

RBA Dog Policy (2021)

To be reviewed Spring Term 2023



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?

Yes there is. It is a risk that needs to be managed. A thorough risk assessment has been carried out (see Appendix 3).

SCHOOL POLICY

- The RBA school dog is called Honey and is owned by Mrs Booth. During the school day Honey will be based in the back office in the Pupil Support Room. Pupils will not be allowed access to her unless consent is given by parent/guardian and it is for a specific pastoral intervention.
- Only the school dog is allowed on the premises.
- The dog is a Cavapoo. She chosen because it is an intelligent breed that will respond well to training and which is known to be good with children. She is very sociable and friendly and she is also a hypo allergenic breed that is well known to be good with families with allergies.
- Staff, parents and children have been informed by newsletter, email and parentmail that a dog will be in school. A risk assessment has been produced and this will be reviewed annually.
- Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog. All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school.
- If the dog is ill she will not be allowed into school.
- The dog will be kept on a lead when moving around the school site or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of an adult.
- Children must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Children 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 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.
- Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog. Everyone must wait until Honey is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking him.
- 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 the dog should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment. Children should not eat close to the dog.

- Children should stroke the dog on its body, chest or back and not its face or top of the head.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling the dog.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned up immediately and disposed of appropriately.
- Parents can opt out of their child having contact with the school dog either by telephone call or email to the school. We will record names of pupils who are not to have contact. This will be kept in the Pastoral office and shared with RBA staff.
- All visitors will be informed about the dog and related protocols on arrival and office staff will relay visitor issues to the Principal asap.
- Appropriately trained staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog.
- The office 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 pastoral staff.
- If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to the Principal or a Deputy as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by the Principal.
- The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in School.
- The Principal along with Mrs Booth, Mr Calmels, Mrs Doe, Mrs Chapman and Mrs Stevens is responsible for implementing this policy.
- Teachers, staff, pupils, 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.

Please see the following appendices for more information.

APPENDIX 1 – Benefits of having a dog in school.

APPENDIX 2 – Frequently Asked Questions

APPENDIX 3 – Risk Assessment

APPENDIX 1

BENEFITS OF HAVING A DOG IN SCHOOL

In summary, having a dog working and helping in the school environment we would like to achieve the following:

- Improve academic achievement
- Increase literacy skills
- Calming behaviours
- Increase social skills and self-esteem
- Increase confidence
- Teach responsibility and respect to all life
- Help prevent truancy and improve attendance
- Motivate children who are often less attentive

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Having a dog would allow us to work towards section 3 of the: *'Secure outstanding personal development, pupil behaviour and welfare for all in the school community'*. She could help with *'pastoral support and well-being to be the highest priority for the whole community (pupils and staff)'*.

COGNITIVE

Companionship with a dog stimulates memory, problem solving and game playing.

BEHAVIOURAL

Behaviour problems occur in school and these can interfere with learning. We would hope that by having a dog in school we would see a difference in the behaviour of pupils in terms of improved attitude toward teachers, and pupils also showed more confidence and responsibility. If pupils can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can hopefully better understand how classmates may feel.

SOCIAL

A dog provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, encourages responsibility, wellbeing and focused interaction with others. After experiencing unconditional love and trust from a dog we would expect to see enhanced relationships with peers and staff. Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching pupil's social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, teach kindness, responsibility, and boundaries. With a dog in school, pupils have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Involving students in the daily care of school dog is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The pupils also learn about responsibility, caring, and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school.

EMOTIONAL

A school dog improves self-esteem, acceptance from others and lifts mood, often provoking laughter and fun. Dogs can also teach compassion and respect for other living things as well as relieving anxiety. Pupils would learn how to express their feelings and enter into more trusting relationships.

Pupils encouraged to gently pat or talk to the dog to teach sensitive touch and to help them to be calm and promotes provides tactile stimulation.

ENVIRONMENTAL

A dog increases the sense of a family environment, being part of something, another purpose for coming to school. Some of these benefits listed above will continue for the young person long after the school day is over.

It will hopefully also boost the pupil's connection to the school environment.

ACADEMIC

Reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop their literacy skills and build confidence in reading. 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. Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud. This activity can create a calming effect on the pupil, the dog will listen to the pupil read with no judgement or criticism and they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. This in turn creates an environment where a pupil's enthusiasm for reading can grow and also develop the confidence to read aloud. The dog will be able to support reluctant readers.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Pupils will have opportunity to walk the dog on school grounds with supervision from one of the pastoral staff. This would be on rota basis. This in turn would allow for a potential improvement in pupils attendance as they have a responsibility to the dog.

ATTENDANCE

We would see an improvement in attendance for pupils given some additional responsibility regarding the dog. It is also another reason for the pupil to want to come to school.

SPORTING

The dog will become a school mascot and attend some of the school's sporting fixtures.

TRANSITION

The dog will be part of the year 4 - year 5 transition process. Pupils who need extra support and visits with regard to the step up would be able to spend time with the dog on their visits

SCHOOL & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The dog will become part of school and local community and would be able to attend open evenings, parents evenings, winter and summer fayres as well as representing the school at local community events. The dog would be able to attend the Young Carers group that RBA run in conjunction with Central Bedfordshire Council. The dog could be part of the whole school photos. The dog will have their own section of the newsletter and possibly a social media account as a way of getting pastoral information out to parents and pupils.

REWARD SYSTEM

Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the students. Those students 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, will be rewarded with spending time to interact with the dog. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities students will be allowed to undertake. It could also be an incentive for positive behaviour or any form of pupil achievement. Pastoral awards could be introduced for a variety of things, fundraising, helping out, effort, could be linked to random acts of kindness. These awards could be 'from' the school dog.

OVERCOMING PHOBIAS

There are pupils who do have dog phobias, a school dog and careful de-sensitisation programme could help to reduce some of these fears.

APPENDIX 2

SCHOOL DOG FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

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

The legal owner of Honey will be Mrs Booth and her family. She will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support insurance and staff training costs where appropriate.

Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

Yes. The dog is from a home where both parents were seen and has been specifically chosen for its temperament.

Will the dog be a distraction?

When in school the dog will be based in the pupil support room. This is a separate building away from the main area of the school. She will have access to quiet space & in the back office of pupil support for some 'chill' time! Honey will always be accompanied by an adult and will never be on their own with a pupil. The dog will also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation, following consultation with staff beforehand.

Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog and a reputable dog behaviourist.

Who is responsible for training?

Mrs Booth, as the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for Honey's training. Appropriate professional training will be obtained and the dog will work towards being trained as a school dog through www.petsastherapy.co.uk

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

In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks in the grounds. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed.

How will the dog's welfare be considered?

Honey will be well looked after. She will live with Mrs Booth who will bring the dog in to school daily. She will undergo puppy training classes. Honey will be fully vaccinated will visit the vet regularly for all the necessary injections as well as regular check-ups. She will also be regularly groomed and is fully insured. If Honey is unwell for any reason she will stay at home with a babysitter! She will be walked fed, and hydrated during the day. She will have access to a quiet area in the back office of for pupil support where she will be able to have 'quiet time'.

How will this be managed where children have allergies?

We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for children and adults that are allergic to dogs. Individual needs will always be met and we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies. The breed of dog is known for minimal moulting, and is given a high quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

It is completely understandable that there will be some concerns about possible allergic reactions to a school dog. Honey will be subjected to a very thorough cleanliness and grooming regime. She is also a hypo allergenic breed that is well known to be good with families with allergies. Honey will only work with pupils who have voluntarily expressed an interest to do and after discussion with the pastoral team as to whether it would be a beneficial intervention. Permission would be sought in advance to any contact. Honey will be based in pupil support which is separate from the main areas of the school.

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

Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with it unless permission for this has been given. We hope to work closely with parents of children who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.

Some children may have had upsetting or traumatic experiences and therefore be fearful of dogs (or indeed other animals). The dog will only come into contact with pupils whose parents have given their permission. The dog will be based in a secure room within the pupil support unit. This is away from the main part of the school. The dog joined RBA as a puppy and has grown up in the school environment surrounded by children. Experience and research have shown that, with proper guidance, handling and time, children can learn to overcome their fear of animals and gain a greater appreciation for them.

Author and Date

Author: Danny Calmels and Helen Booth

Date: Reviewed May 2021

Changes to page 2 – opting out.

APPENDIX 3 – RISK ASSESSMENT

Assessment conducted by: Helen Booth/ Danny Calmels.	Job title: Class teacher/Pastoral Support Manager	Covered by this assessment: All staff, students and visitors
Date of assessment: 19 th May 2021	Review interval: Annually	Date of next review: 19 th May 2023

Related documents
Health and Safety Policy

Risk rating		Likelihood of occurrence		
		Probable	Possible	Remote
Likely impact	Major Causes major physical injury, harm or ill-health.	Low	Medium	Medium
	Severe Causes physical injury or illness requiring first aid.	Low	Medium	High
	Minor Causes physical or emotional discomfort.	Medium	High	High

Issue	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No	Recommended further actions to be taken to reduce risks	By whom	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
Health – diseases and parasites	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dog has a designated handler who is in charge of feeding and caring for the dog while on school premises, ensuring there is a supply of fresh water available. The handler is responsible for permitting people to touch the dog. The dog is permitted only in outside areas, Pastoral office or other areas of school for 	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dog will go to the vet for a regular check-up, to identify whether the dog has any transmittable diseases. On hot days, the handler will ensure there is appropriate provision in place to 	Pastoral Staff	Ongoing	L

Issue	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No	Recommended further actions to be taken to reduce risks	By whom	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
		<p>certain events and always with a handler. The area is kept clean and secure for the wellbeing of the animal, students, staff and visitors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dog is given no opportunity to come into contact with wild rodents on or off the school premises. The dog is fully inoculated 		<p>keep the dog cool, and ensure the dog avoids too much activity during the hottest part of the day.</p>			
Hygiene	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dog is suitably toilet trained. The designated area for the dog to defecate, (behind the pastoral block), is situated away from students and staff. All faeces are immediately picked up by the handler, using a clinical waste bag, and disposed of into the clinical waste bin. The handler immediately washes their hands with sufficient soap and water after picking up faeces. Any soiled dog bedding is immediately disposed of in sealed clinical waste bags, and into the clinical waste bin. The handler takes the dog's bedding home regularly to wash it. Any students/staff/visitors who touch the dog are advised to wash their hands afterwards, and sufficient hand washing provision is provided throughout the school. 	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the dog is ill with an infection or disease, it will not return to the school until it has recovered. Hand sanitiser is provided for anyone who touches the dog. 	Pastoral Staff	Ongoing	L

Issue	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No	Recommended further actions to be taken to reduce risks	By whom	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anyone touching the dog, who has an exposed wound, must have the wound suitably covered. 					
Bites and scratches	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dog has grown up in the school environment and as such, has been trained well, and is used to coming into close contact with people. It has also undergone a training course for therapy dogs (when puppy/dog is an appropriate age). Students/staff/visitors around the dog are closely supervised by the handler. Students/staff/visitors are advised not to put their face close to the dog. The dog is prohibited from roaming freely around the school without the supervision of the handler. 	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students/staff/visitors are only permitted to stroke the dog during allocated time-slots – break and lunchtime or when the dog is required for therapy for significant anxiety/depression The dog is provided with a place it can go to get away from people. 	Pastoral Staff	Ongoing	L
Minor injuries related to dog housing and equipment	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All dog bedding/housing is regularly checked for defects. All dog equipment is stored (in Pastoral Office) when not in use. The dog's food and water bowls are kept out of the path of people to avoid any trips. Any spillages from the dog's bowl are wiped up immediately. 	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All dog bedding/housing is replaced annually. 	Pastoral Staff	Ongoing	L
Allergies	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dog breed is hypoallergenic and as such this will limit any allergic reactions to the dog dander 	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A supply of antihistamine tablets is kept in student services 	Pastoral Staff / Medical	Ongoing	L

Issue	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No	Recommended further actions to be taken to reduce risks	By whom	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students and staff known to have allergies to animals have restricted access to the dog. All students and staff are advised not to touch their face after touching the dog. All students/staff/visitors are advised to wash their hands thoroughly after touching the dog. 		in the unlikely event someone has an allergic reaction.	Staff		
Phobias	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students and staff known to have a phobia of dogs are given restricted access to the dog. The dog is prohibited from roaming freely around the school without the supervision of the handler. 	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During busy times, such as breaks and time between lessons when lots of students and staff will be coming past the dog, the dog will be kept in its area in pastoral or in a large space (field) so can easily be avoided. 	Pastoral Staff	Ongoing	L

