



*Together we Love, we Aim High and we
celebrate!*

School Dog Policy

This guidance should be taken as part of the overall strategy of the school and operated within the context of our vision, aims and values as a Church of England School.

Head teacher: Mrs Nichola Chesterton
Chair of Governors: Mr Pete Luscombe

To be reviewed: November 2025

We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for pupils with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

There is extensive research in to the benefits of school dogs and many schools in the country, both primary and secondary, now 'employ them';

- Children can benefit educationally and emotionally.
- They can increase their understanding of responsibility
- Develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog
- In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

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

Yes there is, although there are a variety of accidents which can happen within a 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 3)

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

School Policy

Our school dog, Frank, is owned by Mrs Chesterton and her family.

- 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 Head Teacher has been informed beforehand.
- Frank is a Springador – ¾ lab and ¼ springer. who was born on 10th November 2014. He was chosen because of his lovely temperament with people. He is calm and tolerant.
- The Chair of Governors, and the governing board agree that a school dog will benefit the children and staff.
- Staff, parents and children will be informed that there will be a dog in the schools. There will be a risk assessment and this will be reviewed annually.
- The leadership will ensure that risks to staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs is minimised. All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school.
- If Frank is ill, he will not be allowed into school.
- Frank will be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of a trained adult.
- Children will never be left alone with Frank and there will be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Children should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around Frank. Children should remain calm around Frank. They should not make sudden movements and must never stare into a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for Frank. Children should not put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up.
- Children should never go near or disturb Frank when it is sleeping or eating.
- Children must not be allowed to play roughly with Frank.
- Everyone must wait until he is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking him.
- If Frank is surrounded by a large number of children, he could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of Frank must ensure that s/he monitors the situation.
- Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring of teeth indicate that Frank is feeling angry or threatened. Flattened ears, tail lowered or between their legs, hiding behind their owner, whining or growling are signs that Frank is frightened or nervous. If Frank is displaying any of these warning signs it should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
- Children should not eat close to Frank.
- Children should be careful to stroke Frank on its body, chest, and back and not by its face or top of head.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling Frank using soap and water and/or hand sanitiser.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.
- Parents will be consulted on allowing their child access to Frank.
- All visitors will be informed about Frank and related protocols on arriving and office staff will relay visitor issues to the Head Teacher as soon as possible.

- Appropriate staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog.
- The Office will know the whereabouts of Frank and which staff are supervising at all times.
- Frank will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of an appropriate member of staff.
- The school dog will be regularly treated for internal and external parasites, using licenced veterinary products, in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations, and following the advice and risk assessment of a veterinary surgeon.
- The school dog will not be brought into school if exhibiting any signs of illness or disease. This is to reduce the risk of transmission of disease to children or immunosuppressed members of staff, avoid the risks from unexpected behaviours while ill and to safeguard animal welfare.
- The school dog will not be fed any raw diet to avoid the risk of carriage and transmission of infection from food borne organisms such as Salmonella and Campylobacter.

Actions

If someone reports having an issue with Frank, this information must be reported to the Senior Teachers and/or the Head Teacher as appropriate. All concerns will be responded to by the Senior teachers and/or Head Teacher.

Roles and Responsibilities

- The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in school.
- The Head Teacher 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 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 truancy
8. Motivate children who are often less attentive
9. Reduce litter around the school site.

The following information has been taken from a wide 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 Frank, 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 towards teachers, and pupils 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 truancy. 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 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 peer. After all, a dog won't judge or correct you." Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practice 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 while they are having a book reading session. Dogs give unconditional acceptance, as they are non-judgemental, which is especially crucial to struggling, emerging readers. 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. Older pupils use dogs to help communicate, 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.

As a reward

Dogs will be gentle and loving but at the same time, full of fun and enjoyment for the pupils. Those pupils 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 can be rewarded with spending time during lunch or break to interact with Frank. 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-to-one basis and will especially help those pupils who have been bullied, abused, going through upsetting/difficult times or even scared/phobic of dogs. Frank will bring much joy and help to all the pupils they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the pupils they are spending time with. Pupils who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

Appendix 2: School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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| Q | Who is the legal owner of Frank and who pays for its costs? |
| A | The legal owner of Frank is Mrs Chesterton; she will bear the costs associated with owning Frank; the school budget will support insurance and staff training costs where appropriate. |
| Q | Is Frank from a reputable breeder? |
| A | Yes. Frank is from a home where both parents were seen and has been specifically chosen for his temperament, attentiveness and attributes. |
| Q | Will Frank be a distraction? |
| A | Frank will be kept in Mrs Chesterton's office. This is separate from the classrooms/playground area to ensure that it only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision. Frank will also have a space to spend time in classrooms and various spaces around the school where pupils can interact safely. Frank 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. |
| Q | Who is responsible for training? |
| A | Mrs Chesterton will be the legal owner of Frank and as a result will be responsible for his training. |
| Q | How will Frank 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 in the grounds. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed. 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 Frank's welfare be considered? |
| A | Frank will be walked regularly and given free time outside. Parents will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to be able to walk with a member of staff and Frank during that time. This will also be used as a behaviour reward, in line with our relationship policy. Frank will have planned and supervised contact with pupils and visitors. Frank will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have unlimited access to water and food as required. We will work very carefully to ensure Frank's welfare is always considered. |
| Q | How will this be managed where children have allergies? |
| A | Pupils will not need to touch Frank, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for children and adults that 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 for individual allergies. Frank is given a high quality food and is regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens. |
| Q | My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this? |
| A | Access to Frank is carefully managed and supervised, and children do not need to have close contact with him unless permission for this has been given. We hope to work closely with parents of pupils who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this. |

Appendix 3: Risk assessment

| Area: Interaction with pupils and staff | | | | |
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| Reason: to ensure the school dog acts appropriately at all times | | | | |
| Hazard | Who might be harmed and how? | What are you already doing? | Risk rating (trivial/low/medium/high/stop) | Is anything further needed? |
| School dog biting a student or adult | Child or adult could be hurt if the school dog bites | The school dog is being trained not to bite. When Frank is approached in the correct way there is very limited danger. The school dog lives with Mrs Chesterton who handles it all the time to ensure that it is used to interactions with people. | Low | Ensure that pupils and adults do not interact with the school dog without supervision. Ensure that all interaction with the school dog is completed in the agreed way. |
| Jumping up / scratching | If the school dog becomes excited there is a danger that it could jump up and knock a child over or leave a scratch mark. | The temperament of the school dog and the agreed training programme has involved not jumping up with praise/rewards given when successful. The school dog has been selected as it is not a large breed. A letter was sent home asking parents to 'opt-out' if they are unwilling for their child to have contact with the school dog. Parents were asked to explain their wishes to their son/daughter and ask them not to approach the school dog if they do not want any contact. | Medium | Ensure that pupils and adults do not interact with the school dog without supervision. The school dog will be under lead control by an authorised adult when people come to interact with him. |
| Running loose | If the school dog was to run loose it could hurt pupils /staff and/or damage property | The school dog will be contained at all times either in an office with a clear sign on the door or in a crate or on a lead. | Low | Monitor that the equipment that is used to contain the school dog is appropriate and effective |
| Direct interaction with pupils/staff | If the school dog is allowed to interact when not in the correct frame of mind, pupils/staff could be scratched | No interactions allowed without authorisation. Interactions will be cancelled if the school dog shows signs of incorrect behaviour. Rewards/praise will be given to reinforce the desired behaviours | Medium | Ensure that Frank is approached in the agreed manner |
| Destruction of materials | If allowed, the school dog may chew/destroy some school materials/resources | The school dog will be contained at all times. The school dog will have its own toys to play with and normal school resources will be removed. | Low | Monitor that the equipment used to contain the school dog is appropriate and effective. |

| Area: Pupils and staff's interaction with the school dog | | | | |
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| Reason: To ensure the school dog is effectively supported to interact appropriately at all times | | | | |
| Hazard | Who might be harmed and how? | What are you already doing? | Risk rating (trivial/low/medium/high/stop) | Is anything further needed? |
| Incorrect/inconsistent interaction with dog | If a student/adult interacts with the school dog in the incorrect or inconsistent way this will affect the school dogs training and have a negative impact on the future interaction | Agreed guidelines that must be followed at all times when interacting with the school dog. There cannot be any interaction with the school dog without authorisation. | Medium | If there are inconsistencies in approach with the school dog the adult/student will have the interaction stopped |
| Use of rewards/treats | Children and adults could be harmed if the school dog is over excited when receiving a reward/treat. Pupils/adults must clean their hands after handling pet treats. | Alcohol gel will be available to adults (and pupils with permission from parents). Treats will only be given to the school dog with authorisation. | Low | Reminders to pupils to wash their hands/use alcohol gel after handling treats. Treats to be locked away to ensure they can only be used after authorisation. |
| Pupils/staff knowledge of interaction with a puppy/dog | If adults and pupils have limited knowledge of how to interact correctly this could result in harm to the school dog or themselves | We will regularly update children as to how to interact with the school dog appropriately. | Medium | There will be an agreed format for how to interact with the school dog |

| Area: Hygiene / health | | | | |
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| Reason: to ensure that pupils, staff and the school dog do not have an increased risk of illness as a result of the school dog being in school. | | | | |
| Hazard | Who might be harmed and how? | What are you already doing? | Risk rating (trivial/low/medium/high/stop) | Is anything further needed? |
| Worms/fleas | If the school dog is not treated for worms there is a danger that germs can be transferred to people | The school dog will be treated as recommended by a local vets to ensure that it is correctly treated for worms and fleas | Low | Monitor that vet visits happen promptly and take actions suggested by the vet. |
| Faeces | If a child/adult comes into contact with the school dog's faeces some germs could be transferred | The school dog will only be walked under supervision. No child will pick up Frank's faeces, this will always be undertaken by the adult in supervision | Low | If a child finds faeces on the school field/playground they will report it to an adult |

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| Allergies | If a child is allergic to dogs they could become unwell | Pupils will not be in contact with the school dog if we have received a negative response form from parents/ guardians. If a student/ member of staff has an allergy the school dog will not carry out tasks near that student/member of staff | Medium | |
| Student's access to the school dog's resources | If a student has access to the school dog's treats/food and eat some, they could become unwell | All of the school dog's resources will be locked away. No child will be allowed to enter Frank's area without authorisation. | Low | Remind pupils not to enter the area |
| Contact with food preparation areas | If the school dog enters a food preparation area this could be unhygienic | The school dog will be in a contained area or on a lead at all times around the school. The school dog will never enter the school kitchen. | Low | Remind pupils and adults to clean their hands. |
| Cleaning hands after interacting with the school dog | If hands are not cleaned pupils/adults could become unwell | All adults and pupils will clean their hands after interaction with the school dog | Low | Remind pupils and adults to clean their hands |

| Area: Activities involving the school dog, including walking | | | | |
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| Reason: to ensure that the school dog has a meaningful and safe impact on the school community. | | | | |
| Hazard | Who might be harmed and how? | What are you already doing? | Risk rating (trivial/low/medium/high/stop) | Is anything further needed? |
| Walking Frank on and off the site | Pupils could be harmed during a walk offsite if they are not focused. Pupils might be harmed if they do not interact correctly with the school dog is on a walk | If the school dog is taken off-site the normal risk assessment process will take place. No student will take the lead when the school dog goes for a walk unless authorised to do so by the accompanying adult. No student will be allowed to interact with the school dog when it is on a walk unless permission is given. | Medium | Careful consideration to be given to the amount of time the school dog is allowed to walk around the school site during break and lunchtimes |
| Visits to | If the school dog visits a | The school dog will initially | Medium | Careful consideration to be |

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| classrooms | classroom and the pupils do not follow the correct procedure then it may become overexcited | only make classroom visits with Mrs Chesterton. The pupils in classrooms will follow the agreed procedure or interactions will stop. | | given to when the school dog can visit classrooms and be under the control of an appropriate member of staff. |
| Being fed | If a student tries to interact when the school dog is eating it may respond aggressively | No student will be allowed in the school dog's contained area when it is eating. Pupils may prepare the school dog's food (washing hands afterwards). All feeding must be supervised | Low | Reminders to all pupils feeding the school dog not to interact while it is eating |
| School events | If the school dog is overwhelmed it may become aggressive or boisterous | The school dog will only attend school events if they are appropriate and it will be under the control of a supervising adult | Low | Monitor the school dog's reactions to school events. If the school events are too overwhelming the school dog will be taken away to his allocated rest space.. |
| Other dogs (on and off the site) | If the school dog is overwhelmed it may become aggressive or boisterous | No other dogs will be allowed on the school premises. At no time will the school dog be walked by a student and as a result if another dog is seen this will be dealt with by the supervising adult | Low | Monitor the school dog's reactions when out walking. |

Dogs all over Britain are helping children to grow their confidence, particularly with reading aloud (Country Life)

Picture the scene. In a primary school in south-east England, a small boy is reading aloud. He sits on his own, his only audience Doug on his knee. A neatly groomed pug, with characteristic dark mask and black-tipped ears, Doug is falling asleep, burrowing deeper into the boy's lap.

Unexpectedly, the boy begins to cry. Doug's handler is at his side immediately. 'Doug the Pug's bored,' offers the boy by way of explanation. 'He's gone to sleep.' The handler denies it. 'But his eyes are closed.' She tells him that Doug has closed his eyes to envisage the wonderful story the boy is reading. Upset, the boy is implacable: 'He's snoring.' 'He's purring with pleasure, just as pugs do.' Uncertain at first, the boy is reassured; he reads to the end of the story.

The pug in question is five-year-old Doug, a therapy dog that, for the past three years, has accompanied his owner, Cate Archer, to schools in London and Buckinghamshire as part of a nationwide initiative to tackle literacy problems among British children. The bulk of Doug's work is as a 'reading dog': he provides a friendly audience for children to read to.

Some of Doug's children have learning difficulties or attention disorders; some lack confidence. Others are kinaesthetic learners: instead of fiddling in their seats, they stroke Doug's ears and hug the biddable little dog. For these children, acquiring basic literacy skills isn't only challenging, but stressful. The presence of a dog alters the classroom atmosphere. 'Doug encourages children to think school is a lovely place to be,' says Mrs Archer. 'He goes on school trips and, in one case, has a stall at the school's summer fair.' The impact on pupils' progress academic, social and behavioural can be marked.