



Sir Thomas Abney
PRIMARY SCHOOL

School Dog Policy

Approved by: Teaching & Learning Committee **Date:** 13th February 2020

Last reviewed on: 13th February 2020

Next review due by: February 2021

Introduction

A variety of animals, including dogs, are becoming an ever-popular and worthwhile addition to schools across the country.

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.

At Sir Thomas Abney, we value the development of children's wellbeing along with their spiritual, moral and social education as highly as we value academia. We believe a school dog will be a unique way to enrich all areas of the children's wider education, skills and wellbeing.

We feel confident that we can successfully integrate a dog into our school family.

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 trained, accompanied dog. Therefore, it is just another risk that needs to be managed. The school has produced a risk assessment to be read in conjunction with this policy. This will be reviewed at least annually (or more frequently as on-going assessment of the dog dictates.)

School Policy

This policy applies to the regulated school dog only. It does not affect the school's right to prohibit other dogs on school property.

The dog will be owned by and live with Ms Edwards (Class Teacher and Literacy Co-ordinator). Ms Edwards has many years' experience as a dog-owner. The dog is a Cocker Spaniel chosen for its mild temperament, ability to be trained and working nature. It will reach medium height (around 40cm) by adulthood. This breed of dog has proven popular and successful as therapy and assistance dogs.

Staff and governors have been consulted about having a school dog. Their feedback forms part of the policy and risk assessment. Parents/Carers are informed of the school dog before their children start school. They will receive copies of the dog policy and risk assessment.

Parents/carers have the right to withhold consent for their child to have any direct contact with the dog. (Appendix 1) Any such wishes will be respected and upheld by the school.

Staff, visitors and pupils known to have allergic reactions to dogs should not go near the dog. Anyone with a fear of dogs will be respected and never be forced to interact with the dog. They can receive coaching in a controlled environment with the dog to help them overcome their fears if they so wish.

The dog's health and well-being is prioritised along with that of the children and staff. The dog will be insured. All vaccinations, worming treatments and vet checks will be up-to-date. If the dog is ill, she will not be allowed into school.

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

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

The dog's interaction with children will be limited during the day; during 'down-time' the dog will be based mainly in the office or occasionally in the staffroom. Notices will be displayed to inform children, staff and visitors of the dog's presence.

Pupils should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog. Children 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. Children should not to put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up. Children should never go near or disturb the dog that is sleeping or eating. Students must not be allowed to play too 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 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. The dog will not be allowed to enter the school kitchen or go into the hall during meal times.

Children should always wash their hands after contact with the dog.

Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by an adult. The dog will be trained to use a designated, external toileting area that is out-of-bounds to the children. If any 'accidents' occur in areas where children have access to, appropriate measures will be taken to disinfect the affected site.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy and risk assessment for dogs in school.

The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy. The Headteacher may delegate this responsibility to Ms Edwards.

Teachers and staff are required to abide by this policy.

The Health and Safety Officer (Ms Wasylenczuk in her role as School Business Manager) is responsible for providing information, advice and guidance as and when required.

Ms Edwards will be responsible for the dog's welfare and wellbeing, both in and out of school.

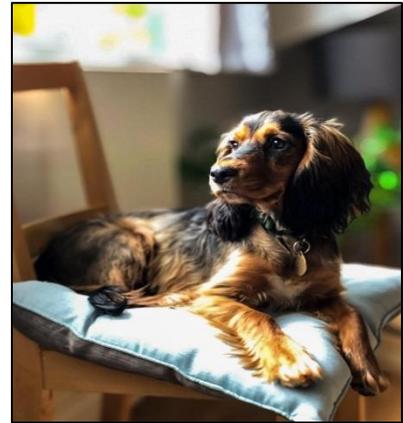
Financial responsibilities are met by Ms Edwards unless there is a specific school training course the details of which are to be agreed in advance by the Governing Body.

Meet our school dog: "Scout"

Scout is an English Cocker Spaniel she was born on the 29th June 2019.

A cocker spaniel's temperament is lively, friendly, adaptable and calm. The cocker spaniel's natural ability to "work" means that they are easily trained and enjoy being in the company of humans and other animals. Their quick intelligence and loyal natures mean that they are an excellent choice of therapy dog.

Scout has spent a few months settling in to her home environment, socialising with children, adults and familiar dogs. She is already displaying a placid nature and has quickly learnt her routine and expectations.



Scout will be brought to school most days. Until she has completed her 'Good Citizen Dog Training' accredited by the Kennel Club, her interaction with children around the school will be minimal. Scout will spend much of her early months exploring her new environment before and after the school day. As a puppy, she will be based mostly in the school offices as she slowly becomes accustomed to the smells, sounds and routines of the school day.

Scout will not engage in any structured educational or emotional support activities and interventions with the children until she has been assessed as being suitable. This could take up to a year initially and her training will continue for as long as She is 'on roll' at Sir Thomas Abney.

As a puppy, there will be opportunities for the children to meet Scout in assemblies or when she pops in to visit classes with Ms Edwards or another member of staff.

She will be able to provide inspiration and motivation for children's work and behaviour.

As Scout's training develops enabling her to have further contact with the children, the school dog policy will be reviewed to include the activities that Scout will be involved with as well as the necessary increase in insurance.

If at any point, Scout is assessed as being an unsuitable school dog, she will be 'retired' and remain as a family pet.

Reasons to have a dog in school

Below, are listed numerous benefits to having a dog in school. Some of these benefits will form longer term aims as our puppy, Scout, grows and develops.

A school dog enables children to put important values into practise: from friendship to patience, respect, love and happiness; each value can be developed through and alongside a dog.

- Children with low attendance can be encouraged to come to school with the incentive of a meet and greet from the school dog.
- With the UK dog population reaching 8.5 million, children and adults are bound to come in to contact with dogs at various points in their lives. Children without pet dogs have the opportunity to learn valuable life skills at school about how to safely interact with dogs when they are out and about.

- With a dog to care for, children are more mindful of their behaviour. Incidents of running in corridors and shouting unnecessarily are reduced; they are generally more aware of the impact of their behaviour and choices.
- Reading programmes with dogs (such as the Kennel Club's 'Bark and Read') 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 and reluctant writers to read aloud what they have written. With the presence of a calm and well-trained dog, children may find social support and peer interaction.
- Dogs provide confidence to children as they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. Dogs can work with students on a one-one basis and will especially help those students who are feeling vulnerable, going through upsetting/difficult times or even scared/phobic of dogs. The dog will bring much joy and help to all the children they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the children they are spending time with. Children who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.
- Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching social skills and responsibility. Researchers report that children can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help students build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Schools can use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower children.
- With a dog in the school, children have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving children in the daily care of school dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The children 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 children. Those children 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, can be rewarded with spending time during lunch or break to interact with the dog. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities children will be allowed to undertake. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem.