



## School Dog Policy and Risk Assessment

### Aims

This document provides information and clear guidance about our school dog. 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. With the proper training and supervision, a dog can enrich a child's life.

### Introduction

The Willaston dog, Molly, lives with and is owned by Miss Kennaugh and her family.

Molly is a six-year old Black Labrador. She is good-natured and people-oriented. We have found Molly to be a real asset to the school.

Molly has public liability insurance through the DESC. She visits the vet for check-ups and vaccinations and has regular flea and worm treatment.

### General information

- Only the school dog is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the headteacher has been informed before hand.
- Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog. All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school.
- 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 appropriate 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 dog. Children 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. Children should not put their face near the dog and should always approach it standing up.
- Children should never go near or disturb the dog when she is sleeping or eating.
- Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.

## **Guidance for interaction with the dog**

- Everyone must wait until Molly is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking her.
- If the dog is surrounded by a large number of children, 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 bearing 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 eat close to the dog or give her their food.
- Children should be careful to stroke Molly on her body, chest, back and not near her face or top of head.
- If any child finds themselves alone with Molly, they should inform an adult immediately.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.
- Parents will be consulted on allowing their pupils access to the dog.
- All visitors will be informed about the dog and related protocols on arrival and office staff will relay visitor issues to the headteacher asap.
- Records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog will be maintained by school staff
- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of the headteacher or other designated adult
- If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to the headteacher or deputy headteacher as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by the headteacher.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

- The headteacher is 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 our dog. This will include highlighting that not all dogs are well trained and that caution must be used around unknown dogs outside school.
- The Governing Body and the DESC Health and Safety Adviser agree and review the School Dog Risk Assessment
- The DESC Legal and Administration Manager has agreed the School Dog Risk Assessment and has confirmed that public liability insurance is provided by the DESC for the school dog.

## **Risk**

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 is included in this document (see appendix 1).

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

## Reasons to have a dog in school

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) Promote calming behaviours
- 4) Increase social skills and self-esteem
- 5) Increase confidence
- 6) Teach responsibility and respect to all life
- 7) Help prevent truancy
- 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 pupils can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel. It was found that violent behaviour in participating pupils 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 pupils. In a controlled study, pupils were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Pupils' behaviour improved toward teachers, and pupils 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.

### **Education:**

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 pupils read to them or join a group of children 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. Others use dogs to help communication, teach kindness, and empower pupils.

With a dog in school, 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.

Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the pupils and staff. Those pupils who have shown a growth mindset or met challenge and faced failure during the week or those who have made good progress and have made effort to learn well may be rewarded with spending time during lunch or break to interact with the school dog. 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 children who are 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 children they are spending time with. Pupils who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

RB/LK  
September 2020

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment  
Appendix 2: Frequently asked questions

## Appendix 2

# School Dog Policy

### Frequently asked questions

**Q Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?**

A The legal owner of the dog is Miss Kennaugh; she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the DESC provides public liability insurance.

**Q Will the dog be a distraction?**

A The dog will initially be in Viking on a Thursday and Friday. Viking is separate from the classrooms / playground area to ensure the dog only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have not been excluded from contact by parents, under strict supervision. The dog will also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation, following consultation with staff beforehand

**Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?**

A Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources. The risk assessment has been agreed by the DESC and school governors

**Q How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?**

A In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks offsite. Our policy of no dogs in the playground is still applicable as we are unable to put effective control measures in place that guarantee temperament and safety when children come into unsupervised contact with unknown dogs.

**Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?**

A The dog will be walked regularly and given free time. Parents will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to be able to walk with a member of staff and the dog during that time. The dog will be kept in Viking and will have her own bed and crate, which she can access at any time. She will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. The dog will have appropriate access to food and water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered.

**Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?**

A Children will not need to touch the dog, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. Some allergies are already managed at school and this will be no different for children and adults that are allergic to dogs. Individual needs will always

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be met and we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies.

**Q My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?**

A Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised. Children do not need to have close contact with the dog if this wish has been communicated by parents to us and to their child. We hope to work closely with parents of children who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.