

Wellbrook School: School Dog Policy



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Policy Statement

This policy relates to the dogs 'Loki' (a therapy dog), owned by the members of staff, Suzanna Hughes also identified as the Assistant Headteacher and Dog Handler and 'Olwen' (a school dog), owned by Head Teacher, Claire Howells.

- The proprietor has the right to refuse entry to any dog.
- Only official school dogs are 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 given specific permission before hand, informing the dog handler (S. Hughes) of their presence.
- Loki is a Cavachon, a mix between a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel and a Bichon Frise this breed is known for it's calming and loving nature, laid back and enjoys a cuddle although is known to bark at strangers initially. With this in mind Loki will be a permanent member of the team, getting to know staff as they join. Loki is known as a wool coat which limits allergies, noted as hypoallergenic.
- Olwen is a golden Labrador. This breed are known for their friendly, sociable and good-natured personalities. As the result of being a rescue dog, Olwen will bark if she does not recognise a new person, particularly if they are tall or wear a hat. However, once reassured, she is calm, friendly and affectionate.
- The proprietor agrees that a school dog may benefit the children and staff of Wellbrook School.
- Staff, parents and children have been informed by letter that a dog will be in school. The Assistant headteacher/dog handler has produced a risk assessment and this will be reviewed annually.
- All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school. There is a display in the foyer and which dog is in attendance at school will be indicated on the display.
- If a dog is ill they will not be allowed into school.
- If on a walk, Loki will be on a lead at all times and will be under the full control and supervision of a trained adult.
- Loki's risk assessment and vet letter indicates that Loki is safe to be left with children and is of a calm and well-behaved nature.
- Olwen's risk assessment indicates that Olwen is safe to be left with supervised children.

- The dogs are not allowed in the kitchen.
- Children will be taught to remain calm around the school dogs and how to treat them on a day to day basis.
- Children should never go near or disturb a dog that is sleeping.
- 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.
- Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or bearing 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. Loki and Olwen have never displayed any of the above other than the highlighted elements, indicating fear through hiding when noise levels are high. If these behaviours change, the RA will be immediately updated and reviewed.
- Loki is happy to be stroked, touched and picked up but must only be picked up by a responsible adult.
- Olwen is happy to be stroked, cuddled and touched.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
- To prevent fouling on the premises, dogs will be given access to the public field at the beginning and end of each day by their owner with a walk off site at lunch time.
- Parents will be consulted on allowing their child access to the dog.
- All visitors will be informed about the dog and related protocols on arrival and office staff will relay visitor issues to the Assistant Headteacher/Handler as soon as possible.
- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure.

Actions

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

Roles and Responsibilities

The proprietor has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in School. The Headteacher 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
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, 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 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 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, 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 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 school dog and who pays for its costs?

A The legal owner of Loki is Suzanna Hughes, our assistant headteacher; the legal owner of Olwen is Head Teacher, Claire Howells. They will bear the costs associated with owning the dogs.

Q Are the dogs from a reputable breeder?

A Loki is from a home where both parents were seen and has been specifically chosen for its temperament. Loki was rehomed following growing up with an elderly member of the family. Loki started his assistance dog 'life' going into care homes to visit his previous owner. Loki then started his training to become a therapy dog, working alongside a trained therapist in a previous special school setting.

Olwen is a rescue dog. She was rescued from a puppy farm in Ireland at around 4 months of age. Her physical appearance and nature clearly indicate that she is a Labrador. Having been given a fresh start, she is particularly loving and affectionate.

Q Will the dog be a distraction?

A The dog will be kept in the SLT offices when not supporting in classrooms. The dogs will be seen around school and will only be alongside the children with communication with the classroom teachers. The dogs will spend pre-arranged times in classrooms, the library and in the garden where children can interact safely. The dog will also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation.

Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

A Yes, we carefully compiled risk assessments prior to either dog starting at Wellbrook school. Loki has worked in previous settings as a school dog.

Q. Will both dogs be in school together?

A. No, either Loki or Olwen will be in school on any given day.

Q Who is responsible for training?

A . The legal owners of the dogs will be responsible for its training. Through his previous role, Loki has logged hours through the British Assistance Dog Trust

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

A In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted off site. Given access to the public field behind school before and after working hours. Dogs will also be taken off site at lunch times in order to go to the toilet.

Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. 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 that time. The dog will be kept in the SLT 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 unlimited access to 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 dog, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. Individual needs will always be met and we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies. Loki's breed of dog is known for zero moulting, he is given a high-quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens. Loki is known as hypo-allergenic and has been a safe breed around other children known to have allergens. Olwen, however, moults freely, therefore in the instance of a regular visitor or member of school having an allergic reaction to Olwen, school would reconsider the risk assessment and the suitability of having Olwen in school.

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 it unless permission for this has been given. 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.