

## **School Dog Policy**

### **2023-2025**

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Chair of Governors	Katherine Russell
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## **1 Introduction**

Research has shown many benefits to therapy and reading dogs in school settings. Beechwood has a school dog who works with our students to improve literacy and student behaviour and wellbeing.

This policy is designed to set out to students, parents and visitors the reasons for having a school dog at Beechwood School and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of students, staff, visitors and the school dog.

Although there is a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment, this can be mitigated against with a robust risk assessment to ensure the safety of all students, staff and visitors.

The welfare of the school dog is always of paramount importance and this policy is mindful of the [Animal Welfare Act 2006](#)

[See Beechwood School Dog risk assessment]

## **2 The benefits of a school dog**

### 2.1 Social and emotional benefits

School dogs have been proven to help improve behaviour, attendance and academic confidence, as well as increasing student understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills. At Beechwood, we have a school dog to support our staff team in bringing all of these benefits to our students. A school dog will also allow our community to develop and demonstrate our artefacts of kindness, respect and excellence.

### 2.2 Literacy benefits

“Reading to dogs has been proven 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. When dogs are in a room of children trying to read they become less stressed, less self conscious and more confident because dogs are non-judgemental. If children are partnered with a dog to read to, the dog provides comfort, encourages positive social behaviour, enhances self-esteem, motivates speech and inspires children to have fun and enjoy the experience of reading.”

- Bark & Read – The Kennel Club

(<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/barkandread>)

“Children who read to dogs are less likely to be embarrassed reading aloud and find the experience less stressful. Research has proved that children who read to dogs show an increase in reading levels, word recognition, and a higher desire to read and write.” - School Dog Policy – The White Horse Federation

### **3 Principles**

3.1 The Headteacher and Chair of Governors both agree to a school dog working in Beechwood School.

3.2 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 approved their presence prior to the visit.

3.3 Any school dog's legal owner has full responsibility for the welfare of the school dog and all expenses relating to pet insurance, food and other expenses and ensuring that the dog is vaccinated, wormed and flea treated.

3.4 An approved risk assessment is in place which will be reviewed annually.  
[See Beechwood School Dog risk assessment]

3.5 The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of the Headteacher or other trained staff members.

3.6 The school's liability insurance covers the school for risk related to a working dog on site.

3.7 Staff, parents and students will be informed in writing that a dog will be in school.

3.8 Parents can indicate that their child is not allowed to be present during dog therapy sessions by emailing the school.

3.9 The presence of a school dog will be signposted to visitors at main reception and the school website. Reception staff will relay visitor issues to the Headteacher's PA as soon as possible.

3.10 A school dog will always be overseen by a member of school staff when on site.

### **4 Code of Conduct**

#### **4.1 Staff Responsibilities**

4.1.1 The Headteacher will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.

4.1.2 If the dog is ill they will not be allowed into school.

4.1.3 The school dog must be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of an adult.

4.1.4 The school dog will be kept in the Headteacher's office when not interacting with students for therapy or reading sessions.

4.1.5 Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the school dog. The medical team will keep a list of all students and staff with a reported allergy to dogs (dander) and ensure that all handlers know who these students and staff are.

4.1.6 Staff leading therapy or reading sessions with the school dog have a responsibility to ensure all staff, students or visitors present are happy for the animal to enter the room.

4.1.7 Students must never be left alone with the school dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.

4.1.8 Students will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog before any interaction during a therapy sessions or visit.

4.1.9 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. If the dog is displaying any warning signs, they should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment by the staff member handling her.

4.1.10 Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by the dog handling staff only.

4.1.11 Beechwood staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog to better inform research into the benefits of a school therapy / reading dog

4.1.12 The dog will always have access to water and - when appropriate - food. The dog will have access to a bed and a quiet space throughout the day in the Headteacher's office. Regular rest breaks and access to outside space will be provided.

## 4.2 Student Responsibilities

4.2.1 Students whose parents have withdrawn consent are not allowed to attend dog therapy sessions

4.2.2 Students with allergies or fears towards dogs must take personal responsibility to keep themselves safe and inform the staff accompanying the dog of the issue.

4.2.3 Students are not allowed to approach the school dog or disturb them whilst they are sleeping, resting or eating.

4.2.4 Students should always ask permission before petting the dog from the accompanying staff member.

4.2.5 Students are not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.

4.2.6 Students must always wash their hands after handling / stroking the school dog.

4.2.7 Students understand that any deliberate violence or threatening behaviour towards the school dog may result in a sanction in line with the school behaviour policy.

## 5 The School Dog – Pom-Bear: 5 year old Pomeranian.

Experienced school dog.



Haybrook College @HaybrookCollege · Oct 16, 2019  
Patiently waiting for their well earned treat after a hard day's work  
[@haybrookcollege](#), Splash and her apprentice Pom Bear.

