilet off school site.

Actions

If someone reports having an issue with the dogs, this information must be passed to the Headmistress, Deputy or dog handlers as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by Headmistress or dog handlers.

Roles and Responsibilities

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

The Headmistress and handlers are responsible for implementing this policy.

Teachers, staff, pupils, parents and visitors are required to abide by this policy.

The curriculum will support learning about dogs and how best to behave around the dogs. This will include highlighting that not all dogs are well trained and that caution must be used around unknown dogs outside school.

Appendix 1. Reasons to have a dog in school

In summary, academic research has shown that dogs working and helping in the school environment can achieve the following:

1. Improve academic achievement
2. Increase literacy skills
3. Calming behaviours
4. Increase social skills and self-esteem
5. Increase confidence
6. Teach responsibility and respect to all life
7. Help prevent school refusing

8. Motivate children who are often less attentive

The following information has been taken from a range of sources to provide further detail about the benefits of having a dog in school.

Behaviour: In some schools, dogs are making a difference in the behaviour of pupils. Researchers report that students can identify with animals, empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel. It was found that violent behaviour in participating students declined by 55%, and general aggression went down 62%. 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 students. In a controlled study, students were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Students' behaviour improved toward teachers, and students also showed more confidence and responsibility. Additionally, parents reported that children seemed more interested in school as a result of having a dog at school.

Attendance: Case study: Mandy was a student with poor attendance and anxiety. Mandy was encouraged back into school using caring for River, a dog, as an incentive. By telling Mandy that "if she didn't come to school to care for him, he wouldn't get walks, water or love," Mandy came to school almost every day for the rest of the year, only missing two days.

Education: Reading programmes with dogs are doing wonders for some students. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even adults are likely to be less scared of reading 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 practice reading aloud. With a presence of a "calm and well-trained dog," students find social support and peer interaction. Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have students 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-judgemental, which is especially crucial to struggling, emergent 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 children with a sense of comfort and love.

Research has proved that student 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 students they mix with.

Social Development: Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching students' social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help older students build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Older students use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower students. With a dog in school, students have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving students in the daily care of classroom dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The students 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 students. Those students 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 to interact with these dogs. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities students 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 students on a one-one basis and will especially help those students 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 students they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the students they are spending time with. Students who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

Appendix 2. School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. Who are the legal owners of the School Dogs and who pays their costs?

The legal owner of the school dog, Monty is Mrs Goodwin, and the legal owner of the school dog Charlie is Mrs Cramp who will care for them out of school hours in their homes and will bear all the costs associated with having a pet dog.

2. Are the dogs from reputable breeders?

Yes, both dogs' breeders were searched for very carefully. Information regarding both dogs' parents and their temperament was considered. The breeder monitored the puppies for 8-10 weeks carefully and advised on whether the temperaments and personalities would suit the role.

3. Will the school dogs be a distraction?

The dogs will have a rest/quiet space where they will reside unless they are being used in other parts of the school. At all times we will ensure the dogs only come into contact with children who are happy to have contact with a dog under strict supervision. In the early stages of the dogs being in school, interaction with the children will be limited.

4. Will the dogs roam freely around the school?

Certainly not. The dogs will be on their leads at all times when moving around school and when interacting with children. The only time the dogs will be off their leads are when they are resting and sleeping.

5. Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

Yes – a formal risk assessment has taken place. We have carefully considered having dogs in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have school dogs. There will also be a School Dog Policy, available for parents to view on the website.

6. Who will be responsible for the training?

Mrs Goodwin and Mrs Cramp are the legal owners of the school dogs and as a result, it is their responsibility for their training. Appropriate training for both dogs has taken place from when they were puppies and is still ongoing.

7. How will the dogs be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?

In the interest of health and hygiene, the dogs will be toileted away from school site, where children have no access.

8. When will the dogs come into school?

The dogs will come into school between 3 and 5 days per week. However, there will be limited interaction with the children until the dogs are settled in.

9. How will the dogs' welfare be considered?

The dogs have taken part in familiarisation training, getting them used to the school, the noises they may hear and being in busy crowds. Once term begins, they will be in school most days but will initially have limited access to the children. The dogs will regularly be walked either by Mrs Goodwin, Mrs Cramp or another member of staff and have plenty of opportunities to go to the toilet offsite. The dogs will be kept in their quiet/rest place and will only have planned and supervised contact with pupils and visitors. The dogs will be provided with food, unlimited access to water, a bed, treats and their favourite toys. The dogs will receive ongoing training and we will work very closely with other professionals to ensure their welfare is always carefully considered.

10. What happens if my child has an allergy to dogs?

Charlie is a F1b Cavapoo, he has a non-shedding coat which means they are usually tolerated very well by those with allergies. Monty is a dog who sheds, however will only interact with the children who do not have any allergies and the area Monty has been in will be cleaned after use. In order to interact with the dogs, children will not need to touch them unless of course they wish to do so. This will therefore relieve some of the possibility of reactions. We already manage a number of allergies at school, and this will be no different for those who are allergic to dogs. Individual needs will always be met, and we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in place where needed.

11. My child is afraid of dogs. How will this be managed?

Access to the school dogs will be carefully managed and supervised. **Children will not need to have any contact with the dog unless they are keen to do so, and their parents give express permission.** Nonetheless, we hope to work closely with any children fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and help them manage it.

Helen
McClure
Headmistress
Updated
01.09.26
Review 01.09.27

Appendix 3 Risk Assessment

Situation being assessed for risk:
Assessment Date:
Teacher i/c:

School Dogs onsite working with children
September 2026

Review Date: September 2026

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	Risk Calculation, if required	Do you need to do anything else to control this risk? Action by who & when?	#If there has been an accident or near miss the designated staff to review and action as required.
Getting germs from the dogs	Pupils, visitors or Staff	Should the dogs defecate on the school site, a member of staff will clear this up immediately and dispose of it in a safe manner. The dogs will be trained to go to toilet off school site. If required, due to accidents, the area will then be disinfected with an appropriate animal disinfectant. All immunisations (including rabies vaccination) are kept up to date in accordance with European Pet Passport scheme and the owners keep a register of this. Flea treatment is carried out at 1 monthly intervals. Worming treatment is carried out in line with European Vet guidelines, at 3 monthly intervals. The dogs will not go into the school dining hall at mealtimes; they will not be permitted into the food preparation area of the kitchen.			

Dog hair causing allergies. Children have allergic reactions.	Pupils, visitors or Staff	A list of any children with allergies is kept on SharePoint and if any child is identified who should not interact with the dog appropriate action will be taken. Parents will continue to be asked to inform the school of any known allergies at registration. Children will have the opportunity to interact with the dog as they wish and those with allergies will be able to opt out of interaction. Children have been taught to wash their hands after active participation with the dogs.			
Either dog gets loose from pen or from lead.	Pupils, visitors or Staff.	The dogs have a set aside area to ensure they are happy and safe during the school day. If the dog gets loose, the designated staff members will be called to come and put the dog back.			

Dog getting over excited when interacting with people and other pets. Child knocked to ground, scratched or bitten.	Pupils, visitors or Staff	The dogs will always be in the care of a responsible adult and will never be allowed to freely roam the school premises. Children are not left with the dogs unsupervised. The dogs will always be on a lead when they are out of their safe rest space. The dogs have been trained not to jump up or mouth the children and this training will be regularly reinforced. Pupils have been, and continue to be, taught the impact of their actions. Pupils will be taught what to do to prevent the dog from chasing them. (i.e. stand still, cross arms). Children have been taught how to recognise behavioural signs from the dogs and react appropriately. The dogs have undergone formal training with experienced trainers. The dogs have also undergone conditioning to the school classroom environment, this area of training will be regularly reinforced. ALL staff have been introduced to the dogs and the expectations (does and don't) of having school dogs. The dogs will attend the vets' regularly to make sure their claws are kept short and that they are in good health.			
Having a fear/phobia of dogs	Pupils, visitors or Staff	All children with a fear/phobia have been identified and kept away from the dogs unless otherwise requested by a parent as part of a programme to overcome this fear. There will be no expectation that all staff will wish to work alongside the dogs – only those who express interest will be involved. Signs in reception and Old Library will alert visitors to the dogs' presence in school so they can advise if they have any allergies or fears.			
Financial cost of the dogs' upkeep	School	The dogs are the responsibility of their owners, Gemma Goodwin and Leanne Cramp They have financial responsibility for the dogs' care and day to day costs. The dogs are the responsibility of owners when dogs are not working in school.			

Claim is made against school about the dogs' behaviour.	School not adequately covered financially.	Gemma Goodwin and Leanne Cramp have fully comprehensive medical insurance for both dogs. A copy of both relevant certificates to be in school dog folder in the office and is reviewed annually. The school finance manager will add the school dogs to the school's insurance policy.			
Humans can be unpredictable, and the dogs' welfare may be compromised.	The Dogs	The dogs will have a quiet space to rest consisting of a bed and play area. The dogs will not be disturbed by adults or children whilst in the quiet rest space. Gemma Goodwin and Leanne Cramp will be responsible for the dogs' well-being at all times. Children and staff will receive training on how to interact with the dog safely before any of them have permission to do so.			
Either dog undergoes a change in personality so that they are not safe to interact with other people	Dogs and school.	This risk assessment will be reviewed, twice, termly and the school senior leadership team will evaluate the impact of having dogs in on a regular basis.			

Helen McClure
Updated 01.09.2026
Review 01.09.2027