



## School Dog Policy

## 1 Introduction

Research has shown many benefits to therapy and reading dogs in school settings. Birchgrove Primary intends to train a school dog who works with our students to improve literacy and support staff and pupil wellbeing. This policy is designed to set out to students, parents and visitors the reasons for having a school dog at Birchgrove Primary (*Section 2 – The benefits of a school dog*) and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of students, staff, visitors and the school dog (*Sections 3 and 4 – Principles and Code of Conduct*). Although there is a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment, this can be mitigated against with a robust risk assessment to ensure the safety of all students, staff and visitors (*Appendix A - Risk Assessment*).

## 2 The benefits of a school dog

School dogs have been proven to help develop students' reading skills, improve behaviour, attendance and academic confidence, as well as increasing student understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills. At Birchgrove Primary we have a school dog to support our staff team in bringing all of these benefits to our students. Birchgrove's school dog will be trained as a Bark to Read dog and will have the equivalence of the Kennel Club Good Citizen Silver certificate as well as future possibilities of being trained as a therapy dog and certified by Pets as Therapy.

### 2.1 Literacy benefits

*“Reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop literacy skills and build confidence, through both the calming effect the dogs' presence has on children and the fact that the dog will listen to the children read without being judgemental or critical. This comforting environment helps to nurture children's enthusiasm for reading and provides them with the confidence needed to read aloud. When dogs are in a room of children trying to read they become less stressed, less self-conscious and more confident because dogs are non-judgemental. If children are partnered with a dog to read to, the dog provides comfort, encourages positive social behaviour, enhances self-esteem, motivates speech and inspires children to have fun and enjoy the experience of reading.”*

- **Bark & Read – The Kennel Club**

(<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/barkandread>)

### 2.2 Therapy benefits

*“Therapy Dogs Nationwide dogs have also shown to help with special needs and autistic children and adults by giving focus and providing a calming environment.”*

### **Nationwide**

### **School Dogs - Therapy Dogs**

[\(http://www.tdn.org.uk/schools/\)](http://www.tdn.org.uk/schools/)

## **3 Principles**

- 3.1 The headteacher, Mrs Sarah Morgan, and Chair of Governors, Mrs Christine Salter, both agree to a school dog (“Daphne”) working in the school.
- 3.2 Only the school dog (“Daphne”) is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the headteacher has approved their presence prior to the visit.
- 3.3 Daphne is a Show English Cocker Spaniel chosen because it is an intelligent breed that will respond well to training and which is known to be good with children, is very sociable and friendly and a medium size dog. The Cocker Spaniel earns the epithet ‘the merry cocker’ for his ever-wagging tail denoting his happy temperament. Cocker spaniels are a hugely popular family pet.
- 3.4 Daphne’s legal owner is Miss V. Lewis. Miss Lewis has full responsibility for the welfare of the school dog and all expenses relating to pet insurance, food and other expenses and ensuring that the dog is vaccinated, wormed and flea treated. Miss Lewis will ensure Daphne is groomed and tidy before coming into school.
- 3.5 Miss Lewis, the legal owner of the school dog, has produced a risk assessment which has been approved by the Safeguarding Lead and this will be reviewed annually.
- 3.6 The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Mrs Lucy Jones/ Mrs Rachel Miles or other trained staff members.
- 3.7 The school’s liability insurance covers the school for risk related to a working dog on site. The Finance Director has responsibility for ensuring this remains on the school’s policy during Daphne’s time working at Birchgrove.
- 3.8 Staff, parents and students will be informed in writing that a dog will be in school.
- 3.9 Daphne will not start working until she is over the age of 1. During her training as a puppy, she will become familiar with her surroundings, interact with staff and small numbers of children supervised by either Miss Lewis, Mrs Miles or Mrs Jones.
- 3.10 Parents can indicate that their child is not allowed to be present during Bark to Read sessions with Daphne by emailing [bircgroveprm@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:bircgroveprm@cardiff.gov.uk) or call 02920 628204.
- 3.11 The presence of a school dog will be sign posted to visitors at reception and the school website.

- 3.12 Daphne will only participate in Bark to Read sessions when she is fully certified.
- 3.13 Only staff trained to handle the dog in student sessions will have permission to do so.

## **4 Code of Conduct**

### ***4.1 Staff Responsibilities***

- 4.1.1 Miss Lewis will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.
- 4.1.2 If the dog is ill she will not be allowed into school. Miss Lewis has responsibility for ensuring appropriate alternative care for Daphne if she is not able to be in the school on a given day.
- 4.1.3 Miss Lewis is responsible for ensuring Daphne is trained and passes her equivalence Kennel Club Good Citizen Silver certificate as well as future possibilities of being trained as a therapy dog and certified by Pets as Therapy.

Daphne has passed both her initial puppy and further training graduate classes.

She has passed her graduate class where she has been assessed on

- Emergency stop
- Send to bed
- Formal recall
- Front finish
- Off lead heel
- Engagement and relationship building e.g bow
- Stand stay
- Go to mark
- 1 minute stay
- Leave it / impulse control

- 4.1.4 Daphne must be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of a trained adult (see clause 3.12).
- 4.1.5 Daphne will be kept in Mrs Jones' room / Mrs Miles' when not interacting with students for reading or club sessions. Daphne will only visit designated club or reading lessons and not be allowed in other areas of the school.
- 4.1.6 Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near Daphne. The office keeps a list of all students and staff with a reported allergy to dogs and ensures that all trained handlers for Daphne know who these students and staff are.

- 4.1.7 Staff leading club or reading sessions with Daphne have a responsibility to ensure all staff, students or visitors present are happy for Daphne to enter the room.
- 4.1.8 Students must never be left alone with Daphne and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- 4.1.9 Students will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog before any interaction during a session or visit.
- 4.1.10 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. If the dog is displaying any warning signs such as growling or flattening of her ears, she should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment by the trained staff member handling her.
- 4.1.11 Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by the trained dog handling staff only.
- 4.1.12 Birchgrove staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog to better inform research into the benefits of a school therapy / reading dog.
- 4.1.13 All incidents will be reported and logged using the sheets provided in Daphne's file. Staff will use the health and safety policy document to refer to. In an emergency situation, the dog will be taken out of the situation and returned to her safe space.

## **4.2 *Student Responsibilities***

- 4.2.1 Students whose parents have withdrawn consent are not allowed to attend dog club or reading sessions.
- 4.2.2 Students should be careful to stroke Daphne on her body, chest, back and not by her face or top of head.
- 4.2.3 Students are not allowed to approach Daphne or disturb her whilst she is sleeping or eating.
- 4.2.4 Students are not allowed to play roughly with the dog or approach Daphne by running towards her.
- 4.2.5 Students must wait until the school dog is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking her.
- 4.2.6 Students are not allowed to eat during sessions with Daphne.
- 4.2.7 Students must always wash their hands after handling / stroking Daphne.
- 4.2.8 Students understand that any deliberate violence or threatening behaviour towards Daphne will result in restorative teaching about why it is not acceptable.

- 4.2.9 Students will receive an assembly from Miss Lewis that will introduce Daphne to the pupils, how they will be expected to approach Daphne (they must ask the handler and not run towards her), how they can fuss Daphne and where not to touch her for example around her head (wait for her to sit and stroke on the back) and how nasty behaviour towards the dog will not be tolerated and that a ban to work with Daphne will be enforced.

## 5 The School Dog – Daphne

Daphne was born 01/02/23. She is from a show kennel in West Wales where Miss Lewis originally had her childhood dog Minty from. Daphne's bloodline is known for their kind, calm and friendly nature with some of the dogs going on to become hearing dogs for the deaf. Daphne loves cuddles and cwtches on the sofa as well as playing fetch in the garden, going on lovely long walks (although not too long) and eating! Currently, Daphne is a very young dog and is still in her puppy stage. She is learning just like we do at school. She is full of love and just wants to make people happy.



