



## Dogs on Site Policy

*This policy is inclusive of all pupils in the school including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage*

**Reviewed: January 2025**

**Reviewed by: J Philpott**

### **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.

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with dogs.

In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with dogs. Appendix I sets out further reasons why Moulsford Preparatory School (the School) feels it is beneficial to allow dogs on site.

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

There is a risk in bringing dogs on site, although there are a variety of accidents that 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.

### **SCHOOL POLICY FOR STAFF DOGS**

Staff dogs are only allowed on site after prior agreement by the Headteacher. All dogs must be considered to have mild temperaments and be suitably natured for the school environment.

Staff and parents are fully aware about the culture of dogs at Moulsford. A risk assessment has been carried out and this will be reviewed annually.

Staff, visitors and children 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 a dog is unwell, they will not be allowed into school.

Staff dogs should be kept on leads at all times when moving around inside school buildings and outside when south of the Thames Path. They must be under the full control and supervision of an adult at all times. Pupils must never be left alone with a dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times when the dog is present.

Pupils should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog and remain calm. They should not make sudden movements nor put their face too close to the dog. Pupils must not be allowed to play too roughly with the dogs.

If a 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 s/he should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.

Children should not feed or eat close to the dogs.

Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog. As a school we provide internal and external hand washing stations.

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

## **SCHOOL POLICY FOR VISITING DOGS**

Visiting dogs (whether owned by Moultsford parents or visiting from other schools) are allowed on site, and can generally be brought in by parents for events such as sports fixtures, subject to the rules above, and some additional rules as outlined below:

- Visiting dogs should be kept on leads, and be under the full control and supervision of an adult, at all times.
- Visiting dogs should not be brought into the school buildings, or be present in any area where food and drinks are being served, eg marquee/gazebo.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by an adult.



## Appendix I – Reasons for having Dogs 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 hugs 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 bullies. 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%.

## List of Dogs notified to the Head as being on site

Updated: January 2025

Owner	Dog
Caroline Scriven	Colin
Katie Beardall	Sybil
Lee Chaffey	Ted
Rory Johnston	Biscuit
Graham Sage	Jovi
Sally Noble	Basil
Rob Lowden	Wilson
Clare Read	Bailey
Catherine Verrill	Pedro
Tiffany Squire	Mabel
Minnie Brown	Lilly
Ben Beardmore-Gray	Pepper and Minnow