



School Dog Policy & Risk Assessment

Rationale

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. Appendix B sets out further reasons for why the school feels it will be beneficial to have a school dog.

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

Of course there is, although 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 just another risk that needs to be managed.

School Policy

The dog will be owned by the Headteacher, Mrs Rebecca Billington. The dog is a Shih Tzu (Eugene) chosen for its very mild temperament and non-moulting coat. Shih Tzu's are known for their affectionate behaviour towards children. She will be responsible for Eugene's regular visits to the vets, injections and inoculations. Eugene has made visits to school and classes previously.

The Chair of Governors, and the Head Teacher have both agreed that the school can have a dog.

Staff have been informed, through staff briefing, that the school will have a dog. Parents have been informed by letter that a dog will be in school. At the start of each academic year there will be lessons around the school dog and parents will be given an opportunity to speak to the head with regards to the school dog. The Headteacher has produced a risk assessment and this will be reviewed annually. The risk assessment is attached as Appendix A

In the event of an emergency evacuation the adult supporting Eugene will escort him to the Fire Evacuation point.

Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must remain at a manageable distance. Parents are able to inform the school of any allergies on admission.

If the dog is unwell he will not be allowed into school.

The dog will normally be kept on a lead and harness until fully trained when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of an adult.

There may be occasions when the dog is working off lead, but this will only happen in an enclosed space and under the control of an adult. Before removing the lead, all present will be consulted. Children must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times when the dog is present with children

Children will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog. Children should remain calm around the dog. They should not make sudden movements and must never stare into a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog. Children should not to put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up. Children should never go near or disturb the dog that is sleeping or eating. Children must not be allowed to play too roughly with the dog.

If the 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.

Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring of 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 he should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.

Children should not feed or eat close to the dogs.

Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog. As a school we will provide anti-bacterial gel.

Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by an adult.

Roles and Responsibilities

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

The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy.

Teachers and staff and children are required to abide by this policy.

The Health and Safety Officer is responsible for providing information, advice and guidance as and when required.

Policy written March 2023

Policy reviewed March 2026

Next review date March 2029

Appendix A Risk Assessment

Introduction:

The value of pet 'therapy' is widely accepted as a powerful aid to stimulation and communication. Studies have shown that the presence of companion animals can improve the well-being of children and lower the rate of anxiety, simply by making the environment happier, more enjoyable and less forbidding. The team at Park C.P. have been considering obtaining a dog as a school therapy pet for some time and the decision was made in June 2023 to go ahead with the project.

The rationale behind this decision was as follows:

- For the school to have a pet that was able to live as naturally as conditions would allow.
- For the animal to be properly cared for outside of the school day.
- To have a pet that the children could interact with and also be of benefit to the children's social and emotional development.

It is accepted that interacting with animals is not appropriate for all children but for some it has the potential to provide many positive benefits. Any parent who does not want their child to interact with Eugene, is invited to write to the Headteacher and inform her of their wishes. There are no diseases associated with the dog as her vet will be responsible for vaccinations, including rabies and completing regular health checks and necessary treatment. A copy of Eugene's health records will be updated and kept in school. Eugene will also be insured.

The risk assessment below is a working document and will be checked annually by key staff and the governing body.

RISK ASSESSMENT FORM RA1

Directorate	Lifelong Learning		Activity (Brief Description)	School Dog		
Service	Education		People at Risk	Pupils, Staff, General Public		
Location	Park Community Primary School, Llay		Date	January 2026	Review Date	March 2029
Assessor	R. Billington		Issue Number			
Item No	Hazard (include effects)	RISK RATING (without controls) High/Medium/ Low	Existing Control Measures			RISK RATING (with existing controls) High/Medium/ Low

	<p>Dog getting over excited when interacting with children. Child knocked to the ground.</p> <p>Child scratched by dog.</p> <p>Child bitten by dog.</p>		<p>The dog will always be in the care of a responsible adult and will never be allowed to roam freely around the school premises.</p> <p>Children will not be left unsupervised with the dog.</p> <p>The dog will always be on a lead or carried when he is not in the school office while the children are in school.</p> <p>Pupils have been and will continue to be taught about the consequences of their actions.</p> <p>Education of this nature is continually given to children, and often to the whole school through assemblies and Health & Well-Being sessions.</p> <p>Pupils will be taught what to do to prevent the dog from chasing them.</p> <p>All staff will have been introduced to the dog and expectations of having a school dog.</p>	
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			<p>The dog will attend the vets regularly to ensure he is in good health and be groomed regularly to ensure that his claws are kept short.</p>	
<p>The dog causing allergies.</p> <p>Children or staff have allergic reactions</p>			<p>Parents have been asked to inform the school of any known allergies before the introduction of the dog to the school.</p> <p>A list of any children/staff who should not interact with the dog will kept in school.</p> <p>The children will have the opportunity to interact with the dog as they wish and those with allergies will be able to opt out of interaction.</p> <p>Children will be taught to wash their hands after active participation with the dog</p>	
<p>Children getting germs from the dog.</p> <p>Children or staff will contract diseases that can be carried by dogs.</p>			<p>Should the dog defecate on the school site a member of staff will clear this up immediately and dispose of it in a safe way.</p> <p>He will be trained to toilet in an area of the grounds that children have limited access to. The area will be disinfected as required.</p> <p>All immunisations are kept up to date in accordance with the European Pet Passport Scheme and a record will be kept of this.</p> <p>Flea treatment is carried out at regularly intervals as advised by the Vet.</p> <p>The dog will not be allowed in the school dining hall at mealtimes; and never in the food preparation area.</p>	
<p>Financial cost of the dog's upkeep.</p>			<p>The dog is owned by and ultimately the responsibility of Mrs Rebecca Billington both in a well-being and financial aspect.</p>	

	School unable to afford the ongoing cost of the Eugene's day to day upkeep or medical bills.		All vets costs are covered by Mrs Rebecca Billington	
	Ultimate Risk		Ultimate Existing Risk	

FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED TO REDUCE RISK TO ACCEPTABLE LEVEL

Item No	Further action necessary to control risk	Action by	Date Completed	Residual Risk (with further controls) High/Medium/Low
		Ultimate Residual Risk		

Assessor(s) Signature(s)	Managers Name:	Managers Signature:
Other relevant Risk Assessments:		

RISK RANKING MATRIX (RISK RANKING = SEVERITY X LIKELIHOOD)				
High (3) Death, Major injury or work related illness, permanent harm or disability	Severity	3	6	9
Medium (2) Injuries or work related illness where people are unable to		2	4	6

undertake their normal work for more than 3 days; semi-permanent harm or injury				
Low(1) All other minor injuries – first aid treatment with no permanent harm – minor cuts and bruises		1	2	3
		Likelihood		
		<p style="text-align: center;">Low (1)</p> <p>Where harm is unlikely to occur under normal circumstances. Low expectation of occurrence.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">- And –</p> <p>there is full compliance with relevant health and safety legislation</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Medium (2)</p> <p>Where harm is likely to occur in time. - Or - Exposure to the hazard exists intermittently or hazardous event occurs occasionally - And / Or – not fully compliant with relevant health and safety legislation</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">High (3)</p> <p>Where the hazard is likely to occur imminently or in the very short term. - Or - Exposure is permanent or occurs frequently. - Or - Much evidence of previous harm - And / Or – Major non-compliances with relevant health and safety legislation</p>
OUTCOME / REQUIRED ACTION (Severity x Likelihood “score”)				
		HIGH (6-9)	MEDIUM (3-4)	LOW (1-2)
		Immediate action is required to control the risk before any further activity.	Work may proceed if additional control measures are implemented within strict timescales. These measures must be proportionate to the potential consequences.	Work can proceed – no significant action is required other than monitoring that things do not change and that existing measures are being monitored And maintained.

Appendix B

Reasons to have a dog in school

Behaviour

Behaviour problems occur in school and these can interfere with learning. Some schools are using dogs to improve behaviour problems by promoting positive behaviour in Children. In a controlled study, Children were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Children' behaviour improved toward teachers, and Children also showed more confidence and responsibility. Additionally, parents reported that children seemed more interested in school as a result of having a dog at school.

Attendance

Children can be encouraged back into school using caring for a dog as an incentive

Social Development

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching Children social skills and responsibility. Specifically, with a dog in the classroom, Children have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving Children in the daily care of classroom dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The Children 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 living, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the Children. Those Children 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, may be rewarded with spending time during lunch or break to interact with these dogs. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities Children will be allowed to undertake. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem. Support Dogs can work with Children on a one to one basis and will especially help those Children who have been bullied abused, going through upsetting/difficult times or even scared/phobic of dogs. The dog will bring much joy and help to all the Children they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the Children they are spending time with. Children who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

Reading

Reading programmes with dogs are doing wonders for some Children. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even adults are likely to be less scared to read to a dog. "It might be less stressful for a child to read aloud to a dog than to a teacher or a peer. After all,

a dog won't judge or correct you." Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud. With the presence of a "calm and well-trained dog," Children find social support and peer interaction. Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have Children read to them or join a group of children in the library whilst they are having a book reading session. Dogs give unconditional acceptance, as they are non-judgmental, which is especially crucial to struggling, emerging readers. The dogs also provide confidence to children as they do not make fun of them when they read, but above all they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. Research has proved that Children who read to dogs show an increase in reading levels, word recognition, a higher desire to read and write, and an increase in interpersonal skills among the Children they mix with. Bullying can be a problem in all schools with Children anxious about school for fear of taunting and abuse. But in some schools dogs are making a difference in the fight against bullies. Researchers report that Children can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel.