

Animal Assisted Intervention Policy



RIVERSIDE BRIDGE SCHOOL
'EXCELLENCE FOR ALL'



Ratified by Governors: 16th June 2020

To be reviewed: every 3 years



Animal Assisted Intervention Policy

Review Frequency: Every 3 years

Date of ratification: 16th June 2020

Date next review due: June 2023

Scope of Plan: This plan applies to all staff, students, governors, volunteers and visitors at Riverside Bridge School

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Introduction

Students 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. Thorough risk assessments have been carried out and this is included in this document (see appendix 3 and 4).

Dogs are not allowed anywhere on the school site at any time unless specifically authorized 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

- Only the school dog(s) are 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.
- The dogs profiles appear later in this document.
- The dogs that have been chosen are because they are known to be good with children, and are very sociable and friendly.
- The Head teacher and the governing board agree that a school dog will benefit the children and staff of Riverside Bridge School.
- Staff, parents and children have been informed that dog(s) will be in school.
- A risk assessment has been developed and this will be reviewed regularly.
- 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 dogs are unwell, they will not be allowed into school.
- The dogs will be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of the dog's handlers.
- Children must never be left alone with the dogs and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Children, with adult assistance where necessary should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dogs.
- Children should remain calm around the dogs. They should not make sudden movements and must never stare into a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dogs.
- Children should not put their face near the dogs and should always approach it standing up.
- Children should never go near or disturb the dogs when they are sleeping or eating.
- Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the dogs.
- Everyone must wait until the dogs are still before touching or stroking them.
- If the dogs are surrounded by a large number of children, the dogs could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dogs must ensure that s/he monitors the situation.

- Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or bearing of teeth indicate that the dogs are feeling angry or threatened. Flattened ears, tail lowered or between their legs, hiding behind their owner, whining or growling are signs that the dogs are frightened or nervous. If the dogs are displaying any of these warning signs they should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
- Children should not eat close to the dogs.
- Children should be careful to stroke the dogs on their body, chest, back and not by their face
- Children should always wash their hands after handling the dogs.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.
- Parents/Carers will be consulted on allowing their children access to the dogs.
- All visitors will be informed about the dogs and related protocols on arrival and office staff will relay visitor issues to a member of SLT.
- Appropriately trained staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dogs.
- The office will know the whereabouts of the dogs and their handler is at all times.
- The dogs will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of the handlers
- There will be one of the two dogs onsite every day of the school week.
- The dogs are regularly groomed and visit the vets regularly to ensure they are in good health
- The dogs will be fed in the SLT hub away from any pupils.

Actions

If someone reports having an issue with the dogs, this information must be passed to a member of SLT. All concerns will be responded to by a member of SLT in conjunction with the Head teacher.

All parents/carers will be asked to sign a consent form to give permission or not give permission for their child to interact with the dogs.

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 dogs. This will include highlighting that not all dogs are well trained and that caution must be used around unknown dogs outside school.

Dog Profiles

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

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, with empathy for the dog and 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 from another establishment: 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 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 students 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 antagonise them whilst 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 dogs will be Mr. Chaplin and Miss Smith. They will bear the costs associated with owning the dogs; the school budget will support insurance and staff training costs where appropriate.

Q Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

A: Yes. The dogs are from homes where both parents were seen and has been specifically chosen for their temperament.

Q Will the dog be a distraction?

A: The dogs will be kept in the 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 under strict supervision.

The dogs will also have a space to spend time in classrooms and in the playground where children can interact safely.

The dogs may also attend meetings with staff to support further socialization or wellbeing, following consultation with staff members beforehand.

Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

A: 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?

A: Mr Chaplin and Miss Smith will be the legal owner of the dogs and as a result, will be responsible for her training. Appropriate professional training could be sought through an approved trainer, with advice from the Pets As Therapy charity. This could eventually enable the dogs and handlers to become dog therapists and administer dog therapy.

Q How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?

A: In the interest of health and hygiene our school dogs will be toileted when taken out for short walks in the local area. Only the handlers or 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?

A: The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. Parents/Carers will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to be able to walk with a member of staff and the dogs during that time. This will also be used as a behaviour reward, in line with our behaviour policy. The dogs will be kept in the SLT hub or office area and will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. The dogs will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have unlimited 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?

A: Children will not need to touch the dogs, 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. The dogs are given high-quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

Q My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?

A: Access to the dogs is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with it unless permission for this has been given. We hope to work closely with parents/carers of children who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.

Appendix 3:

Lilly Risk Assessment

1 - highest

5 – lowest

Hazard	Risk	Risk Category 1-5	Likelihood 1-5	Controls in place
Dog getting over excited when interacting with children.	Child scratched by dog	4	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lilly will always be in the care of a responsible adult who will have received handling training.
	Child bitten by dog	4	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children are not left with the dog unsupervised.
	Child getting knocked to the floor	4	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lilly will always be on a lead when she is out of the designated office.
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dog will be trained regularly by experienced trainers. Pupils have been, and continue to be, taught the impact of their actions. Education of this nature is continually given to children, and often to whole school during assemblies, class time and PSHE lessons. Pupils will be taught what to do to prevent over stimulating or upsetting the dog and how to remain calm around her Pupils and adults will be reminded not to touch Lilly's mouth, head and rear end and to stand, turn and say "whoops / Oh dear" if she attempts to jump up or lick someone's face. All staff given permission to handle Lilly will be given strict instructions to follow and appropriate training where necessary. Lilly will attend the vets' regularly to make sure she is in good health.

Hazard	Risk	Risk Category 1-5	Likelihood 1-5	Controls in place
The dog gets loose from her lead.	Child scratched, or bitten by dog	4	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dog is in the SLT Hub or Reception office. She may be let off the lead to eat or drink once in these rooms. Staff will be alerted with signage and pupils only allowed in with supervision. Children and staff are taught not to tease her or taunt her. If Lilly does get loose in the office staff or designated handler will call for support from SLT, who will come and put the dog back on her lead. There are members of staff who will be called upon in the event of the dog getting loose or if she needs attention at any other time, they are: 1. Mr. Chaplin 2. Mrs. Clark 3. Miss O'Keefe 4. Ms Hughes 5. Miss Smith 6. Miss Amri 7. Mrs Cerri. The dog handlers will support the safe containment of Lilly within the reception office when she is present. Lilly will always be on her lead when out of the offices or when trained adults are in strict supervision.
Dog hair causing allergies	Children have allergic reactions	1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents have been asked to inform the school of any known allergies. Children will have the opportunity to interact with Lilly as they wish and those with allergies would be able to opt out of interaction. Children will be taught to wash their hands after active participation with Lilly.

Hazard	Risk	Risk Category 1-5	Likelihood 1-5	Controls in place
Children getting germs from the dog.	Children/staff will contract diseases that can be carried by dogs	3	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should the dog defecate on the school site a member of staff will clear this up immediately and dispose of it in a safe manner. All immunisations (including rabies vaccination) are kept up to date in accordance with European Pet Passport scheme and the owner keeps a register of this. Flea treatment is carried out at monthly intervals. Worming treatment is carried out compliant with European Vet guidelines, at 3 monthly intervals. The dog will not go in the school dining hall at meal times and classrooms during lunch clubs or cooking lessons; she will not be permitted into the food preparation area of the kitchen or the Food tech room.
Claim is made against school re: behaviour of the dog.	School not adequately covered financially	1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school has public liability insurance and. The policy covers Lilly in school and Mr. Chaplin has further insurance outside of school hours. There is opportunity to have Lilly assessed as a Pets As Therapy dog once further training is completed. This will greatly reduce the cost of insurance.

Appendix 4

Max's Risk Assessment

Hazard	Risk	Risk Category 1-5	Likelihood 1-5	Controls in place
Dog getting over excited when interacting with children.	Child scratched by dog	4	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Max will always be in the care of a responsible adult who will have received handling training.
	Child bitten by dog	4	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are not left with the dog unsupervised.
	Child getting knocked to the floor	4	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Max will always be on a lead when he is out of the designated office.
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The dog will be trained regularly by experienced trainers. • Pupils have been, and continue to be, taught the impact of their actions. Education of this nature is continually given to children, and often to whole school during assemblies, class time and PSHE lessons. • Pupils will be taught what to do to prevent over stimulating or upsetting the dog and how to remain calm around her • Pupils and adults will be reminded not to touch Max's mouth, head and rear end and to stand, turn and say "whoops / Oh dear" if she attempts to jump up or lick someone's face. • All staff given permission to handle Max will be given strict instructions to follow and appropriate training where necessary. • Max will attend the vets' regularly to make sure he is in good health.

Hazard	Risk	Risk Category 1-5	Likelihood 1-5	Controls in place
The dog gets loose from his lead.	Child scratched, or bitten by dog	4	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dog is in the SLT Hub or Reception office. He may be let off the lead to eat or drink once in these rooms. Staff will be alerted with signage and pupils only allowed in with supervision. Children and staff are taught not to tease him or taunt him. If Max does get loose in the office, staff or designated handler will call for support from SLT, who will come and put the dog back on his lead. There are members of staff who will be called upon in the event of the dog getting loose or if he needs attention at any other time, they are: 1. Mr. Chaplin 2. Mrs. Clark 3. Miss O'Keefe 4. Ms Hughes 5. Miss Smith 6. Miss Amri 7. Mrs Cerri. The dog handlers will support the safe containment of Max within the reception office when he is present. Max will always be on her lead when out of the offices or when trained adults are in strict supervision.
Dog hair causing allergies	Children have allergic reactions	1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents have been asked to inform the school of any known allergies. Children will have the opportunity to interact with Lilly as they wish and those with allergies would be able to opt out of interaction. Children will be taught to wash their hands after active participation with Max.

Hazard	Risk	Risk Category 1-5	Likelihood 1-5	Controls in place
Children getting germs from the dog.	Children/staff will contract diseases that can be carried by dogs	3	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should the dog defecate on the school site a member of staff will clear this up immediately and dispose of it in a safe manner. All immunisations (including rabies vaccination) are kept up to date in accordance with European Pet Passport scheme and the owner keeps a register of this. Flea/tick/worming treatment is carried out at monthly intervals. Worming treatment is carried out compliant with European Vet guidelines, at 3 monthly intervals. The dog will not go in the school dining hall at meal times and classrooms during lunch clubs or cooking lessons; she will not be permitted into the food preparation area of the kitchen or the Food tech room. Max will be taken to the vet regularly to ensure he is in good health. If Max is unwell or becomes unwell he will remain/be taken home.
Claim is made against school re: behaviour of the dog.	School not adequately covered financially	1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school has public liability insurance and. The policy covers Max in school and Miss Smith has further insurance outside of school hours. There is opportunity to have Max assessed as a Pets As Therapy dog once further training is completed.
Financial Cost of the dog		5	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Miss Smith is the owners of the dog and financially responsible for the care of the dog

Claim made against the school	Financial cost to the school			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school has public liability insurance which covers any accident or injury.
Lead walking (dog pulling on lead)	Child/adult pulled	3	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Max is lead trained. Pupils will be supervised by the dog handler at all times while being in control of the lead. The dog handler will monitor the dog and the level of tension on the lead The dog handler will intervene and take control of the lead at the soonest indication of any pulling
Emergency evacuation		4	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dog handler will be responsible for evacuating Max from the building. Max and the handler will stand inside the MUGA alongside SLT Max may visit pupils during the evacuation in order to help keep them calm, if appropriate.