



School Dog Policy

Oakridge CP School

Date of creation/review	Reason for review	Date of next review	Reviewer/approval body
November 2024		July 2025	Head Teacher/LGB

Rationale

Good mental health and wellbeing helps children and young people:

- Develop
- Attend school
- Engage in learning
- Fulfil their potential

DfE 2014 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/mental-health-and-wellbeing-support-in-schools-and-colleges>

There is ample evidence that interaction with pets – and dogs in particular – supports good mental health. We believe our pupils will benefit emotionally and educationally while developing empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog in school. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment and comfort through interacting with dogs particularly in times of personal and/or family crisis.

Is there a risk of bringing a dog into a school environment?

Yes there is, though there are a variety of accidents that can happen within a school environment which school manage effectively through risk assessment protocols. A school dog is just another risk that needs to be managed. A thorough risk assessment has been carried out and is included in this document (see appendix 2).

School Policy

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

- The governing body agree that having a school dog will benefit the children and staff of Oakridge CP School.
- A school dog is used for three main purposes when working with children in school. These are categorised as respite, reward for good work/behaviour and reading confidence work.
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- 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 been informed beforehand.
- There is a specific risk assessment in place which is reviewed annually (appendix 2).

The School Dog

- The school dog – hereby referred to as Whisper – is owned by Mrs S. Wilson who is responsible for her ongoing training, health and insurance.

- Whisper has been trained and certified as a Pets as Therapy dog.
- Whisper – a labrador retriever- is chosen because: she sheds little hair, is an intelligent breed that responds well to training, is known to be good with children and is very sociable and friendly.
- If Whisper is ill she will not be allowed into school
- The dog is included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Mrs Wilson.
- Any dog foul is cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.

Appropriate Adults

- Whisper is always under the full control and supervision of an appropriate adult when not in her bed in the Headteacher's office.
- For the purpose of this policy an 'appropriate adult' is someone who has experience of dogs, is known to Whisper and has been observed directing her by his trained appropriate adult (Mrs Wilson), who makes the final decision regarding their suitability.
- Staff maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog.
- Children are never left alone with the dog and there is appropriate adult supervision for all direct work.
- The office knows the whereabouts of the dog and which appropriate adult is supervising at all times.

Children

- Staff, parents and children are aware that a dog will be in school regularly and have the option to opt out of contact at any time.
- Parents are informed if their children will have direct access to the dog for personal sessions.
- Before each session children are reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around dogs:
 - They should remain calm around Whisper
 - They should not make sudden movements or play rough
 - They must never stare into Whisper's eyes as this could be threatening
 - They should not put their face near Whisper

- They should always approach her standing up
- They should never go near or disturb Whisper when she is sleeping or eating
- They should not eat close to Whisper
- They should always wash their hands after handling the dog and avoid touching their own mouth and eyes until after the session
- Everyone waits until Whisper is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking her.
- If Whisper is surrounded by a large number of children, she could become nervous and agitated. The appropriate adult monitors this and will adjust the session accordingly if needed.

Allergies

- Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog. The school maintains a list of pupils with known dog allergies based on information provided by parents/carers.
- All visitors are informed on arrival that there is a dog in school and of related protocols on arrival and office staff relay visitor issues to the Head Teacher or Teacher in Charge as soon as possible.

Dealing with concerns

If someone reports having an issue, this information must be passed to the Teacher in Charge as soon as possible. All concerns are responded to by the Teacher in Charge and a record made.

If this does not resolve the concern, the Headteacher will review the concern.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in School.

The Headteacher and Teacher in Charge are responsible for implementing this policy.

Teachers, staff, pupils, parents and visitors are required to abide by this policy.

The wider personal development curriculum supports learning about dogs and how best to behave around our dog. This includes highlighting that not all dogs are well-trained, and that caution must be used around unknown dogs outside school.

Appendix 1 – Frequently Asked Questions

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

Answer: The legal owner of the dog is Mrs Wilson; she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog.

Question: Will the dog be a distraction?

Answer: The dog will be kept in the Headteacher's office. The office is separate from the classrooms / playground area to ensure the dog only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision of an appropriate adult.

Question: Who is responsible for training?

Answer: Mrs Wilson is the legal owner of the dog and as a result, is responsible for its training. Appropriate professional training has been obtained.

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

Answer: In the interest of health and hygiene Whisper will be toileted when taken out for short walks on the fields. Only staff members will clear this away leaving no trace on the ground.

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

Answer: Whisper's welfare is very important to us. She will have regular walks and given free time outside. She is used to being alone for extended periods. While in the office, she will be provided with a comfortable bed and toys. Initially, she will be given time to get used to her new surroundings on transition days with Mrs Wilson. Her exposure to children will be gradually increased to develop her stamina. Mrs Wilson will monitor her wellbeing very carefully.

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

Answer: Children with dog allergies will not be exposed to Whisper nor will they be required to spend any time in areas she frequents. We are fortunate to have the space in school to allow for this. Staff already have experience of managing allergies at school and this will be no different for children and adults who 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.

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

Answer: Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children will not 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.

Appendix 2 -

HAZARD	WHO IS AFFECTED/AT RISK	RISK RATING (LOW, MEDIUM, HIGH)	ACTIONS/CONTROL MEASURES	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
Illness caused by the dog	Staff, pupils and visitors	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School dog is vaccinated, wormed, and treated for fleas • Dogs are groomed before the visit • All staff and pupils are required to wash their hands after contact with dogs • Appropriate adults clear up dog urine and faeces promptly and dispose of this safely – pupils are told to stay away • Dogs are not taken anywhere near food preparation areas and will not be allowed in the dining hall during dinner/snack time 	<p>Mrs S Wilson</p> <p>Appropriate adults</p>
Bites and scratches	Staff, pupils and visitors	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only trained, certified dogs are used as school dog • Dog's wellbeing is carefully monitored. Any increase in dog's stress level requires dog to be removed from stressful situation instantly • Children are trained in how to approach dog for instance not startling, not putting face near etc • Children are never left unsupervised with dog 	<p>Headteacher</p> <p>Appropriate adult(s)</p>

HAZARD	WHO IS AFFECTED/AT RISK	RISK RATING (LOW, MEDIUM, HIGH)	ACTIONS/CONTROL MEASURES	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
Allergies	Staff, visitors and pupils	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We seek parental permission for children to interact with dogs and ask for parents to identify if their child has known allergies • A list of any children and/or staff who should not interact with the dog is kept on display in the office • There is a poster in the school entrance asking visitors to alert office to any allergies • Alternative activities are provided in a separate room for those with allergies • Dog's access to areas within school is limited 	School administrator Teaching staff Appropriate adults
Phobias	Staff and pupils	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We seek parental permission for children to interact with dogs and ask for parents to identify if their child has a known phobia • List of these children in office • Contact with dogs is optional • Alternative activities are provided in a separate room for those with a phobia 	School administrator Teaching staff
Activities involving the dog	Staff, pupils, dogs and appropriate adults	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog only used for reward, respite and reading confidence • Appropriate adult(s) remain with dog at all times • Appropriate adult(s) set a limit for the number of children who can interact with dog at once • Appropriate adult(s) clean up urine and faeces • Appropriate adult(s) remove children who misbehave or upset dog • A time limit is set on activities as recommended by Mrs Wilson, so dog does not get tired 	Appropriate adults

HAZARD	WHO IS AFFECTED/AT RISK	RISK RATING (LOW, MEDIUM, HIGH)	ACTIONS/CONTROL MEASURES	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
Children misbehaving	Pupils, dogs and appropriate adults	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are told in advance what to expect and how to behave • Appropriate adult is present at all time during the intervention • Appropriate adult(s) are ready to remove children who misbehave or upset dog 	Appropriate adults
Damage caused to school materials, equipment and the school site	Dogs	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable toys provided • Dog to remain with appropriate adult at all times • Areas/classrooms are cleared as much as possible before dog's visit 	Appropriate adults