



## **School Dog**

### **Introduction:**

There is an increasing body of research to support the benefit of a dog in school. In schools across the country, Reading Dogs are used to help children develop fluency in reading and Therapy Dogs provide comfort and reassurance to children with anxiety and self-confidence issues.

Increasingly in schools, it is recognised that children's emotional wellbeing is at the root of positive behaviour and success with socialising as well as in the classroom.

A dog can support children who are anxious about school and could be the reason that they want to come in every morning. Children with trouble managing their behaviour could learn to care for the dog and the dog could be helpful in de-escalating anger. Reading dogs can help boost children's confidence and fluency. Caring for an animal can help children to learn about responsibility and can help children to learn how to treat animals safely and with compassion.

Dogs are great fun to have around and can bring a caring, family atmosphere to a school.

### **Preparations for having a School Dog:**

School leaders have taken advice from The Dogs Trust and Pets as Therapy, who have provided guidance about the necessary risk assessments and insurance that we have put in place, as well as practical guidance.

The Dog's Trust outreach advisors also visit the school annually to deliver assemblies and workshops, which have increased the childrens' learning about behaviour around dogs.

Polly Kelynack has undertaken training to read dogs' body language to ensure the dog is comfortable at all times. If the dog showed any signs of stress, interactions would be immediately stopped.

The dog's toilet area is designated off site, away from the children's play areas.

In order to ensure that the dog would be beneficial to the children's learning and wellbeing and not be a distraction, we will plan when and where the children will interact with the dog. Parents/carers can object to their child having contact with the dog at any time.

If any child is allergic to dog hair, we will ensure that they do not encounter the dog (or have restricted contact) at the parent/carer's request.

Likewise, if a child is frightened of or has a phobia of dogs, we will keep the dog away from them - or we can offer opportunities for the child to be slowly introduced to the dog to reduce their fear. Parents/carers are invited to contact the Headteacher if either of these cases apply, so that we can make the necessary arrangements.



**Herbie:**

Our school dog is Herbie, who is also Polly Kelynack’s family pet.

Herbie’s breed was specifically selected due to its low moulting and calm, loving disposition.

Herbie has had a lot of early socialisation whilst with his breeder, and has since had additional training to ensure his suitability to work in a school.

Herbie has regular check-ups at the vet and up to date vaccinations, flea and worming treatment.

**Guidelines on how to interact with the School Dog:**

Parents/ carers are informed that there is a school dog and can request that their children do not have contact with the dog. There will always be a responsible adult in charge of the dog during interactions with children and Herbie will always be on a lead. Children and adults are required to adhere to the following guidance and there are signs around the school to help them remember:

- Always approach the school dog calmly and slowly
- Never run up to the dog
- Offer the back of your hand for the dog to sniff when meeting the dog
- All interactions must remain calm with the authorised adult in control at all times
- Children must wash their hands after they have been stroking the dog

**Status:**

Last reviewed: March 2022, July 2023

Next review: July 2024 and annually thereafter