Our School Dog Policy

Purpose
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.

Dogs teach children responsibility
Having to remember to feed, provide water and show support for a dog can give children a sense of importance and satisfaction that they may not get from other chores. The relationship that develops can be life changing for a child and a great support system as they themselves continue to grow and develop.

Dogs teach children patience
Dogs do not always do as they are told first time!

Dogs teach children compassion
Just like humans, dogs feel emotion and pain. They are prone to injuries and the infirmities of age during their relatively short lives.

Dogs teach children about socialisation
Like most of us, dogs are social animals who enjoy and need attention and affection. By learning how to interact with a dog, children can learn how to better socialise with other children. Research has shown how such interaction can improve a child's self-esteem.

Dogs are fun
Last, but certainly not least, dogs are a lot of fun. They greet you with a wagging tail every day and can cheer you up even on your worst day.

Many people have studied dogs in attempts to decipher their behaviour, and the theories abound. However, you just have to witness the interactions between dogs and children to realise the potential for greatness.

By having a school dog we want to encourage those children who are vulnerable, or those less confident at reading to have a friendly audience and look forward to reading as a treat. We want to ease the transition into school, for those who find it difficult each morning, by having a friendly, furry friend to calm them. Indeed, the options and experiences are limitless. The breed of Cockerpoo is carefully selected as suitable for this type of environment. Willow is well cared for and responsibly owned by Mrs Tearle and her family.

Is there a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment?
This policy shows that we have thought carefully about school life with a dog and how, through careful management, there is a very low risk of harm. Please see attached Risk Assessment.

Governors, staff, parents and pupils are supportive and welcome a dog in school.

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 Head Teacher has been informed beforehand.

Introduction to Willow
Willow is owned by Mrs Tearle and her family. She is a Cockerpoo, chosen for her mild temperament, friendliness, and known to have a non-moulting and hypoallergenic coat. Her mum is a multigeneration

registered Cockerpoo and her dad is a pure-bred KC 5th generation pedigree registered poodle. Both parents have been tested and are clear of potential hereditary conditions. All paperwork for this as been shown to Mrs Tearle.
Willow was born on 1st May 23, she has been micro chipped and vaccinated and is registered with the vets for regular health checks.

Context
Mrs Tearle is responsible for all ownerships costs i.e., purchase of dog; veterinary costs; pet insurance; food, resources etc.

The school will fund training to enable Willow to be the very best school dog, she can be. She will be used to support pupil wellbeing and reading. As part of the training she will receive from the trainer, a timetable of activity, rest and play will be drawn up for the time that Willow is in school.

Day to day Management
Visitors and new pupils will be informed of the dog on arrival. Information about Willow will be put on our website and prospectus.

Willow will:
Not be allowed in school if she is unwell.
Be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk where children are present.
Be always under the full control and supervision of an adult.
Be crate trained.
Have had all injections and these will be maintained annually.
Have rest days away from school.

Guidelines to interaction with the School Dog
Under no circumstances will children have close interaction with the school dog if parents/carers do not give the school permission for this.

Once permission has been given no child shall be forced into interaction with the school dog if this makes them feel unhappy or uncomfortable in anyway.

At all times interaction with the school dog must be controlled and safe for adults, children and the school dog herself. If the following guidelines are not followed interaction with the school dog will be cancelled.

At all times of interaction there must be an authorised adult who takes the leading role when interacting with the school dog. If children, or visiting adults, do not abide by the guidance given by the authorised adult the interaction will be cancelled.

Children will be reminded about safe ways to interact with dogs and they will be reminded that they should never go up to dogs they don't know even if they comfortably interact with Willow.

The following guidelines must be followed when interacting with the school dog. These guidelines will be shared regularly with all pupils and staff.

These guidelines apply to all adults and children.

- Never enter the school dog's room without an authorised adult
- If the door to the school dog's room is shut make sure you knock and wait for the authorised adult to let you in. Never let yourself in as the school dog might not be ready.
- There must be an authorised adult present during all interaction.
- Always approach the school dog calmly and gently (voice and movement).
- Always approach the school dog slowly.

- Never run up to the school dog.
- Keep noise levels low during interaction with the school dog.
- All interaction must remain calm with the authorised adult staying in control at all times.
- Only the authorised adult can move any of the school dog's resources, including food and treats.
- Visiting children and adults can only handle equipment if the authorising adult gives permission.
- Whilst the school dog is new to the school no visiting adult or children will give her any food/treats.
- There must not be any interaction with the school dog whilst she is eating or sleeping.
- Children should not kneel or lay down when interacting unless guided to by the authorised adult.
- Children when walking the dog (under supervision of an adult) must stay calm and quiet and walk behind/alongside the school dog at all times. (Children will receive training to support with dog walking)

Willow has been trained to follow non-verbal as well as verbal cues. These are shared with the adults and children she comes into contact with.

Hygiene

- After all interaction with the school dog, hands must be washed with soap and water.
- When interaction takes place outside no children will ever be asked to pick up faeces.

Concerns

Our school does have a 'no dogs' policy, however Willow will be the school dog and will be in school for a specific purpose. She will be on a leash at all times when moving around the school property while children are present and will always be accompanied by an adult. Willow will also be fully insured to carry out her role thus allowing her to be on the school site.

Some children may have had upsetting experiences and thus have a fear of dogs (or another animal). Willow will be calm and gentle around children; she has a very loving and gentle nature. Experience and research have shown that, with proper guidance and handling, children can learn to overcome their fear of animals and grow in respect and appreciation for them. As part of Willows initial therapy training, she has been trained to not engage with someone unless they engage first with her. She has also been trained to follow a non-verbal command to disengage if needed.

It is understandable that some of you may be concerned about possible allergic reactions to a school dog. Willow is a Cockerpoo which is known to be none to low shedding breed. Willow will be subjected to a thorough cleanliness and grooming regime. Mrs Tearle is herself allergic to animals but is not allergic to Willow. We have asked parents who are concerned to make the school aware if their child has an allergy.

Any parent who does not wish their child to interact with the school dog has been asked to inform us of their wishes.

Monitoring

This policy and risk assessment will be reviewed annually. This policy will also be reviewed if it deemed necessary prior to agreed review date.
The impact of having a school dog will continue to be monitored by the SMT.

Written September 2023

Reviewed September 2024

Reviewed September 2025

Next review September 2026

Signed: _____ Head Teacher / Date ----------

Signed: _____ Chair of Governors / Date ----------