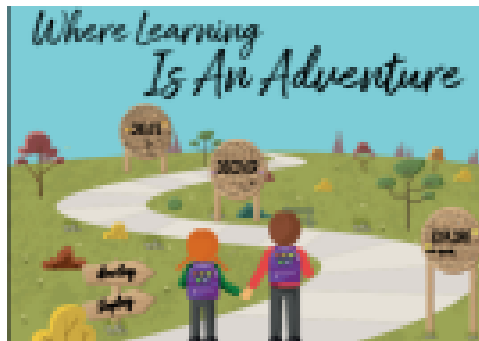


## Our Vision

*Together, we nurture a love of learning that celebrates the wonder of childhood and prepares every child for the future.*

We develop environments that support learning, where creativity, critical thinking, and resilience flourish. Our schools promote empathy, celebrate diversity, and encourage children to respect differences and take responsibility for themselves and their communities.

By embracing the wider world and fostering strong, collaborative relationships between our schools, we build a forward-thinking community with high expectations for all. We empower children to think independently, stay safe, and grow into confident, compassionate individuals ready to thrive in an ever-changing world.



**The Federation of Burley and Sopley School Dog Policy**

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. A school dog can bring a great deal of benefits to a school and also further promote our values:

## **Resilience**

Our school dog will provide children with an opportunity to reflect on how they react and respond when a dog is nearby. To understand how to behave around dogs and to be respectful at all times. Our school dog will provide an opportunity to talk about respectful behaviour around dogs and to show respect to dog owners, for example always asking an owner if their dog is happy to be stroked and patted. We will also be able to model responsible dog ownership and model how dog owners need to be respectful of all around them as well. There may be times when children will not be able to interact, due to their own conduct, but through retrying, knowing there is always another chance.

## **Responsibility**

The school dog promotes the value of responsibility by helping pupils understand that caring for and interacting with a living being requires thought, respect and self-control. Children learn that they are responsible for following agreed rules, approaching the dog safely and considering the dog's needs, feelings and wellbeing. Through these interactions, pupils develop an awareness that their words, actions and behaviour have an impact on others, and that positive outcomes are achieved when they act with kindness, patience and responsibility. These experiences encourage children to take ownership of their behaviour and recognise their role in creating a safe, supportive and respectful environment.

## **Exploration**

The school dog promotes the value of exploration by providing a safe, supportive and non-judgemental companion for pupils. Unlike people, dogs do not criticize mistakes or judge how well a task has been completed, helping children to feel more confident when trying new things and taking risks in their learning. This encourages pupils to explore different ways of thinking, learning and communicating without fear of getting things wrong. Whether reading aloud, sharing their news or talking about their experiences, children can develop the confidence to express themselves with

their furry friend, building resilience, self-belief and a positive attitude towards learning and discovery.

## **Compassion**

As a school we will ensure that we consider everyone's feelings towards a dog. No member of our school will ever be made to interact with our school dog if they do not wish to do so. Equally, we aim to support all our pupils in understanding how our actions can have an impact on the lives of animals. Knowing that we must be calm, quiet and kind when interacting with our school dog, developing empathy for animals.

### **Aims of the school dog.**

#### **Bringing a sense of shared ownership**

Although the dog will belong to one member of staff, it is hoped that the introduction of a school dog will further promote a sense of community. As the dog will be part of the school, all the school community can ensure that they work together to ensure that we care for the dog, keep the school tidy and create a 'home' for our school dog to feel safe and secure in.

#### **Supporting pupil behaviour**

There is a great deal of reading around the positive impact on pupils' pastoral development. Our school dog will be used to support pupils in understanding self conduct and work to help some pupils in self regulating their emotions. For those who are sad or upset, they can visit the school dog and experience the joy that dogs can bring when times are difficult. For those with phobias of dogs, time can be taken for children to be used to a dog being nearby and can see their peers interacting with a dog in a safe and familiar environment in order to build further dog confidence.

#### **Developing an understanding of dogs.**

Safeguarding always remains a high priority within the school and we have a duty to teach children how to be safe in their everyday lives. Our school dog will be used to teach children dog safety rules, such as asking permission before touching dogs, how to behave around dogs and knowing when to leave a dog alone.

#### **As a reward:**

Our dog will also provide an opportunity for children to celebrate. Children will be able to show off work, come and share exciting news and spend time with the school dog when they have been exceptional! For some children, time with the school dog (grooming, stroking, walking etc) may be worked towards as part of a behaviour plan.

### Enhancing the curriculum

Our school dog will enhance our curriculum, by offering first hand opportunities to interact with the dog and use a stimulus for learning, including story writing, art work etc.

### Courageous Advocacy

As a school, we aim to make a difference in the world in a meaningful way. There are a number of ways dogs help people in the world, including therapy dogs and guide dogs. There are also numerous organisations and charities which work with animals, preventing cruelty and making the lives of animals better. For our children, our school dog will help make the connections between the work some of these charities do and how that, through fund raising etc, we can make a difference.

### Wellbeing

As we have investigated the potential impact of school dogs, we have discovered the undocumented impact of a dog on the wellbeing of the school community. Staff, in the schools we have visited, have all commented how their school dog cheers them up and makes their school a better place to work. We hope that this will be mirrored within our schools in the Federation.

## **Key Principles**

It is important to remember that a school dog does not belong to a school; it belongs to an owner with whom it forms an important bond and lives as part of the family. The fact that the dog's owner is a head teacher, teacher, or teaching assistant (for example) does not minimise their duties and responsibilities as the dog's owner; there is still a legal and moral duty of care towards the animal at all times.

The dog will be owned by a member of staff, who will be responsible for the welfare of the dog. All bills associated with normal pet ownership, including food, vet bills, pet insurance etc, will be the responsibility of the dog owner.

Liability insurance for the school must be sought in order for any dog to work in school. This will be the responsibility of the school to organise.

Only the school dog is allowed on the school 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.

The introduction of any school dog will be discussed by the governing body prior to the school dog being on site. It is the governing bodies role to ensure that the Federation's policy is being followed and evaluated, as well as reviewing the schools risk assessments associated with a school dog.

### **Dog Welfare**

The welfare of our school dog must always remain a high priority. The school dog will be based within the head teachers office, and provided with a 'safe space' to use while working in each school.

While in school, the dog will always be in sight of the dog owner, or a dedicated 'named handler' who will be the best placed to read any signals of upset or distress from the school dog.

Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or bearing 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

The dog will always be escorted on a lead, when moving around the school grounds. This ensures that the dog handler is always in control of the dog and that expectations for behaviour are set early.

The owner will also need to ensure that alternative arrangements are in place for the care of the dog on occasions when the dog is unable to go into school; for example, if the dog is unwell or classroom temperatures rise above a comfortable level for the dog (dogs are not able to regulate their body temperature as effectively as humans.) The same is true if the dog becomes unwell whilst at school or needs to be removed from the school environment for any reason

As with any dog, exercise is key. The dog owner has a responsibility to walk the dog at intervals throughout the day.

The dog will eat and drink within the headteacher's office.

The dog will have a designated area for exercise and toileting – this will never be where children play.

### **Staff conduct**

Staff should always model appropriate behaviour around the school dog.

The school dog should not be encouraged to jump up, or sit on furniture.

The school dog will not be permitted in the staff room, where staff eat and drink.

Staff will not give the dog 'treats' without permission of the dog owner.

No staff will be made to interact with the dog if they do not wish to do so.

The school dog will not be allowed to 'wonder' around the school building, but will be taken on a lead when visiting classes.

### **Child interactions**

Permission for children to interact with the school dog must be sought prior to any child having physical contact with the school dog. No child will ever be made to interact with the school dog, should they not wish to.

Children must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.

Children will be taught appropriate rules of having a school dog

Should any child be deemed to be a danger to the dog, unable to regulate their behaviour or a concern that the child's behaviour will be a risk to dog or child – interaction will not be permitted.

Any child with an allergy will not interact with the dog and a separate risk assessment will be carried out and discussed with the child's parents.

*Our thanks to all the sources we have used to support our thinking:*

*North Baddeley Infant School*

*Saint James CE Primary Academy*

*Dogford Primary School*

*Creative Education*

*Cherryl Drabble (author of 'Our adventures with Doodles the Schnoodles, introducing a school dog')*

*Dogs Trust*

*Paws for thought*

*Dog Listener*

*The Dog Mentor*

*Assistant Dogs for Therapy*

### *Parental Consultation Letter*

We have been considering extending our school family through the possible introduction of a school dog. At this stage, we are very much in the early phases of exploring this idea and recognise that there are many important factors to consider before any decision is made.

We are fully aware of the responsibilities associated with dog ownership, as well as the importance of ensuring that the welfare of both our pupils and any potential school dog is prioritised at all times.

So far, we have undertaken a range of research, including online training, background reading, discussions with other schools that already have a dog on site, and conversations with professionals who work with school dogs. However, there is still further due diligence required to ensure that this would be the right decision for our school community and for any future dog.

#### **Who would the dog belong to?**

The dog would belong to me personally, and all associated costs (including purchase and veterinary care) would be covered by my family.

#### **How would the dog be introduced to the children?**

As I have children of primary school age, the dog would be used to being around young children from its earliest days. There would be a gradual and carefully managed introduction to the school environment, including its sights, sounds and routines. Alongside this, we would ensure that children are taught how to behave appropriately around a dog, with clear rules and expectations established for both pupils and the dog.

#### **Would the dog ever be left alone with pupils?**

No. Initially, I would always accompany the dog and closely monitor interactions, ensuring I can recognise any signs of stress or discomfort in either children or the dog. In time, we would aim to train key members of staff as 'dog handlers' to support this work. The dog would never be left unattended with pupils. Comprehensive risk assessments, appropriate insurance, and staff training would all be in place.

#### **What breed would the dog be?**

We recognise that different breeds have different characteristics, and this would be carefully

considered. We are exploring guidance from organisations and charities that support schools in selecting breeds most suited to working in educational environments.

**What about children who are scared of or allergic to dogs?**

Before introducing a dog, parents would be asked to give permission for their child to interact with it. This may mean that, for some classes or pupils, the dog would not visit directly. We would ensure that the needs of all children are respected.

**What would happen if the dog was unwell?**

The dog would not attend school every day and would have rest days at home as needed. If unwell, the dog would remain at home. Within school, the dog would also have a designated 'safe space' in the Headteacher's office where it could rest quietly.

**What role would the dog have in school?**

Initially, the dog would support individual pupils and small groups, particularly those with pastoral needs. It would also contribute to our safeguarding curriculum by helping children learn how to behave safely and appropriately around dogs.

In the longer term, there is potential for the dog to be trained to support reluctant readers, as many children feel more comfortable reading aloud to a dog than to an adult. The dog may also provide opportunities for children to share their work, build confidence, and, where appropriate, support emotional regulation by offering a calm and reassuring presence.

**What have other schools found?**

Schools we have spoken to have shared very positive experiences, including:

- Increased enjoyment of school and improved attendance
- Greater willingness to engage in learning
- Improved behaviour, social interaction and sense of responsibility
- Increased understanding of how to behave safely around dogs
- Development of empathy and care for another living being
- Improved relationships between pupils and staff
- Increased motivation to complete and share work
- A calming influence for some anxious pupils
- Improved confidence, particularly for children who may find communication challenging

We fully recognise that this idea may be met with excitement by some and concern by others. It is therefore essential that we gather a wide range of views, alongside further evidence, before making any decision.

At this stage, we would very much welcome your questions, comments and opinions to help inform our next steps. Please share your views using the attached form. While we may not be able to respond individually to every comment, all feedback will be carefully considered as part of our decision-making process.

Please send in comments, thoughts and questions on the form below.

## [School Dog Feedback Form](#)

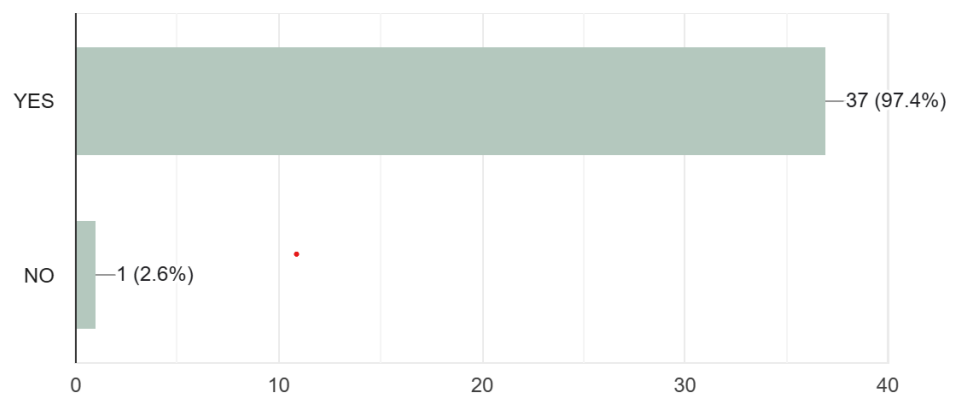
Many Thanks – Mr Bowen

### Initial Outcomes:

I would be happy to have school dog

 [Copy chart](#)

38 responses



Comments:

Some examples of feedback:

I think it is a great initiative, and welcome the prospect. My school had dogs owned by the French teacher and were used as part of the in-class learning process.

I think it is a FANTASTIC idea, and I know that my son would hugely benefit as he finds animals to be very calming and they really bring out the best in him. A great way for kids to learn about responsibly taking care of an animal. Can't wait !

I think this is a nice idea. We're not allowed pets in our rental property so this is a nice way for my boys to interact regularly with a familiar furry friend. I think learning respect, care and caution around animals is a positive thing.

Brilliant idea, fully supportive

What a fantastic idea!

This would be a very positive step for the children within the school .

I think this is a fantastic idea and so enriching for the children!

I think children would very much benefit from having a dog on site.

I think this is a great idea. Bxxxx likes dogs but unfortunately we can't have our own currently. It will be good for her to understand the responsibility of owning such a pet. I'm also aware of their calming influence.

I agree with your letter laying out the benefits of healthy and meaningful interactions with our canine companions.

Yes, yes and yes please. I know that you will endeavour the proper training will be carried out as well as the purpose for a school dog being more child focused/beneficial.

I love the idea of a school dog!