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**Kingsley St John’s**

**School Dog Policy**

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**January 2025**

**To be reviewed January 2027**

**School Dog Policy**

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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.

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

Yes 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 just another risk that needs to be managed. A thorough risk assessment has been carried out and this 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 Headteacher Mrs R Jones. This includes drop off and collection times. This policy outlines measures put in place to allow the dog to be present on the school premises

**School Policy**

The dog will be owned by Mrs R Jones.

• The Governors have the right to refuse entry to the dog.  
• 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 Principal has given prior permission.  
• The dog is a Black Labrador Cross chosen because it is an intelligent breed that will respond well to training and which is known to be good with children, which sheds little hair and is very sociable and friendly.  
• Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog. All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school.  
• If the dog is unwell, he will not be allowed into school.  
• Children will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog. Children should remain calm around the dog.  
• Children should never go near or disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating.  
• Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.   
• 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.  
• Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.  
• Parents will be consulted on allowing their children access to the dog via an opt out agreement.  
• All visitors will be informed about the dog and related protocols on arrival and office staff will relay visitor issues to the Head of relevant department asap.  
• Appropriately trained staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog. This includes Mrs R Jones and the SLT.  
• The office will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.  
• The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Mrs R Jones

**Actions**

If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to the Headteacher or Governors as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by the relevant Person.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in School. The Principal 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 that 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, in particular reading

3)  Calming behaviours

4)  Increase social skills and self-esteem

5)  Increase confidence

6)  Teach responsibility and respect to all life

7)  Help prevent school refusing

8)  Motivate children who are often less attentive

The following information has been taken from a 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 students can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel. It was found that violent behaviour in participating students 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 students. In a controlled study, students were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Students’ behaviour improved toward teachers, and students 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:**​ Case study: Mandy was a student with poor attendance and anxiety. 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 students. 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,” students find social support and peer interaction. Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have student 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, emergent 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 students 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 students they mix with.

**Social Development:**​ Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching students’ social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help older students build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Older students use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower students. With a dog in school, students have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving students in the daily care of classroom dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The students 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 students. Those students 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, students 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 students on a one-one basis and will especially help those students 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 students they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the students they are spending time with. Students who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

***Appendix 2***

**School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

Q ​***Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?***​ A The legal owner of the dog will be Mrs R Jones; she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support insurance and staff training costs where appropriate.

**Q** ​***Is the dog from a reputable breeder?***​ Yes. The dog is a 1st Generation Springador and has been vet checked to ensure he is healthy

Q ​***Will the dog be a distraction***​? The dog will be kept in Mrs R Jones’s office area. The office is separate from the classrooms / playground area to ensure it only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this. The dog will also have a space to spend time in classrooms, the Hall and small soft play area where children can interact safely. The dog will also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation, following consultation with staff beforehand.

Q ​***Has a risk assessment been undertaken?***​ Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog and a reputable dog behaviourist.

Q ​***Who is responsible for training?*** M​rs R Jones will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for its training. Appropiate professional training will be obtained.

***Q How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all***?​ In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks outside of school and at the top of the field before children arrive. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed.

Q ​***How will the dog’s welfare be considered?***​ The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside when children are in lessons. Parents will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to be able to walk with a member of staff and the dog during lunchtime. This will also be used as a behaviour reward, in line with our behaviour policy. The dog will be kept in the Headteacher’s office and will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have access to food and water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog’s welfare is always considered.

Q ​***How will this be managed where children have allergies?***​ Children will not need to touch the dog, 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. He is given a high quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

Q ​***My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?***​ Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with Desmond We hope to work closely with parents of children who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.

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***Appendix 3***

**School Dog Risk Assessment**

**Purpose**

1. Dogs teach children responsibility. Having to remember to feed, provide water and show support for a dog can give children a sense of importance and satisfaction that they can’t get from school or other chores. The relationship that develops can be life-changing for a child and a great support system as they themselves continue to grow and develop.

2. Dogs teach children patience. Dogs do not always do as they are told first time!  
3. Dogs teach children compassion. Just like humans, dogs feel emotion and pain. They are prone to injuries and the infirmities of age during their relatively short lives.  
4. Dogs teach children about socialisation. Like most of us, dogs are social animals who enjoy and need attention and affection. By learning how to interact with a dog, children can learn how to better socialise with other children. If they can learn the social cues of a dog, then interacting with humans who can talk will be a walk in the park (pun intended).  
5. Dogs are fun. Last, but certainly not least, dogs are a lot of fun. They greet you with a wagging tail every day and can cheer you up even on your worst day.

Many people have studied dogs in attempts to decipher their behaviour, and the theories abound. However, you just have to witness the interactions between dogs and children to realise the potential for greatness. Dogs can sense when children with epilepsy are about to have a seizure, they can sense when a diabetic child’s sugar is low, and they can help children with severe physical disabilities find happiness in life. With the proper training and supervision, a dog can enrich a child’s life. After all, dogs are basically four-legged children who never grow up!

**Area:**​ Interaction with pupils and staff  
**Reason**​: To ensure the school dog interacts appropriately at all times

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| **Step 1 Identify the hazards** | **Step 2 Who might be harmed & how?** | **Step 3 What are you already doing?** | **Risk Rating Trivial / low / medium / high / stop** | **Step 4 Is anything further needed?** |
| School dog biting a child or adult | Child or adult could be hurt if the school dog bites | The school dog is being trained not to bite. When the dog is approached in the correct way there is very limited danger. Desmond lives with Mrs R Jones and her children who handle him all the time to ensure that he is used to interaction with children | Low | Ensure that children 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 |
| Running loose | If the school dog was to run loose he could accidentally hurt children/adults or damage property | The school dog will be contained at all times either in an office (with a clear sign on the door) in a cage or on a lead | Low | Monitor that the equipment used to contain the school dog is appropriate and effective |

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| Direct interaction with children/ staff | If the school dog is allowed to interact when not in the correct frame of mind children/ staff could be scratched | No interaction is allowed without authorisation. Interaction will be cancelled if the school dog shows signs of incorrect behaviour. Rewards/praise will be given to reinforce the desired behaviour | Medium | Ensure that the dog is approached in the agreed manner |
| Destruction of materials | If allowed the school dog may chew/destruct some school materials/resources | The school dog with be contained at all times. The school dog will have his 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 interaction with the school dog

**Reason**​: To ensure the school dog is effectively supported to interact appropriately at all times

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| **Step 1 Identify the hazards** | **Step 2 Who might be harmed & how?** | **Step 3 What are you already doing?** | **Risk Rating Trivial / low / medium / high / stop** | **Step 4 Is anything further needed?** |
| Incorrect / inconsistent interaction with dog | If a child/adult interact with the school dog in the incorrect or inconsistent way this will affect the school dogs training and have a negative impact on 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 any inconsistencies in approach with the school dog the adult/child 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. Children/adult must clean their hands after handling treats | Alcohol gel will be available to all adults and children. Treats will only be given to the school dog with authorisation | Low | Reminders to the children to wash hands / use alcohol gel after handling treats. Treats to be locked away to ensure they can only be used after authorisation |
| Pupil/staff knowledge of interaction with a puppy / dog | If adults and children have limited knowledge of how to interact correctly this could result in harm to the school dog or themselves | Books available suitable for all ages to help discuss subject with children. Bruce Waddell, Parent Governor and Veterinary Surgeon will visit each year to cover the subject | Medium | There will be an agreed format for how to interact with the school dog |

**Area**​: Hygiene / Health  
**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

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| **Step 1 Identify the hazards** | **Step 2 Who might be harmed & how?** | **Step 3 What are you already doing?** | **Risk Rating Trivial / low / medium / high / stop** | **Step 4 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 humans | The school dog will follow a flea and worming programme as agreed by the vets. | Low | Monitor that vet visits happen promptly and take actions suggested by the vet |
| Faeces | If a child/adult come 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 be asked to pick up the dog’s faeces, this will always be undertaken by the adult in supervision | Low | The school dog will be walked outside of the school premises. |
| Allergies | If a child is allergic to dogs they could become unwell | Children will not be in contact with the school dog if we have received a negative response form from parents/guardians. If a child has an allergy the school dog will not carry out tasks near the child | Medium |  |
| Children’s access to school dog’s resource | If a child has access to the school dog’s treats/food and eats some they could become unwell | All of the school dog’s resources will be locked away. No child will be allowed to enter the school dog’s area without authorisation | Low | Remind children not to enter 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 under supervision at all times around school. He will never enter the school kitchen | Trivial |  |
| Cleaning hands after interacting with the school dog | If hands are not cleaned children/adults could become unwell | All adults and children will clean their hands after interaction with the school dog | Low | Remind children and adults to clean their hands |

**Area**​: Activities involving the school dog, including walking  
**Reason**​: To ensure that the school dog has a meaningful and safe impact on the school

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| **Step 1 Identify the hazards** | **Step 2 Who might be harmed & how?** | **Step 3 What are you already doing?** | **Risk Rating Trivial / low / medium / high / stop** | **Step 4 Is anything further needed?** |
| Walking the dog on and off the site | Children could be harmed during a walk offsite if they are not focussed. Children might be harmed if they do not interact correctly when the school dog is on a walk | If the school dog is taken off site normal risk assessed procedure will take place. No children will take the lead when the school dog goes for a walk unless authorised to do so by accompanying adult. No children will be allowed to interact with the school dog when he is on a walk unless permission is given | Medium | Careful consideration needs to be given to the amount of time the school dog is allowed to walk around school during play/lunchtimes |
| Visits to classroom | If the school dog visits a class and the children do not follow the correct procedure he may become over excited | The school dog will initially only make classroom visits with Mrs R Jones. The children in classrooms will follow the agreed procedure or interaction will stop | Medium | Careful consideration will be given to when the school dog can visit classrooms and be under the control of the class teacher or teaching assistant |
| Being fed | If a child tries to interact when the school dog is eating he may respond aggressively | No child will be allowed in the school dog’s contained area when he is eating. Children may prepare the food for the school dog (washing their hands afterwards). All feeding will be supervised | Low | Reminders to the children feeding the school dog to not interact when he is eating |
| School events | If the school dog is overwhelmed he may become boisterous | The school dog will only attend school events if they are appropriate and he will be under the control of a supervising adult | Low | Monitor the school dog’s reaction to school events. If the school events are too overwhelming the school dog might not attend school on that day |
| Other dogs (on and off the site) | If the school dog is overwhelmed he may become boisterous | No other dogs to be allowed on School grounds. At no time will the school dog be walked off site by a child without direct supervision and as a result if another dog is seen this will be dealt with by the supervising adult | Low | Monitor the school dogs reaction when out walking |

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| **Signature:** | **Date to be reviewed:** |