



School Dog Policy 2024

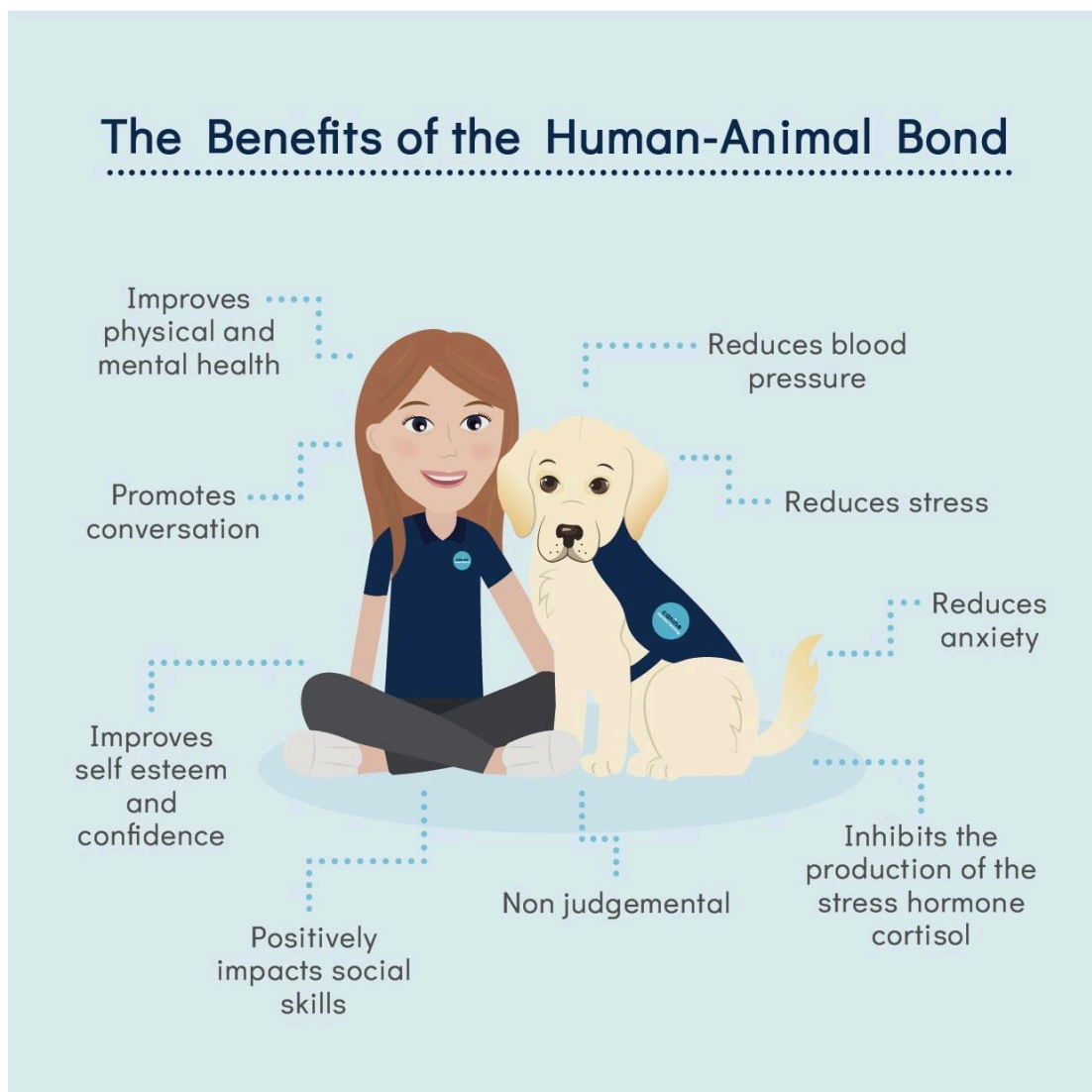
Introduction:

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally through direct contact with a dog.

It can increase knowledge and understanding of responsibility and facilitate the development of both empathy and nurturing skills. In addition to these benefits; children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

Any form of interaction with an animal can create a risk however; these risks can be managed through the use of a thorough risk assessment. A risk assessment has been carried out and is available for all staff and visitors to see.

Dogs are not allowed anywhere on the school site at any time unless specifically authorised by the proprietor. This includes drop off and collection times. This policy outlines measures put in place to allow the school dog to be present.



Research:

In summary, academic research has shown that dogs working and helping in the school environment can achieve the following:

- Improve academic achievement
- Increase literacy skills
- Decrease anxiety
- Enable the development of calm behaviours
- Increase social skills and self-esteem
- Increase confidence
- Teach responsibility and respect for all living creatures
- Improve attendance

Behaviour

In some schools, dogs are making a difference in the behaviour of children. Researchers report that students can identify with animals and, with empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel.

Some schools are using dogs to improve behaviour difficulties by promoting positive behaviour in children. In one study children's behaviour improved toward teachers, and the children 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.

Education

Reading programmes with dogs are doing wonders for some children. 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," children find social support and peer interaction. Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have children 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 children 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 children social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help older children build self-esteem; learn about positive

and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Older children use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower children.

With a dog in 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 classroom 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 part of the school's reward programme

Dogs are often gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for children. Children, who have earned rewards during the week can choose a reward that could include walking, grooming, playing and training with the dog at designated times. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem.

Guidelines:

Skye, the school's current school dog is owned by Fiona D'Arcy.

- Only a designated school dog is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless specific permission has been granted by the Head of Learning. This includes any dog designated as an emotional support dog or therapy dog.
- Staff, parents and all students are aware that Hope Tree School has a school dog. A risk assessment is available and will be reviewed annually.
- Staff, visitors and students known to have allergic reactions to dogs should not interact with the dog.
- All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school.
- If the dog is unwell, she will not be allowed into school.
- Students must never be left alone with the dog and there must be an appropriate adult present at all times.
- All students will participate in opportunities to learn about dog behaviour and how to behave around her.
- All students should remain calm around the dog. Approach calmly and allow the dog to see and hear that they are there.
- Students should not put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up.
- Students should never go near or disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating.
- Students should not play rough games with the dog. The dog has specific games which she enjoys and all students will be encouraged to play these specific games only.
- Human food is sometimes harmful to dogs and as such the dog should not be given any human food. The dog has a range of treats that can be given under supervision and for specific tasks.
- Students are encouraged to stroke the dog on her body, chest, back and not on her face.
- Students will be encouraged to wash their hands following interaction with the dog.

- Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.
- Parents will be consulted on allowing their child access to the dog and the consent form signed (consent form in Appendix B)
- All visitors will be informed about the dog and related protocols on arrival and any concerns (allergy etc) will be relayed to the Head of Learning.
- The Head of Pastoral Care will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.
- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of the Head of Pastoral Care.

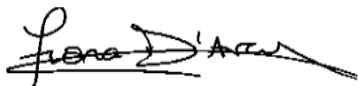
Any concerns about the school dog can be reported to the Head of Pastoral Care, who will investigate these concerns in line with this policy.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Head of Learning has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in school. All staff are responsible for implementing this policy. Teachers, staff, students, 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.

Signer 

Head of Learning



Head of Pastoral Care

Date: March 2024

Review Date: March 2025

Appendix A

School Dog: Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?

A: Skye's legal owner is Fiona D'Arcy and she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support insurance and staff training costs where appropriate.

Q: Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

A: Yes, Skye came from a family home where both parents were seen and was specifically chosen for her temperament.

Q: Where will the dog be in school?

A: Skye has a bed in the main learning area and spends most of her time there. She also likes to be outside whenever possible although she doesn't like it when it is raining.

Q: Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

A: Yes, a risk assessment is available for all to read and is available on request.

Q: Who is responsible for training?

A: Skye has attended many training sessions since being a pup. She is able to perform many basic behavioural requests on command in addition to receiving specific specialist training for some tasks. All her training is the responsibility of Fiona D'Arcy

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

A: In the interest of health and hygiene, Skye has been trained to toilet on command. She has a designated toileting area on site which is separate to any areas used by children. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed.

Q: How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A: Skye has lived in a family home all her life and is well used to interacting with children. She is a highly intuitive dog who is naturally able to detect distress and can often offer a cuddle voluntarily in these circumstances. She also enjoys working and thrives on learning new things.

Skye 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.

Skye will have access to water at all times. Skye's welfare is of paramount importance and will always be prioritised.

Q: How will this be managed where children have allergies?

A: Skye has a short coat which is groomed regularly. Any student who has a known allergy to dogs will not be able to interact with her directly, which will relieve the possibility of an allergic reaction. Where possible we would work with parents to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies.

Q: My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?

A: Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with her unless permission for this has been given. Any student who is fearful of dogs and wishes to change this can have a specific programme designed by the Head of Pastoral Care in order to address the fear and develop lifelong skills to manage fear and anxiety.

Appendix B:

Parental consent for the handling of the school dog:

Skye, the school dog, will be onsite every day unless she is unwell or a whole day school trip is planned.

Please indicate below that your child has permission to:

- | | Yes | No |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| • work with Skye | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| • handle Skye | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| • care for Skye | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| • walk Skye with a member of staff | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Does your child have any known allergy to dogs? **Yes** **No**

If yes, please give details:

Does your child have any known fears relating to dogs? **Yes**

If yes, please give details:

Date of your child's last tetanus injection?

Students will be supervised at all times and expected to follow instructions from staff. Whilst every care is taken to prevent accidents, animals are unpredictable and injuries such as scratches may occur.

Student's name:

Signed (Parent/carer):

Date: