



MacIntyre Academies Discovery Academy

Dogs in School Policy

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		- New version		

Person Responsible:	Principal
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Dogs in School Policy

1. Intent

Learners 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, most children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

Dogs have access to the school site to facilitate and support pupil learning, and encourage calmness and kindness. This policy outlines measures put in place to allow a school dog(s) to be present. Where reference is made to a dog this could be more than one dog.

As with any activity in school there is always a level of risk attached, however with appropriate measures, which are highlighted below, risks are minimised. Before any dog visits Discovery Academy, a thorough risk assessment must have been carried out, signed off by the Principal.

2. Implementation

- Therapy or assistance dogs require prior permission from the Principal before being allowed on site. Permission will only be considered where the dog has been assessed for the specific roles they may perform.
- A school dog must have been selected because they respond well to training, are known to be good with children and young people and are very friendly.
- A staff member will always be present to supervise a school dog with a contingency in place in the case that the dogs responsible person needs to take a break.
- The school will follow guidance from organisations such as the RSPCA on having dogs in school to ensure the welfare needs of the dogs are always being met.
- Staff, parents and learners must be informed through the usual school communication channels that a dog will be in school.
- Staff, visitors and learners known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog. There will be a notice in reception to inform all visitors that there is a dog in school.
- If the dog is ill, they will not be allowed in school.
- The dog will be kept on a lead when on a walk and will be under close supervision, if off lead training is taking place this will be planned for.
- The dog may occasionally need a rest day or a social opportunity with other dogs and have a 'day off'. Staff and learners will be prepared for these eventualities.
- Learners should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog, such as:
 - Learners should remain calm around the dog.
 - Learners should not make sudden movements and must never stare into a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog.
 - Learners should not put their face near a dog's face
 - Learners should always approach calmly.
 - Learners should never go near or disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating.
 - Learners must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.
 - Learners should not give food to the dog unless supervised and agreed by Mrs Ruth Pike.

- Learners should be careful to stroke the dog on their body, chest, back and not by their face or top of head.
- A clear rule sheet will be displayed on the door where the dog is located for learners and staff to follow.
- If the dog is surrounded by many children, it could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that they monitor the situation.
- 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, they should be immediately removed from that situation or environment.
- Learners will not be able to see the dog when they are showing aggressive or highly dysregulated behaviours as this could create a risk to them, other people or the dog.
- Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by an adult.
- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure.
- Any learner who is fearful of dogs will not be forced to have any contact with our school dog and all efforts will be made to respect their wishes.

3. Actions

If someone reports having an issue with a dog in school, this information must be passed to the Principal or a member of the Senior Leadership Team as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by the Principal.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Local Advisory Board:

- Will ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in school.
- Has the right to refuse entry to the dog.

Principal

- Is responsible for implementing this policy
- Will ensure the curriculum, where possible, supports learning about dogs and how best to behave around our dogs. This will include highlighting that not all dogs are well trained, and that caution must be used around unknown dogs outside of school.

The Dog's Responsible Person (or owner)

- Will ensure that if there are any behaviour changes of concern in a dog, the dog will no longer come into school.

All staff

- All staff must abide by this policy and support learners to do so also.

- All staff must ensure they report any incident or near miss event with the dog, following academy procedures.

5. Impact

Academic research (Appendix 2) has shown that dogs working and helping in the school environment can achieve the following:

- 1) Improved academic achievement
- 2) Increase in literacy skills
- 3) Calming behaviours
- 4) Increase in social skills and self-esteem
- 5) Increase confidence
- 6) Teach responsibility and respect to all life
- 7) Help prevent truancy
- 8) Motivate learners who are often less attentive

It is our intention to monitor the impact of having a dog in school as we go forward to ensure it serves a purpose to our learners and staff.

Appendix 1:

Discovery have a long standing school dog called Ruby. Ruby is owned by a staff member within the Discovery Academy Team, Ruth Pike. Ruth is an experienced dog owner, who has experience of introducing a therapy dog into a school.

Appendix 2: Links to Research

Research shows that interacting with a dog can moderate stress by reducing the heart rate, lowering blood pressure, and other observable supportive signs of anxiety (Katcher, Friedmann, Beck, & Lynch, 1983).

Research has shown that learners may read to dogs with greater confidence than to other humans [“An Analysis and Evaluation of Sit Stay Read: Is the Program Effective in Improving Student Engagement and Reading Outcomes?” Corinne Serra Smith, Sept 2009](#)

Current research highlights the benefits that therapy animals have on learners health and wellbeing (Anderson and Olson, 2015; Carlyle, 2019; [Jalongo, M.R., Astorino, T., Bomboy, N. \(2004\) Canine visitors: the influence of therapy dogs on young children’s learning and wellbeing in classrooms and hospitals. Early Childhood Education Journal \(32:1\).](#)