



# Ladywood Primary School Dog

## Rationale

The school dog's primary aim is to educate, help and support children of all ages, backgrounds, sexes and abilities. This is achieved by training a carefully selected dog to an incredibly high standard to work in the school environment, both educational and therapeutic aids.

The impact a school dog has on children in the educational environment is amazing and life changing. 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) Calm behaviour down
- 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 not that attentive

School dogs help teach children non-violence, empathy, respect, kindness, love, responsibility, friendship and trust. It promotes the positive role that dogs have and deserve in today's society especially with regard to the ways in which dogs can both enhance children's lives and help children. It also promotes the effectiveness and uniqueness of the child-dog bond and the tremendous impact this can have on the individual child.

Reading to dogs has been proved to help children develop literacy skills and build confidence, through both the calming effect the dogs' presence has on children and the fact that the dog will listen to the children read without being judgemental or critical. This comforting environment helps to nurture children's enthusiasm for reading and provides them with the confidence needed to read aloud.

Ladywood Primary is a THRIVE school and pets can be used extensively with this programme to support the most vulnerable pupils in our school.

## Role of the School Dog

The roles of a school dog in the educational environment are many. These roles consist of the following:-

### **Classroom Canines**

These dogs will be happy to simply 'chill out' in the classroom whilst the children are having their lesson (s). Their very presence will have a calming effect on the children. Research studies in both Britain and America have concluded that having a dog in a school classroom can have many positive benefits - these include help to calm children down, improve academic achievement, motivate those children who are often not that attentive, teach responsibility and encourage children to respect all life. Furthermore, it has been shown that when classmates share the affection and care of a 'class' dog, a bond forms among the classmates and strengthens their team ethics.

### **Listening Canines**

These dogs will be incredibly calm and happy to have an individual child read to them. Dogs give unconditional acceptance, as they are non-judgmental, which is especially crucial to struggling, emerging readers. The listening canines 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. In America, the 'Read' Dogs, as they are known, have proved through research that children who read to these 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 children they mix with. In the UK The Kennel Club operates the 'Bark and Read Foundation' which works with Pets As Therapy, Caring Canines and Dogs Helping Kids Charities to provide Reading Dogs in schools across the country.

### **Reward Canines**

These dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the children. Those children 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 the children will be allowed to undertake with the reward dogs. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem.

### **Therapy Canines**

These dogs will work with children on a one-one basis and will especially help those children who have been bullied, abused, suffering with emotional issues, going through upsetting/difficult times or even scared/phobic of dogs. These dogs will bring much joy and help to all the children they meet. Children who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a school dog.

## Types of Dogs

Many types of dog are being used in schools across the country as either school dogs or visiting dogs. Dogs such as Labradors and Spaniels have proved easy to train as therapy dogs and assistance dogs and as such these are being chosen for school dogs. Some schools are choosing dogs which do not shed much hair such as Bedlington terriers.

When selecting a dog it is important to use reputable breeders and view the puppy's parents for nature and temperament.

## Training for the School Dogs

School dogs need training from approximately 8 weeks old in the environment in which they will be working. Reputable trainers who are able to train the dog as a Therapy Dog should be chosen with the ultimate aim of having the dog assessed as a Working Therapy Dog. Full training will take approximately 18 months to 2 years with the puppy requiring 3 sessions a week (at the approximate cost of £20 a session). Designated handlers will need to be selected.

It is considered beneficial for the trainer to hold assemblies or class workshops for children and staff meetings for all staff.

## Insurance

Pet insurance will need to be explored for the school dog.

Barnsley BMBC Health and Safety unit have written a H&S Risk Assessment for School Dogs and whilst children will never be unsupervised with the school dog it is reassuring to know that the School insurance covers any bite that may be sustained during interaction with the school dog.

# Research

## Why dogs help children

The relationship between a child and his/her pet has been around for hundreds of years. Potential benefits from a child having a pet are numerous and consist of the following: - a child's best friend, the role of a sibling, a playmate, a confidant, provides emotional support and love, promotes positive self-esteem, teaches responsibility and empathy, brings a sense of identity, allows the child to cope with death and loss and can have a lifelong influence on their later attitudes towards animals.

Sigmund Freud believed that dogs had a 'special sense' that allowed them to judge a person's character accurately. His dog Jo-Fi (a Chow) attended all of his therapy sessions. Freud believed that the presence of his dog had a calming influence on all of his patients, especially children. It was the academic work of Boris Levinson and his dog Jingles in the 1960's that brought the world evidence that pets were good for children and more importantly that pets could help children. Levinson felt that many children could derive benefit from pet psychology - the withdrawn, the inhibited, the autistic, the obsessive compulsive, the fearful, the submissive, the culturally disadvantaged and the young non-verbal.

In the 1970's Dr Samuel Corson of Ohio State University had good success with a group of 20 dogs who helped children and other patients at a psychiatric hospital. At the same time Skeezer, a mongrel dog, became America's first Canine Co-Therapist with children. For seven years Skeezer worked as a member of staff at the Children's Psychiatric Hospital in Michigan where he helped children who were severely troubled and those who needed a helping hand with their emotions. More recently, American psychologist Dr Stacia Bjarnson discovered that children with social, emotional, behavioural and academic issues tended to open up and talk about their feelings when in the presence of her poodle Noodle, who was a registered therapy dog. Noodle currently works with Dr Bjarnson at the Northwest Village School in Connecticut, a special school for over 200 children. Noodle works with children in both group settings and on an individual basis.

The 1970's and 1980's marked a turning point in the growth of animal assisted therapy with children and by the 1990's thousands of animal-assisted therapy volunteers were working in programmes around the world.

Children who have not had a bond relationship with an animal by the age of eight may find it more difficult to interact with and understand animals at a later stage. Furthermore research suggests that when a child reaches the age of eight patterns of aggression start to become both stable and predictable and unless this aggression is identified and treated, the child may go on to become violent and aggressive as an adult.

'The Link' is a term commonly used in America to explain the connection between animal abuse and violence towards people. If a child abuses an animal they may

themselves be victims of abuse in the family home, or witnesses to violence at home and they are then more likely to be aggressive to humans when they are adults. Whilst most children are usually sensitive to the misuse of pets, for some abused and disturbed children, pets represent someone they can gain some power and control over. Hence childhood cruelty to animals could be viewed as an important warning sign and one that should not be ignored.

Humane education is a values education which encourages children to be more kind and respectful towards others. Humane education is also regarded as a long-term measure to prevent cruelty towards both humans and animals. Today such educational programmes are huge in America where they are often taught in Schools by animal welfare organisations, from Project Pooch in Oregon to Project Pal in Wisconsin. Britain has very few of these programs. It is down to the discretion of each and every school in Britain to involve the children in having 'hands on' experience with animals, but sadly most schools would rather teach children computers, the use of CD-Roms and how to use the internet.

In the 1990s a research study undertaken in Britain concluded that there is a need in schools to teach children about the positive benefits of dogs. There is no better place to educate our children on how to treat animals than that of the school environment. Animals in schools can encourage children to respect all life, teach responsibility, motivate those children who are often not that attentive, help calm children down and improve academic achievement.

Could it be that teaching respect as part of the school day could make the difference between a violent and peaceful world. Dogs as role models? Why not? Perhaps relating to our best friends as part of the school curriculum can help make the world a safer place for us all to relate to each other (Salotto, 1999). Since 2003 a very small number of state schools across Britain have trained up dogs from puppyhood to live and work in the school environment as classroom assistants.

Dogs Helping Kids believes the time is now right to have dogs helping our children in the school environment and we are working towards the day when every school in Britain has a trained dog as a classroom assistant. Even if one child's behaviour is changed we will feel that our work has been worthwhile. Dogs in schools should be viewed as a very beneficial educational aid and one that should be embraced.

<http://www.puppygurus.co.uk/dhk/our-school-dogs.php> Roles of the School Dogs

## Images of school dogs



## Ladywood's School Dog - DRAFT Policy

It does not jump up at people.

It does not lick people.

It does not bark.

It will not be allowed onto any furniture.

It will have its own bed/blanket.

It will not be allowed into the playground whilst the children are playing.

It is not a doll or a toy and must not be treated as such.

The children will be taught how to handle a dog and treat it with respect e.g. stroking, walking, commands.

	Expectations of the dog	Expectations of the children
<p><b>Classroom canine</b></p> <p>To have a calming effect on the children</p>	<p>To lay on its bed and 'chill' during lessons.</p> <p>When allowed to sit in front of the children or at their side with all four paws on the floor.</p> <p>No going onto furniture</p>	<p>To ignore the dog whilst working.</p> <p>To calmly approach the dog.</p> <p>Wait until the dog is in the correct position before stroking or talking to it.</p> <p>Children to reinforce the rule about furniture</p> <p>To wash their hands and not put them near their mouth after handling the dog.</p>
<p><b>Listening canine</b></p> <p>To be non-judgemental when listening to emerging/struggling reading</p>	<p>To lay on its bed either facing the child, at the side of the child or with their head in the child's lap.</p>	<p>To calmly approach the dog.</p> <p>To read to the dog, they will be allowed contact with the dog if they wish.</p> <p>To wash their hands and not put them near their mouth after handling the dog.</p>



<p><b>Reward Canine</b></p> <p>Children will be allowed at lunchtime to exercise the dog in a designated area of the school grounds (with permission of the parents)</p>	<p>To walk on a lead without pulling To stand and be brushed</p> <p>To play with the children e.g. fetch a ball and drop it.</p>	<p>To calmly approach the dog and be calm around the dog at all times.</p> <p>To follow the rules of walking and grooming</p> <p>To know that the dog drops the ball at their feet or in their open hands and they do not remove it from the dog's mouth.</p> <p>To wash their hands and not put them near their mouth after handling the dog and its toys</p>
<p><b>Therapy Canines</b></p> <p>To be a reassuring friend to the child</p>	<p>To follow instructions from the designated staff members</p> <p>To sit/lay in front of the child or at their side to offer comfort to the child</p> <p>The designated staff member must not put the dog at harm and read the situation carefully</p>	<p>To calmly approach the dog.</p> <p>To stroke the dog to help focus.</p>

## BMBC 'Basic Activity' Risk Assessment Form

<b>Directorate</b>	Children, Young people & Families
<b>Division</b>	
<b>Service/Function</b>	
<b>Location</b>	
<b>Date of Assessment</b>	
<b>Manager responsible for the Basic Activity</b>	
<b>Lead Risk Assessor for the Basic Activity</b>	
<b>Lead Risk Assessor's Signature</b>	
<b>Risk Assessment Team Members (e.g. employees, supervisors, managers, safety reps etc)</b>	

**Activity covered by this risk assessment**

Bringing dogs into schools

Hazard	Risks	Control Measures	Actions Required	Person Responsible and Target Date
Dogs	Bites	Dog must be kept on a lead at all times. Proper supervision by adults, children should never be left alone with a dog.	Children should be instructed beforehand on the appropriate behaviour around dogs. Never make sudden movements when close to a dog. Keep calm and quiet. Children instructed not to eat around the dog. Never stare into a dog's eyes as this may be seen as threatening. Refer to <a href="http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/training/safe-and-sound">www.thekennelclub.org.uk/training/safe-and-sound</a> for teachers notes, online computer games and resources on child safety around dogs. Children can undertake the activities contained within this resource prior to any visit.	
Bites/scratches	Dog fights [if more than one dog]	Dog must be kept on a lead at all times. Proper supervision by adults, children should never be left alone with a dog.	Ongoing monitoring of the situation if the dog becomes frightened, flattened ears, lowered tail, tail between the legs, hiding behind the owner, whining or growling then remove the dog immediately.	

Contact with dog faeces	Illness/Disease	Dog fouling is cleaned up immediately	Appropriate bags to be used, washing facilities made available
Poor Hygiene	Infection	Children told not to put their face near a dog. Always wash their hands after handling the dog.	

**Manager's Assessment Acceptance Statement**

I accept the details of the assessment and will ensure that the risk control measures identified, any risk control actions identified and monitoring requirements are acted upon within the given time scales.

Manager's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Date of planned review (not to exceed 12 months) \_\_\_\_\_

Date of planned full re-assessment (not to exceed 24 months) \_\_\_\_\_