

Camelford Community Primary School



School Dog Policy

November 2022

Ratified by Headteacher: Nov 2022
Next review due: Nov 2025



Rationale

There is an increasing body of research to support the benefit of a dog in school. In schools across the country, Reading Dogs are being used to help children develop fluency in reading and Therapy Dogs provide comfort and reassurance to children with anxiety and self-confidence issues.

Increasingly in schools, it is becoming recognised that children's emotional wellbeing is at the root of positive behaviour and success with socialising as well as in the classroom. A dog can support children who are anxious about school and could be the reason that they want to come in every morning. Children with trouble managing their behaviour could learn to care for the dog and the dog could be helpful in de-escalating anger. Reading dogs can help boost children's confidence and fluency.

Caring for an animal can help children to learn about responsibility and can help children to learn how to treat animals safely and with compassion. Dogs are great fun to have around and can bring a caring, family atmosphere to a school.

Preparations for having a School Dog

Having a dog in school is a big step and the arrangement needs to work for all groups in our school community. School leaders have taken advice from schools who currently have a school dog, Dogs' Trust and Pets as Therapy, who have provided guidance about the necessary risk assessments and insurance that we will need to put in place, as well as practical guidance, such as allocating a dog toilet area well away from anywhere the children will access. In order to ensure that the dog would be beneficial to the children's learning and wellbeing and not be a distraction, we will plan when and where the children will interact with the dog.

If any child is allergic to dog hair, we make sure that they don't come into contact with the dog (or have restricted contact) if parents request it. Likewise, if a child has a phobia of dogs we will keep the dog away from them, or we can offer opportunities for the child to be slowly introduced to the dog, to reduce their fear.

Parents are invited to contact the Headteacher if either of these cases apply, so that we can make the necessary arrangements.

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 Headteacher has been informed beforehand.

Winston

Our school dog is Winston. Winston is owned by Mrs Nayeab. Winston is a Labrador Retriever and was born in April 2022. This breed has been chosen because:

- The breed is known to be child-friendly, lively, gentle mannered and affectionate, yet sensitive.
- The breed is known to be highly intelligent and respond excellently to training.

Winston will have lots of early socialisation with children in the Pastoral Support room and will have additional training to ensure his suitability to work in a school.

The long term plan is for Winston will become a member of Pets As Therapy, when he is old enough to complete the training.

He will have regular check-ups at the vet and have up to date vaccinations, flea and worming treatment.

While Winston is still a puppy, interactions with children will be short and will be very carefully monitored to avoid children being hurt by play scratches and nips, and to avoid undue stress to Winston.

Winston will attend puppy training classes and will receive additional training support to help him with his job as school dog.

Guidelines to interaction with the School Dog

Parents/carers are informed that we have a school dog on the premises and are asked to complete a consent form to allow their children to interact with Winston. They can also request that their children do not have contact with the dog.

There will always be a responsible adult in charge of the dog during interactions with children. Children and adults are asked to adhere to the following guidelines:

Do:

- Make sure you have permission from your parent
- Make sure the dog is with an adult
- Make sure you ask before touching Winston
- Wash your hands before and after touching Winston
- Talk to an adult if you feel nervous
- Make sure there are only 2 children at a time
- Let them sniff the back of your hand first
- Use a quiet voice
- Move slowly and calmly
- Always follow the dog handler adult's instructions

Do not:

- Do not touch Winston with anything other than your hands.
- Do not feed Winston human food and no treats unless Mrs Nayeb has supplied them and given you permission.
- Do not think that all dogs are the same as Winston – always ask dog owners before touching an unknown dog.
- Do not enter Mrs Nayeb's room without permission or without an adult present to see Winston.
- Do not disturb Winston when he is eating or sleeping.

Frequently asked questions

My child is allergic to dogs and I do not want them to have an allergic reaction

As previously mentioned, Winston is a Labrador Retriever breed, which means that he is a short-haired breed. This helps to significantly reduced risk of an allergic reaction. If, however, you would still prefer your child not to come into contact with Winston, we will accommodate your request and ensure that arrangements are in place. We have undertaken a thorough risk assessment, which details the hygiene practices that will be in place – such as cleaning of hands and the environment before and after coming into contact with Winston. More information is detailed in our risk assessment.

Will the dog be properly cared for?

Winston will be subject to a rigorous grooming process to prevent the risk of infection or disease. Winston will be kept in the Kerenza Room during the day and will have adequate supply of food and water. Winston has passed a health check from the vets, is fully vaccinated, wormed and has had flea treatment in line with current expectations. He is under a Pet Health Care Plan, which will ensure future treatments will continue. You can find more information on these arrangements in our risk assessment.

My child is scared of dogs

We understand that some children may be fearful of dogs. Labradors are known for being extremely child-friendly and Winston will provide the opportunity for children to overcome their fears, with their parents' permission. The training that Winston has and continues to undergo ensures that he is well-behaved, gentle and calm around children. If parents would prefer their child not to come into contact with Winston, we will accommodate your request and ensure alternative arrangements are in place.

Is the dog well-behaved?

Winston has learnt routines and he is doing exceptionally well. Winston is still a puppy and will continue to undergo training to ensure he is well-behaved at all times. He will be kept on a short lead whenever walking around school. There may be times in the future, as long as all of the children are happy, when he will be left off the lead on the field and playground, but this will only take place when all adults are happy that he is safe to do so.