



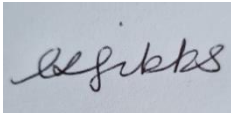
## Having a Dog in School Policy and Rationale

Date: September 2025

Review date: September 2027

Signed:  (Chair of Governors)

Val Male

Signed:  (Headteacher)

Claire Gibbs

# Scout Gibbs (School dog)



Introduction

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a suitable calm dog.

In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with animals. By having a school dog we want to encourage those children specifically who are vulnerable, or those who are less confident socially or academically, by having a friendly audience to listen to them, whether that is through reading to, or just spending time with a dog.

The breed of dog was carefully selected; lively, perky and lovable, whilst gentle, playful and affectionate, they are excellent with children. The dog is well cared for and responsibly owned by staff members.

### **Is there a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment?**

This policy shows how we have thought carefully about school life with a pet dog and how, through careful management, there is a very low risk of harm.

#### **Context**

- The dog is owned by Mrs Gibbs
- Vet costs will be paid by Mrs Gibbs, with the exception of non-essential vet costs
  - The breeds are chosen for their mild temperament.
- The Head teacher and Governors have agreed that a dog will bring many benefits to Margaret Wix
  - The vast majority of pupils are very keen to have a small dog on site. Where there are any concerns or fears expressed by individuals, a care plan will be put in place
    - The risk assessment will be reviewed annually
  - When visitors and pupils arrive at school they will be advised of the presence of the dog
- The dog will be trained as a therapy dog; the cost of specialist training will be borne by the school.

#### **Day to Day Management**

**The dog will:** • Not be allowed in school if unwell

- Be carried or kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or when on a walk
  - Be under the full control and supervision of an adult at all times
    - Be fully 'house' trained
  - Have had all injections prior to joining Margaret Wix
    - Never be taken off site by pupils

**Pupils will:** • NOT have sole responsibility for, or be left alone with the dog

- Be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog every time they meet her:

- ♣ Always remain calm around the dog
- ♣ Do not make sudden movements, do be gentle
- ♣ Do not stare into the dog's eyes (could be interpreted as a threat)
- ♣ Do not put your face near the dog
- ♣ Always approach the dog standing up
- ♣ Do not disturb the dog when it is eating or sleeping
- ♣ Do not eat close to the dog and never feed the dog
- Learn about how dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring of teeth indicates that a 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.

### **Health and Safety principles**

Children will always wash their hands after handling the dog. Any dog 'mess' will be cleaned up immediately and disposed of appropriately by an adult. Children must never attempt to do this.

Should a bite (even playfully) occur:

1. Parents will be contacted immediately
2. The wound will be cleaned and covered with a sterile, non-sticky dressing
3. The child/adult will be released for medical attention
4. All relevant staff will be informed
5. A full investigation into the circumstances will be led by a Senior Leader.
6. The suitability of the dog will be reassessed by the governors.

### **Reasons to have a dog in school**

Some anecdotes Reading Programmes Reading programmes with dogs are doing wonders for some pupils. 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 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, pupils find social support and peer interaction. Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have pupils 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-judgement, 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 making amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. Research has proved that students who

read to dogs shown and increase in reading levels, work recognition, and desire to read and write and an increase in intrapersonal skills.

### **Attendance**

Children with low attendance or punctuality can be encouraged to come in by timetabling 'dog time' first time in the morning, etc. Some schools are using dogs to improve behaviour problems by promoting positive behaviour in pupils.

### **Social Development**

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching pupils social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help older pupils build self-esteem, learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility and boundaries. With a dog in the classroom, pupils 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 school dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care.

### **Reward**

As a Reward Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the pupils. Those pupils who have performed/behaved incredibly well in a week or have made excellent progress, could be rewarded by spending some of lunchtime or break time with the dog. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities pupils will be allowed to undertake.

### **Support Dogs**

Dogs can work with pupils on a one-to-one basis and will especially help those pupils who have been bullied, abused, bereaved, or are going through a particularly difficult time or even if they are scared of dogs. The dog will bring much joy and support to all the pupils that interact with him. Pupils who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

### **Risk Assessment**

The value of pet 'therapy' is widely accepted as a powerful aid to stimulation and communication. Studies have shown that the presence of companion animals can improve the well-being of children and lower the rate of anxiety, simply by making the environment happier, more enjoyable and less forbidding.

It is accepted that interacting with animals is not appropriate for all children but for some it has the potential to provide many positive benefits. Any parent who does not want their child to interact with Scout is invited to write to Mrs Gibbs and inform her of their wishes. There are no diseases associated with the puppy as her vet will be responsible for vaccinations, including rabies

and completing regular health checks and necessary treatment. A copy of Scout's health records will be updated and kept in school. Scout will also be insured.

The risk assessment below is a working document and will be checked annually by key staff and the governing body.

KEY: 1- Low risk    2    3 -Medium risk of injury    4    5-High risk of injury

Hazard	Risk	Risk 1 - 5	Controls in place	Review date
Dog getting over excited when interacting with children.	<p>Child knocked to the ground.</p> <p>Child scratched by dog.</p> <p>Child bitten by dog.</p>	<p>1</p> <p>3</p> <p>2</p>	<p>The dog will always be in the care of a responsible adult and will never be allowed to roam freely around the school premises.</p> <p>Children will not be left unsupervised with the dog.</p> <p>The dog will always be on a lead or carried when she is not in the school office while the children are in school.</p> <p>Pupils have been and will continue to be taught about the consequences of their actions.</p> <p>Education of this nature is continually given to children, and often to the whole school through assemblies and PSHE sessions.</p> <p>Pupils will be taught what to do to prevent the dog from chasing them.</p> <p>The dog will undergo formal training from the age of 4 months with an experienced dog trainer. Selected children will be part of this process.</p> <p>Risk of scratching and biting will reduce, and the risk assessment will be reviewed as she progresses through her weekly training.</p> <p>All staff will have been introduced to the dog and expectations of having a school dog.</p> <p>The dog will attend the vets regularly to ensure she is in good health and that her claws are kept short.</p>	Annually
The dog causing allergies.	Children or staff have allergic reactions	1	<p>Parents have been asked to inform the school of any known allergies before the introduction of the dog to the school.</p> <p>A list of any children/staff who should not interact with the dog will kept in school.</p> <p>The children will have the opportunity to interact with the dog as they wish and those with allergies will be able to opt out of interaction.</p>	

			Children will be taught to wash their hands after active participation with the dog	
Children getting germs from the dog.	Children or staff will contract diseases that can be carried by dogs.	1	<p>Should the dog defecate on the school site a member of staff will clear this up immediately and dispose of it in a safe way.</p> <p>She will be trained to toilet in an area of the grounds that children have limited access to. The area will be disinfected as required.</p> <p>All immunisations are kept up to date in accordance with the European Pet Passport Scheme and a record will be kept of this.</p> <p>Flea treatment is carried out monthly.</p> <p>The dog will not be allowed in the school dining hall at mealtimes; and never in the food preparation area.</p>	
Financial cost of the dog's upkeep.	School unable to afford the ongoing cost of the Scout's day to day upkeep or medical bills.	1	<p>The dog is ultimately the responsibility of Mrs Gibbs both in a well-being and financial aspect.</p> <p>Scout will be insured by the school, for Public Liability Insurance.</p> <p>All vets costs are covered by Mrs Gibbs.</p> <p>Puppy training and support in school will be provided by a qualified professional.</p>	