



# OLD BEXLEY CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Love God ♦ Love Each Other ♦ Love Learning

*Happy Children and Limitless Learning in an Anglican Christian School  
A place where everyone can flourish*

Reviewed	Agreed by Staff	Agreed by Governors	Review date
September 2025	September 2025	September 2025	September 2026

*At Old Bexley CE Primary School, we aim to provide the best possible education for each child within the context of a caring Christian community.*

*Our school values are the Fruit of the Spirit – Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Goodness, Kindness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-Control (Galatians 5: 22-23) These values promote inclusion, respect and empathy whilst our broad and balanced curriculum inspires aspirational, lifelong learners. They underpin all aspects of school life, including behaviour and relationships within the school.*

## DOGS IN SCHOOL

### Introduction

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.

### 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 dog. Therefore, it is just another risk that needs to be managed.

### School Policy

The Chair of Governors, Julie Bowen, has agreed that the school can have selected dogs in school. The school works in partnership with Pets as Therapy and is visited by Suzi, a 4-year old black Labrador/Retriever and her owner Stephen. Suzi helps children in KS2 to increase their confidence in reading twice a week.

The school's policy is as follows:

- Staff have been informed, through staff briefings, that the school will have a dog. Parents have been informed by letter that the dog will be in school.
- Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog.
- If the dog is unwell she will not be allowed in school.

- The dog will be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will always be under the full control and supervision of her trained adult.
- Children must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times when the dog is present with children.
- Children should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around a 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 put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up.
- Children should never go near or disturb the dog if it is sleeping or eating. Children must not be allowed to play too roughly with the dog.
- If the dog is surrounded by a large number of people, the dog could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that he/she monitors the situation.
- Dogs express their feelings through body language. Growling or baring of teeth indicate that the dog is feeling 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 she should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
- Children should not feed, or eat close to the dog.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog. As a school we provide anti-bacterial gel.
- Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by an adult.
- Any child with a phobia/allergy will not be obligated to come into contact with the dog. Individual support plans will be put in to place when appropriate.

### **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, children, 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:

- Improve academic skills
- Increase literacy skills
- Calming behaviours
- Increase social skills and self-esteem
- Increase confidence
- Teach responsibility and respect to life
- Help prevent truancy
- 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

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. Student behaviour improved towards teachers, and students also showed more confidence and responsibility. Additionally, parents reported that children seemed more interested as a result of having a dog in 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 students social skills and responsibility. Specifically, with a dog in the classroom, 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 student also learns about responsibility, caring and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog in school.

#### As a reward

Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for students. Those students who have performed incredibly well during the week or those who have achieved tasks set for them, may be rewarded by 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-to-one basis and will especially help students who have been bullied, abused, going through upsetting/difficult times or are even scared/phobic of dogs. The dog will bring much joy and help to all 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.

### Reading

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-judgemental, 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 interpersonal skills among the students they mix with. Bullying can be a problem in schools with students anxious about school for fear of taunting and abuse. Researchers report that students can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel.