



The Dog Mentor



Policy



Introduction

Children can benefit from educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility, empathy and nurturing skills through regular contact with a dog. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

The school has full knowledge of the Animal Welfare Act (2006) and works within its guidelines at all times.

The Dog Mentor Programme UK

The use of dogs in school is part of the recognised Dog Mentor UK Programme. More information can be found at <https://www.thedogmentor.co.uk/>

The dogs that are placed in schools have all undergone The Dog Mentor initial training and will work towards further awards within this programme. By working towards and gaining the awards, the dogs are maintaining the high quality expected of Dog Mentors.

Q) Is there a risk to bringing a dog into a school environment?

The simple answer is yes. However, there a variety of other situations that can happen in the school environment which far exceed the number of injuries/risks that can be caused by a dog. Therefore, it is just another risk that needs to be mitigated. A thorough risk assessment has been carried out and can be accessed by all stakeholders upon request.

Dogs are only permitted on the school site at any time unless specifically authorised by the Head Teacher or most senior member of school staff. This includes drop off and collection times. The Dog Mentor has been assessed and this policy outlines the mitigation that has been put in place to allow the dog to be on site.

School Policy

The Dog Mentor will be owned by a member of school staff and reside with them in their family home.

The Dog Mentor will undergo a full training session and a thorough risk assessment is carried out by a third party (The Dog Mentor UK) and will be reviewed annually as a minimum.

The Dog Mentor has been chosen to work as a Dog Mentor in school because of its intelligence and personality. The Dog Mentor has been assessed as being a dog that will respond well to training, is good with children and is very sociable.

All stakeholders have been informed that a dog will be working in school.

The risk assessment carefully considers the needs of any member of the school community who has known allergies. All visitors will be informed that there is a dog on site prior to entering the building. If any visitor raised concerns, this will be reported to the most senior staff member on site and appropriate action will be taken. Visitors will be instructed about the need to follow the rules set in place for working with Dog Mentor.

The Dog Mentor will be slowly introduced to the school environment and the children and staff working within. The time that the Dog Mentor works in school will be gradually increased if this is deemed appropriate and suitable for the dog and school.

If the Dog Mentor is unwell at any time, they will not come into school.

The Dog Mentor will be kept on a lead when moving through the school building and will be under the full control of a trained member of staff.

On occasions where it is deemed appropriate, and only when training has been completed, the Dog Mentor may be granted 'right to roam' in certain designated areas and will still be accompanied by a trained adult or the dog owner.

Children will never be left alone with the Dog Mentor and there will always be an appropriate adult supervising.

Children and staff will be taught and reminded about what is deemed as appropriate behaviour around the Dog Mentor. This will be in line with the recommendations of the staff at The Dog Mentor UK. Children will be taught by way of an assembly which will be presented to them when the Dog Mentor is

first introduced to school, and it is recommended that this is then revisited at least termly.

Children will not be permitted to interact with the Dog Mentor when the dog is eating or sleeping.

The Dog Mentor will never be surrounded by large groups of children. No more than two children will place their hands on the dog at any one time. Interactions with the Dog Mentor will always be supervised by a trained adult.

The Dog Mentor's wellbeing will always be a priority. The dog handlers and the dog owner will continually monitor the Dog Mentor and will use their working knowledge of the animal to read the communication given out. If at any point, the Dog Mentor shows any sign of being upset or distressed, she will be withdrawn from the situation and given time to relax.

The Dog Mentor programme considers the dogs needs fully and will only continue to work in school if it is deemed that she is happy to be there. Positive reinforcement is at the heart of the Dog Mentor training programme and the training received by the dogs is reward-based.

The Dog Mentor will not be present when children are eating.

Children will be carefully guided on how to approach and stroke the Dog Mentor so that the dog's needs are always being considered.

School staff will carefully monitor and record any impact that the Dog Mentor has on the school community.

Dog foul will be disposed of carefully and in line with the guidance given on the Risk assessment. Staff members working with the Dog Mentor will be offered COSHH training to ensure that they have an understanding of the importance of handling and disposing of dog waste correctly.

Office staff will be made aware of when the Dog Mentor is on site. This ensures that, in the event of any emergency evacuation, the Dog Mentor will safely be removed from the environment provided this does not put any staff member at risk.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body hold the responsibility of ensuring that the school has written a policy for having a dog present in school.

The Head Teacher is responsible for implementing the policy in school.

Teachers, staff, parents and visitors are required to always abide by the policy.

The school curriculum will support the teaching and learning about dogs to enable children to improve their knowledge about animal welfare and the behaviour and care of dogs and animals as a whole. This education will include ensuring that children know that not all dogs are well-trained, and that caution should always be taken around unknown dogs outside school.

Policy Date: December 2024

Written By: The Dog Mentor Program

Checked By: Mrs Julia Norman

Review Date: December 2026

Appendix 1

Reasons for Having a Dog in School

Academic research has shown that dogs supporting in the school environment can achieve the following:

- 1) Improve academic achievement
- 2) Increase literary skills
- 3) Calm erratic/unwanted behaviours
- 4) Increase social skills and self-esteem
- 5) Improve confidence
- 6) Support the teaching of responsibility and respect for all. Life
- 7) Support the improvement of punctuality and attendance
- 8) Motivate children to learn
- 9) Increase pupil engagement

Appendix 2

How the school intends to include the Dog Mentor in the school curriculum (including the wider and hidden curriculum)

Behaviour

- Use of reward charts to support behaviour targets. Images of the Dog Mentor will be used on the reward charts as an anchor. Children who enjoy working with the Dog Mentor will be offered time with them as a reward.
- Dog Mentor class of the Week award will be presented to the class who are deemed to have displayed the best behaviour/ tidiest classroom.
- Dog Mentor posters will be displayed around school to promote the desired behaviours.
- Resources accessed from The Dog Mentor Sharepoint will be used to support children to regulate their behaviours
- Children can be referred to The Dog Mentor Programme and, if appropriate, will complete the programme with a designated staff member. Typically, this will consist of 2 x 30-minute sessions for 6 weeks.

Attendance

- Children who find it difficult coming into school each day will be given the opportunity to work with/support the Dog Mentor each morning.
- Children can benefit from Dog Mentor reward charts to support coming into school.
- Carefully designed Dog Mentor worksheet will be used to support the reintegration of children into school.
- Classes that improve attendance or win weekly/termly attendance can be rewarded by spending time with the Dog Mentor.

Education

- The Dog Mentors can support in all areas of the curriculum. Guidance about such opportunities is provided to staff during the initial training session.
- The Dog Mentor Sharepoint offers staff a wide range of resources that can support teaching and learning across the curriculum.
- The Dog Mentor can spend time in classrooms to support the motivation and reengagement of pupils in certain subjects.

- Dog Mentors can support reading development. Some children will find it easier to read aloud to a dog than they would to an adult or another child. Working with the Dog Mentor can therefore impact on reader confidence in children.
- Phonics resources related to the training of the Dog Mentor are available to support children during the early reading programmes.

Social & Emotional Development

- The Dog Mentor Programme is carefully designed to support the social and emotional development of children. The programme focuses on a range of learning theories and strategies to support children in developing their understanding of themselves. Children who are selected to work on the programme will learn about the importance of clear communication. They will be supported to learn and use language to understand and communicate their emotions. They will learn strategies to regulate themselves and understand that their emotions are human and normal but at times need to be managed to allow them to work and play alongside others.
- The school will ensure that the Dog Mentor is covered under Public Liability insurance and the dog owner will ensure that the Dog Mentor has personal pet insurance, and that the insurance company has been informed that the dog will be working in a school environment.

