

St. Joseph's R.C. Primary School



Dogs in School Policy

January 2026

Review: January 2028

Introduction

St Joseph's RC Primary School fully believes in the benefits of having dogs in schools. 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. Children who read to dogs are less likely to be embarrassed reading aloud and find the experience less stressful. Research has proved that children who read to dogs show an increase in reading levels, word recognition, and a higher desire to read and write. Dogs are also useful when dealing with children's challenging behaviour, to either diffuse the situation or give a calming influence and something soothing to touch.

Health and Safety

There are a variety of accidents which can happen within the school environment which far exceed the number of injuries or incidents caused by a dog. Therefore, it is another risk that needs to be managed.

- St Joseph's has its own risk assessment related specifically to our school dog and this is reviewed on an annual basis.
- It will be made known on the school office entrance and the school's website that the school have a dog.
- Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions will be made aware of the dog's presence, so that precautions can be taken to prevent reactions. If there is planned contact for a child with the dog, antihistamines (supplied and written permission given by the parents/carers of the allergic child) may be administered to combat the allergy symptoms.
- If the dog is ill, it will not be allowed into school.
- The school dog will be based in the headteacher's office or the school office when Mrs Francis is teaching.
- When moving between classrooms or on a walk the dog will be under full control and supervision of an adult.
- Children will be aware of and reminded about appropriate behaviour around the dog. They should remain calm and not make sudden movements Children should never go near or disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating.
- Children must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times
- Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring 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, it should be immediately removed from the situation or environment.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling the dog.

- Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by an adult.
- The dog will have a designated place for using the toilet. This will be marked off to make everybody aware.
- Members of the school community will work closely with the Dogs Trust, receiving regular 'Be Dog Smart' training
- If Mrs Francis was to leave, the school dog would leave with her.

Incidents

1. If an incident or bite occurs (even playfully) parents will be contacted immediately.
2. If there is a wound it will be cleaned and covered with a sterile, non-sticky dressing.
3. The appropriate medical attention will be given.
4. All staff will be informed.
5. A full investigation will take place.
6. The suitability of having a dog will be reassessed by the senior leadership team.

Roles and Responsibilities

The headteacher and Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy and risk assessment for dogs in school.

The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy.

Teachers and staff are required to adhere to this policy.

The owner of the dog is financially responsible for all of the dog's care and is responsible for the dog outside of school hours. They are responsible for ensuring that the dog is vaccinated, wormed and flea treated and that the dog is insured providing public liability insurance cover.