



# The Trafalgar School

at Downton

## School Dog Policy

<b>Date of Last Review:</b>	01/05/2021	<b>Review Period:</b>	Bi-Annually
<b>Date of Next Review:</b>	01/05/2023	<b>Owner:</b>	Headteacher
<b>Ratified by LGB:</b>	Ratified 17 <sup>th</sup> June 2021		

## **Policy Statement**

Studies show the presence of a pet, in this case a dog (“Boo”), in school has a number of beneficial effects on both students and staff. The Trafalgar School at Downton has a school dog who works with our students to improve student behaviour, wellbeing and education. This policy is designed to set out to students, parents and visitors the benefits for having a school dog and the 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.

## **The Benefits of a school dog**

- A dog provides companionship and a friendly welcome to school
- A dog enriches the curriculum
- Students with no exposure to animals or nature in their home environment can see, feel, touch and make connections to the wider world of animals.
- Observing and caring for an animal instils a sense of responsibility and respect for life.
- A dog brings increased sensitivity and awareness of the feelings and needs of others— both animals and humans.
- Students learn that all living things need more than just food and water for survival.
- Students will see directly how their behaviour and actions affect others.

## **Wellbeing**

Studies show that many children and adults turn to their pets for emotional well-being, with 40% of children choosing pet companionship when feeling down. Children were also found to seek out their pets when feeling tired, upset, scared or lonely.

- Pets are good for morale, and teach children about relationships and about the needs of another living being – learning to care for a pet helps them to learn how to care for people.
- Pets encourage nurturing
- Pets build self-esteem and reduce anxiety
- Helping to take care of a pet gives a person a sense of pride and accomplishment, especially when the pet returns the affection
- Pets teach responsibility
- Pets become friends
- A relationship with a pet can help to strengthen a child’s social skills, giving them the potential to do better in school.

## Health

Studies show that children from families with pets are better equipped to fight off infection than children from non-pet households, showing significantly higher levels of immune system performance. When school attendance records were compared side by side, researchers discovered that children with pets averaged more days at school every year than their pet-free counterparts.

## Education

*Literacy: "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

## Roles & Responsibilities

Only the school dog is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the Headteacher has approved their presence prior to the visit.

Boo is a Labrador, chosen because it is an intelligent breed that will respond well to training and which is known to be good with children, and is very sociable and friendly.

Boo's legal owner is Mr Curtis. Mr Curtis has full responsibility for her welfare and all expenses relating to pet insurance, food and other expenses and ensuring that the dog is vaccinated, wormed and flea treated.

Mr Curtis, the legal owner of Boo, has produced a risk assessment which has been approved by the Local Governing Body and this will be reviewed periodically.

Boo will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Mr Curtis or other trained staff members.

The Academy's liability insurance covers the school for risk related to a working dog on site.

Parents can indicate that their child is not allowed to be present with Boo by emailing the Headteacher – [Headspa@trafalgars.wilts.sch.uk](mailto:Headspa@trafalgars.wilts.sch.uk)

The presence of Boo will sign posted to visitors at Reception and at the Headteacher's Office.

Only staff trained to handle Boo in student sessions will have permission to do so.

Mr Curtis will know the whereabouts of Boo and which staff are supervising at all times.

If Boo is ill she will not be allowed into school.

Mr Curtis has responsibility for ensuring appropriate alternative care for Boo if she is not able to be in the school on a given day.

Mr Curtis is responsible for ensuring Boo is trained.

Boo must be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of a trained adult. Where it is deemed safe to do so she can be taken off the lead providing supervision is maintained at all times by an appropriate adult.

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

Boo will only visit designated therapy or reading lessons and not be allowed in other areas of the school.

Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near Boo.

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

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

Students will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around Boo before any interaction during a therapy session or visit.

If a dog is surrounded by a large number of children, a dog could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of Boo must ensure that s/he monitors the situation. If Boo is displaying any warning signs such as growling or flattening of her ears, she should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment by the trained staff member handling her.

Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by the trained dog handling staff only.

The Headteacher will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the Boo to better inform research into the benefits of a school dog.

Students whose parents have withdrawn consent are not allowed to attend dog therapy sessions.

## **Guidance for students**

- Always remain calm around dogs
- Avoid any sudden movements

- Avoid rough play
- Don't stare into a dog's eyes as this could be interpreted as a threat
- Don't put your face near a dog
- Always approach the dog standing up
- Do not disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating
- Don't eat close to the dog and never feed the dog your food or other food/treats without permission
- Always wash your hands after handling or stroking the dog

## **Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually.