



## BOWDEN HOUSE SCHOOL

### SCHOOL DOG POLICY

#### Introduction

A variety of animals, including dogs, are becoming an ever-popular and worthwhile addition to schools across the country. 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. We value the development of children's well-being along with their spiritual, moral and social education as highly as we value academic progress. We believe a school dog is a unique way to enrich all areas of children's wider education, skills and well-being.

Bowden House has introduced the use of a school dog into the emotional, well-being provision at school. This policy is designed to set out to students, parents/carers and visitors, the reasons for having a school dog at Bowden House.

#### The benefits of a school dog

School dogs have been proven to help improve behaviour, attendance and academic confidence, as well as increasing student understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills.

Listed below, are numerous benefits to having a dog in school.

- a school dog enables children to put our school values into practice: from friendship to patience, respect, love and happiness; each one of our values can be developed through and alongside a dog
- children with low attendance can be encouraged to come to school with the incentive of a meet and greet from the school dog
- with the UK dog population reaching 8.5 million, children and adults are bound to come in to contact with dogs at various points in their lives. Children without pet dogs have the opportunity to learn valuable life skills at school about how to safely interact with dogs when they are out and about
- with a dog to care for, children are more mindful of their behaviour. Incidents of running in corridors and shouting unnecessarily are reduced; they are generally more aware of the impact of their behaviour and choices

- as a focus or context for learning, the school dog can provide an excellent resource and tangible motivation for children in all subject areas
- dogs provide confidence to children as they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. Dogs can work with students on a one-one basis and will especially help those students who are feeling vulnerable, going through upsetting/difficult times or even scared/phobic of dogs. The dog will bring much joy and help to all the students they meet. Students who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog
- dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching social skills and responsibility. Researchers report that students can identify with animals and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how their peers may feel. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help students build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Schools can use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness and empower students
- with a dog in the school, students have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving students in the daily care of school dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The students also learn about responsibility, caring and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school
- as a reward: 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, can be rewarded with spending time during lunch or break to interact with the dog. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities students will be allowed to undertake. It has been proven that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem.
- dogs can be a great way to help students to interact with members of the wider community.

### Confidence benefits

“If children are partnered with a dog to read to, for example, the dog provides comfort, encourages positive social behaviour, enhances self-esteem, motivates speech and inspires children to have fun and enjoy the non-judgemental experience”

Bark & Read – The Kennel Club (<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/barkandread>)

### Behaviour benefits

“Researchers report that students can identify with animals and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how other students may feel. It was found that violent behaviour in participating students declined by 55% and general aggression went down 62%. In a controlled study, students were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Students' behaviour improved toward teachers, and students also showed more confidence and responsibility.”

Hazel Oak School Dog Policy (<https://hazel-oak.co.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2018/02/School-Dog-Policy.pdf>)

## Principles

- the Headteacher, Aaron Sherwood and the Governors have agreed to the presence of a School dog at Bowden House School
- only the school dog is allowed on the premises. No other dogs are permitted unless the Headteacher has approved their visit
- the School Dog is a Cockapoo. The school dog is not Kennel Club registered as it is a cross-breed, selected for its temperament, reduced risk of congenital health issues and hypoallergenic, non-shedding coat
- Mr Sherwood is the legal owner of the dog and has full responsibility for its welfare. Mr Sherwood will pay all expenses relating to pet insurance, vaccinations, flea and worm treatment, food and maintenance costs
- Mr Sherwood has produced a risk assessment which has been approved by the Safeguarding Lead Governor and this will be reviewed annually
- the dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Mr Sherwood or other trained staff members
- the dog is covered by the school's Public Liability Insurance policy and the School Business Manager has responsibility for ensuring this remains on the school's policy during the presence of a school dog at Bowden House School. The dog is also fully insured by Mr Sherwood
- staff, parents and students will be informed in writing that a dog will be in school
- parents/carers will need to sign the consent form in order for their children to interact with the school dog.
- the presence of a school dog will be made clear to visitors upon their arrival at the school reception
- only staff trained to handle the dog will have permission to do so. Whilst training, this will be limited to his owner and handler, Mr Sherwood and selected members of staff with prior agreement.

## Code of Conduct

### Staff Responsibilities

- Mr Sherwood will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times
- if the dog is ill he will not be allowed into school. Mr Sherwood has responsibility for ensuring appropriate alternative care for the dog if he is not able to be in the school on any given day

- Mr Sherwood is responsible for ensuring the training of the dog
- the school dog will be kept in the Headteacher's office or the School Reception, when Mr Sherwood is not available or is working with a student where the dog's presence is not appropriate
- staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the school dog. The Student and Family Coordinator keeps a list of all students and staff with a reported allergy to dogs
- students must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times
- students will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the school dog before any interaction
- if the school 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. If the dog is displaying any warning signs such as growling or flattening of his ears, he should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment by the trained staff member handling him
- any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by the trained dog handling staff only

### Student Responsibilities

- students whose parents/carers have withdrawn consent are not allowed to interact with the school dog
- students should be careful to stroke the school dog on his body, chest, back and not by his face or top of his head
- students are not allowed to approach or disturb the school dog whilst he is sleeping or eating
- students are not allowed to play roughly with the school dog
- students must wait until the school dog is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking him
- students must always wash their hands before and after stroking and handling the school dog
- students understand that any deliberate violence or threatening behaviour towards the school dog will result in a fixed term exclusion

## School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) – to publish to parents/carers

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

A The legal owner of the dog will be Mr Sherwood. He will bear the costs associated with owning the dog - the school budget will support liability insurance

### **Q Will the dog be a distraction to students' learning?**

A The dog will be kept in the Headteacher's office or the School Reception. The dog will also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation and support staff well-being, following consultation with staff beforehand

### **Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?**

A 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

### **Q Who is responsible for training?**

A Mr Sherwood will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for his training. Appropriate socialisation training will be obtained

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

A In the interest of health and hygiene our School dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks around the grounds

### **Q What if my child is scared of dogs? Will they be forced to be in the same room as the dog?**

A The School dog will be kept in the Headteacher's Office or the School Reception. Mr Sherwood or the member of staff responsible at the time will ensure the school dog only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision.

A student will not be forced to be in contact with the school dog at any time against their wishes.

### **Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?**

A The school dog's welfare will be carefully monitored. He will be walked regularly and given free time outside of sessions to rest and play.

The school dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have appropriate access to food and water.

### **Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?**

A Children will not need to touch the school dog or be in the same room as him at any point which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. 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/carers to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies. The school dog was specifically chosen for being a breed known for its hypoallergenic, non-shedding coat. He will be given high-quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

### **The School Dog**

**'Milo'**



**Agreed by the school's Governing Body on: 09 January 2023**

**Signed by: Wendy Phillips (Chair of Governors)**

**Review date: 01 September 2023**