



St Hilary's Prep School Policy

Dogs in School Policy

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Statement of intent

St Hilary's Prep School supports the companionship and presence of a school dog for the academic, social and emotional benefits of pupils. This policy is designed to set out to pupils, parents and visitors the reasons for having a school dog and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of all members of the community including the dog itself. Although as with most things, there is a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment, this can be mitigated with a robust risk assessment to ensure the safety of all.

1. The benefits of a school dog

School dogs have been proven to help develop pupils' reading skills, improve behaviour, enhance attendance and boost academic confidence. It also educates children about the responsibility of caring for animals and helps them develop empathy and nurturing skills. At St Hilary's we hope that the school dog will be a beneficial addition to the daily life of our school offering company and camaraderie to all. He can also act to enhance interventions already offered in support of children seeking emotional

support or promoting engagement for pupils who may have found aspects of school life difficult or challenging in the past.

Animal assisted interventions can:

- Teach empathy and appropriate interpersonal skills;
- Help individuals develop social skills;
- Be soothing and support the development of rapport between the teacher and pupil, and improve individual's skills to pick up social cues imperative to human relationships;
- Staff can process that information and use it to help pupils see how their behaviour affects others;
- School dogs have been shown to support emotional regulation through the positive impact on the autonomic nervous system;
- Children working in the company of a school dog can experience increased motivation for learning, resulting in improved outcomes;
- Dogs can be used to support children with social and emotional learning needs, which in turn can assist with literacy development.

Research into the effects of school dogs shows a range of benefits including:

- Increase in school attendance;
- Gains in confidence; "If children are partnered with a dog to read to, for example, the dog provides comfort, encourages positive social behaviour, enhances self-esteem, motivates speech and inspires children to have fun and enjoy the non-judgemental experience"
- Decreases in learner anxiety behaviours resulting in improved learning outcomes, such as increases in reading and writing levels;
- Positive changes towards learning and improved motivation;
- Enhanced relationships with peers and teachers due to experiencing trust and unconditional positive regard from a school dog. This in turn helps pupils learn how to express their feelings and enter into more trusting relationships;
- SEN benefits – 'Therapy Dogs Nationwide' have shown to help with special needs and those with autism by giving focus and providing a calming environment;
- Behaviour benefits - Researchers report that pupils can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel.

2. Roles and responsibilities

It is important to remember that a school dog does not belong to a school; it belongs to the owner with whom it forms an important bond and lives as part of the family. The fact that the dog's owner is the Headmaster does not minimise their duties and responsibilities as the dog's owner; there is always still a legal and moral duty of care towards the animal.

The legal owner of the dog has full responsibility for its welfare and will pay all expenses relating to pet insurance, vaccinations, flea and worm treatment, food and maintenance costs.

The owner is responsible for ensuring the dog is trained to a sufficient standard that the dog does not display any negative behaviours (including those stated in section 4 of this policy).

The Senior Leadership Team is responsible for:

- Producing a risk assessment which is reviewed annually.
- Ensuring the dog is included within fire evacuation procedure
- Ensuring the dog is covered by the school's Public Liability Insurance policy
- Informing Staff, parents and pupils in writing that a dog will be in school, and ascertain if any allergies or phobias that the School should be made aware of
- The presence of a school dog will be made clear to visitors upon their arrival at the school reception

3. Code of conduct

- Pupils will be reminded of appropriate behaviour around the dog in assemblies and before first contact or interaction.
- Should the dog show any warning signs of stress such as ears back or growling, then it will immediately be removed from the situation.
- Any dog foul will be cleaned up immediately.
- Pupils will not be allowed to approach or disturb the dog whilst it is asleep.

4. Unacceptable behaviours

Should the dog present with specific aggressive behaviour, they will no longer be able to continue as a school dog. These include biting, snarling, growling, or being possessive of toys, food and people.

5. Other dogs in school

Other dogs will generally not be permitted on site with the exception of drop off and pick up times. Any dog on site at this time should be well behaved and must be on a lead. Staff are empowered to request dog owners to comply or they will be asked to leave the site.

Dogs are not permitted at other times of the school day e.g. at fixtures or other events in school.

6. Banned breeds

Banned dog breeds are strictly prohibited from the school site at all times. There are 5 banned breeds and these are Pit Bull Terrier, XL Bully, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino and Fila Brasileiro.

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