



LPW Independent School

School Dog Policy

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1 Introduction

Research has shown many benefits to dogs in school settings. LPW School has a school dog who works with our students to improve literacy and student behaviour and wellbeing. This policy is designed to set out to students, parents and visitors the reasons for having a school dog at LPW and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of students, staff, visitors and the school dog. Although there is a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment, this can be mitigated against with a robust risk assessment to ensure the safety of all students, staff and visitors (*Appendix A - Risk Assessment*).

2 The benefits of a school dog

School dogs have been proven to help develop students' reading skills, improve behaviour, attendance and academic confidence, as well as increasing student understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills. At LPW School we have a school dog to support our staff team in bringing all of these benefits to our students.

2.1 Literacy benefits

"Reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop literacy skills and build confidence, through both the calming effect the dogs' presence has on children and the fact that the dog will listen to the children read without being judgemental or critical. This comforting environment helps to nurture children's enthusiasm for reading and provides them with the confidence needed to read aloud. When dogs are in a room of children trying to read they become less stressed, less self-conscious and more confident because dogs are non-judgemental. If children are partnered with a dog to read to, the dog provides comfort, encourages positive social behaviour, enhances self-esteem, motivates speech and inspires children to have fun and enjoy the experience of reading."

- Bark & Read – The Kennel Club

(<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/barkandread>)

2.2 Attendance & punctuality benefits

"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."

- Case Study – Hazel Oak School Dog Policy (<https://hazel-oak.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/School-Dog-Policy.pdf>)

2.3 Behaviour & rewards

"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."

Hazel Oak School Dog Policy

<https://hazel-oak.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/School-Dog-Policy.pdf>

3 Principles

3.1 The Headteacher, Dan Carter, and Chair of Board, Guy Stobart, both agree to a school dog ("Bernie") working in the school.

3.2 Only the school dog ("Bernie") is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless the Headteacher has approved their presence prior to the visit.

3.3 Bernie is a cross between a St Bernard and a Springer Spaniel and has been selected because of his extremely calm temperament who is very sociable and friendly.

3.4 Bernie's legal owner is Christine Carter. Christine Carter has full responsibility for the welfare of the school dog and all expenses relating to pet insurance, food and other expenses and ensuring that the dog is vaccinated, wormed and flea treated.

3.5 The Headteacher, Dan Carter, has worked with the Deputy Headteacher to produce a risk assessment that has been approved by the Safeguarding Lead and this will be reviewed annually.

3.6 The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Dan Carter or other members of the school's leadership team.

3.7 The school's liability insurance covers the school for risk related to a working dog on site. The Finance Manager has responsibility for ensuring this remains on the school's policy during Bernie's time working at LPW School.

3.8 Staff, parents and students will be informed that a dog will be in school.

3.9 Parents can indicate that their child is not allowed to work with Bernie by emailing nbishop@lpw.org.uk or calling 0117 907 4500 to inform the Headteacher's office.

3.10 The presence of a school dog will sign posted to visitors at reception and the school website. Reception staff will relay visitor issues to a member of SLT as soon as possible.

4 Code of Conduct

4.1 Staff Responsibilities

4.1.1 The Headteacher will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.

4.1.2 If the dog is ill he will not be allowed into school. Mr Carter has responsibility for ensuring appropriate alternative care for Bernie if he is not able to be in the school on a given day.

4.1.3 Bernie will be kept in the Headteacher's office when not interacting with students.

4.1.4 Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near Bernie. The SENCo Assistant keeps a list of all students and staff with a reported allergy to dogs and ensures that all staff know who these are.

4.1.5 Staff leading sessions with Bernie have a responsibility to ensure all staff, students or visitors present are happy for Bernie to enter the room.

4.1.6 Students must never be left alone with Bernie and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.

4.1.7 Students will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog before any interaction during a session or visit.

4.1.8 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. If the dog is displaying any warning signs such as growling or flattening of his ears, he should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment by an appropriate member of staff.

4.1.11 Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by the Headteacher or another member of SLT.

4.2 Student Responsibilities

4.2.1 Students whose parents have withdrawn consent are not allowed to work with Bernie.

4.2.2 Students should be careful to stroke Bernie on her body, chest, back and not by her face or top of head.

4.2.3 Students are not allowed to approach Bernie or disturb her whilst she is sleeping or eating.

4.2.4 Students are not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.

4.2.5 Students must always wash their hands after handling / stroking Bernie.

4.2.6 Students understand that any deliberate violence or threatening behaviour towards Bernie will result in a fixed term exclusion.

5 The School Dog – Bernard (aka Bernie)

