

# Broadwood Primary School



## School Dog Policy

**Date of Policy:** February 2023

**Review Date:** February 2025

## **Introduction**

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

## **School Policy**

- The dog will be owned by Broadwood Primary School and cared for in and out of school hours by Mrs Mitcheson.
- The dog is a Golden Labrador named Broadie, he has come from a reputable breeder and is good with children and busy everyday life.
- The governors all agreed that school can have a dog.
- Staff have been informed through staff briefing that the school will have a school dog.
- Parents have been informed by letter and information on our website that we have a dog in school.
- Mrs Mitcheson has produced a risk assessment and this is reviewed annually
- Staff, visitors and students known to have allergic reactions to dogs should not go near the dog.
- If the dog is poorly then he will not be allowed in school.
- The dog will be supervised by an adult when moving around school
- Students must never be left alone with the dog and there must be an appropriate adult at all times when the students are with the dog.
- Students will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog. They should not make sudden movements and must never stare into the dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog. Students should never put their face near a dog and always approach him standing up.
- Students should never go near a dog when they are sleeping or eating.
- Students must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.
- If the dog is surrounded by a large number of students, he could become nervous and agitated, therefore the adult in charge should monitor the situation.
- Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring their teeth indicate that the dog is feeling angry and 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 removed from that particular situation or environment.
- Children should not feed the dog or eat close to him.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling the dog.
- Any dog foul should 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 Head Teacher is responsible for implementing this policy. The Head Teacher may delegate this to another member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Teachers and staff are required to abide by this policy.

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

## **Reasons to have a dog in school**

**Bullying** can be a problem in all schools with students 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 students can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel. It was found that violent behaviour in participating students declined by 55% and general aggression went down by 62%.

**Attendance** Children can be encouraged back into school using caring for a dog, as an incentive.

**Behaviour** problems occur in school and these can interfere with learning. Some schools are using dogs to improve behaviour and problems by promoting positive behaviour in students. 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. Additionally, parents reported that children seemed more interested in schools as a result of having a dog at school.

**Reading** programmes with dogs are doing wonders for some students. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even to 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 correct you or judge you". Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud. With the presence of a "calm and well-trained dog", students find social support and peer interaction. Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have students read to them or joining a group of children in the library whilst they are having a book reading session. Dogs give unconditional acceptance, as they are non-judgemental, which is crucial to struggling, emerging readers. Research has proved that students 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 students they mix with.

**Social Development:** Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching students' social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help older students build self-esteem, learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility and boundaries. Older students use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness and empower students.

With a dog in the classroom 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 classroom 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 the 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 that 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, will be rewarded with spending time during lunch or breaktime to interact with the dog. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities students 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 students on a one-one basis and will especially help those students 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 students they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the students they are spending time with. Students who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.