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## SCHOOL DOG POLICY AND RISK ASSESSMENT

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<b>Approved by:</b>	Epsilon Star MAT Board of Trustees
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<b>Date Approved:</b>	March 2025
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<b>Next review due:</b>	March 2026
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## **Introduction**

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. Appendix B sets out further reasons for why the school feels it will be beneficial to have a school dog.

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

Of course 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 a risk that needs to be managed.

## **School Policy**

The dog will be owned by the Head of Academy. The dog is a Labrador chosen for its very mild temperament and sensitivity around children. The Head of Academy will be responsible for The dog's regular visits to the vets, injections and inoculations.

The CEO, CFO and the Head of Academy have all agreed that the school can have a dog.

Staff have been informed, through staff briefing, that the school will have a dog. Parents have been informed by letter that a dog will be in school. At the start of each academic year there will be lessons around the school dog and parents will be given an opportunity to speak to the head with regards to the school dog. The Head of Academy has produced a risk assessment and this will be reviewed annually. The risk assessment is attached as Appendix A

In the event of an emergency evacuation, the adult supporting The dog will accompany him to the Fire Evacuation point.

Staff, visitors and pupils known to have allergic reactions to dogs must remain at a manageable distance. Parents are able to inform the school of any allergies on admission.

If the dog is unwell, The dog will not be allowed into school.

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

There may be occasions when the dog is working off lead, but this will only happen in an enclosed space and under the control of an adult. Before removing the lead, all present will be consulted.

Pupils must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times when the dog is present with pupils.

Pupils should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog. Pupils 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. Pupils should not to put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up. Pupils should never go near or disturb the dog that is sleeping or eating. Pupils must not be allowed to play too roughly with the dog. They should always ask to stroke the dog before touching him.

If the dog is surrounded by a large number of pupils, 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 baring 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 he should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.

Children should not feed or eat close to the dog.

Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog. As a school we will provide anti-bacterial gel.

Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by an adult.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Board of Trustees has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in School.

The Head of Academy is responsible for implementing this policy.

Teachers and staff and children are required to abide by this policy.

The Head of Academy is responsible for providing information, advice and guidance as and when required.

## **Appendix A**

### **Risk Assessment**

#### **Introduction:**

The value of pet 'therapy' is widely accepted as a powerful aid to stimulation and communication. Studies have shown that the presence of companion animals can improve the well-being of children and lower the rate of anxiety, simply by making the environment happier, more enjoyable and less forbidding. The team at Lubbins Park Primary Academy have been considering obtaining a dog as a school pet for some time and the decision was made in March to go ahead with this.

The rationale behind this decision was as follows:

- For the school to have a pet that was able to live as naturally as conditions would allow.
- For the animal to be properly cared for outside of the school day.
- To have a pet that the children could interact with and also be of benefit to the children's social and emotional development.

It is accepted that interacting with animals is not appropriate for all children but for some it has the potential to provide many positive benefits. Any parent who does not want their child to interact with The dog has been asked to identify this on the form sent home. The Head of Academy and all staff will ensure that the wish of these families is met. There are no diseases associated with the dog as his vet will be responsible for vaccinations, including rabies and completing regular health checks and necessary treatment. A copy of The dog's health records will be updated and kept in school. The dog will also be insured.

The risk assessment below is a working document and will be checked annually by key staff and the Board of Trustees.

<b>Hazard</b>	<b>Risk</b>	<b>Risk 1 - 5</b>	<b>Controls in place</b>	<b>Review date</b>
Dog getting over excited when interacting with children.	Child knocked to the ground.	1	The dog will always be in the care of a responsible adult and will never be allowed to roam freely around the school premises.	Ongoing
	Child scratched by dog.	3	Children will not be left unsupervised with the dog.	
	Child bitten by dog.	3	The dog will always be on a lead when he is not in the Head of Academy's office while the children are in school.  Pupils have been and will continue to be taught about the consequences of their actions.  Education of this nature is continually given to children, and	

			<p>often to the whole school through assemblies and PSHE sessions.</p> <p>Pupils will be taught what to do to prevent the dog from chasing them.</p> <p>The dog has undergone formal training from the age of 12 months with an experienced dog trainer. He is an ex-police dog.</p> <p>All staff will have been introduced to the dog and expectations of having a school dog.</p> <p>The dog will attend the vets regularly to ensure he is in good health and that his claws are kept short.</p>	
The dog causing allergies.	Children or staff have allergic reactions	1	<p>Parents have been asked to inform the school of any known allergies before the introduction of the dog to the school.</p> <p>A list of any children/staff who should not interact with the dog will be kept in school. The Head of Academy and staff will know who these children are.</p> <p>The children will have the opportunity to interact with the dog and those with allergies will be able to opt out of interaction.</p> <p>Children will be taught to wash their hands after active participation with the dog</p>	Ongoing
Children getting germs from the dog.	Children or staff will contract diseases that can be carried by dogs.	1	<p>Should the dog defecate on the school site a member of staff will clear this up immediately and dispose of it in a safe way.</p> <p>He will be trained to toilet in an area of the grounds that children have limited access to. The area will be disinfected as required.</p> <p>All immunisations are kept up to date in accordance with the European Pet Passport Scheme and a record will be kept of this.</p> <p>Flea treatment is carried out at 6 monthly intervals.</p> <p>The dog will not be allowed in the school dining hall at mealtimes; and never in the food preparation area.</p>	Ongoing
Financial cost of the dog's upkeep.	School unable to afford the ongoing cost of the dog's day to day upkeep or medical bills.	1	<p>The dog is ultimately the responsibility of Samantha Murrell both in a well-being and financial aspect.</p> <p>The dog will be insured by the school, for Public Liability Insurance.</p> <p>All vets' costs are covered by Samantha Murrell</p> <p>The Dogs Trust are providing training and support in school through assemblies.</p>	Ongoing
Escape onto school	Injury to dog	1	<p>Dog to be kept on a lead while travelling around school.</p>	Ongoing.

driveway, or highway, causing accident	Death of dog Injury to public Dog causing a road traffic incident		Dog to be kept in the Head of Academy's office, in a crate when she is not in there.  No cars to enter onto drive, unless permitted.  Gates to be locked before and after school.	
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KEY:

1- Low risk

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3 -Medium risk

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5-High risk

## Appendix B

### Reasons to have a dog in school

#### Behaviour

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.

#### Attendance

Children can be encouraged back into school using caring for a dog as an incentive.

#### Social Development

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching pupils social skills and responsibility. Specifically, with a dog in the classroom, 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, may be rewarded with spending time during lunch or break to interact with these dogs. 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. The dog will bring much joy and help to all the pupils they meet and are happy to provide plenty of love to the pupils they are spending time with. Pupils who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

#### Reading

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 in the library 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 interpersonal skills among the pupils they mix with. Bullying can be a problem in all schools with pupils anxious about school for fear of taunting and abuse. But in some schools dogs are making a difference in the fight against bullying. 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 participation pupils declined by 55%, and general aggression went down 62%.

