Harrietsham Church of England Primary School

School Dog Policy

Policy lead:	Jackie Chambers
Responsibility:	Headteacher
Date approved by Governing Body:	September 2026
Governor signature:	Rebecca Emson (Chair)
Review date:	September 2027

Harrietsham Church of England Primary School

School Dog Policy

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School Context:

Harrietsham CEP Vision Statement

We are a warm, welcoming, and inclusive school rooted in our rural community. Like the mustard seed we grew from tiny beginnings and our branches are now spread wide –providing support and taking our values beyond the school gates. All those in our community feel safe and nurtured - able to flourish and grow academically, spiritually, emotionally and physically to achieve their full God-given potential.

"Nurtured we flourish"

We are a nurturing school. As such we believe in, and follow, **The Six Principles of Nurture** in all of our practice.

1. Children's learning is understood developmentally.
2. The classroom offers a safe base.
3. The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing.
4. Language is a vital means of communication.
5. All behaviour is communication.
6. The importance of transition in children's lives.

Our Values

The roots of our vision are in the parable of the Mustard Seed.

'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches'.
Matthew 13 31-32

In order to grow and reach our potential, everything that we do in school is driven by our vision and underpinned by our core Christian values of:

Love, Fellowship and Forgiveness

Introduction

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.

Is there a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment?

Yes, there is - though there are a variety of accidents which can happen within the school environment which far exceed the number of injuries or incidents caused by a dog. Therefore, it is just another risk that needs to be managed. A thorough risk assessment has been carried out (**see Appendix 3**).

Our School Dog, Max, is a Dog Mentor Dog, and has been trained and assessed by 'The Dog Mentor' (Dogs Supporting Education | The Dog Mentor | UK). He has been awarded certificates of his training and a Dog Mentor licence (**see Appendix 4**).

Other dogs are not allowed anywhere on the school site at any time unless specifically authorised by the Headteacher. This includes during drop off and collection times.

This policy outlines measures put in place to allow the School Dog to be present.

School Policy

The dog will be owned by a member of staff (Headteacher) or by a member of a Therapy Charity.

- The Governors have the right to refuse entry to the dog.
- Only the School Dog is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy, assistance dog or Dog Mentor Dog and the Headteacher has been informed beforehand.
- The dog has been chosen because of his intelligence, because he will respond well to training, because he is known to be good with children and because he sheds little hair and is very sociable and friendly.
- Staff, parents and children have been informed by letter that a School Dog will be in school. The Headteacher has produced a risk assessment (provided by The Dog Mentor) and this will be reviewed annually.
- Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog.
- All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school. All visitors will be informed about the dog and related protocols on arrival and office staff will relay visitor issues to the Headteacher asap.
- If the dog is ill, he will not be allowed into school.
- The dog will be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of an appropriately trained adult.
- Children will never be left alone with the dog and there will be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Children will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dogs. Children will be reminded to remain calm around the dog.
- Children will be reminded never to go near or disturb dogs that are sleeping or eating.
- Children will not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.
- 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.
- 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.
- Children will not eat close to the dog.
- Children will be reminded to be careful to stroke the dog on their body, chest, back and not by their face or top of head.
- Children will be asked to always wash their hands after handling a dog.
- Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.

- Parents / carers will be informed of the school's use of a school dog and given the opportunity to notify the school of any concerns, allergies, medical conditions, cultural considerations or phobias. Individual risk assessments will be completed where appropriate.

- Appropriately trained staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the School Dog.

- The office will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.

- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure.

Actions

If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to the Headteacher or a Deputy Headteacher as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by the Headteacher.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in School.

The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy.

Teachers, staff, pupils, parents and visitors are required to abide by this policy.

The curriculum will support learning about dogs and how best to behave around our dog. This will include highlighting that not all dogs are well trained and that caution must be used around unknown dogs outside school.

The use of the school dog will operate in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the current version of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE). The welfare and safety of pupils remains paramount at all times.

The school will make reasonable adjustments for pupils, staff or visitors with disabilities, medical conditions, allergies or phobias relating to dogs. Individual risk assessments may be undertaken where required.

The Governing Body will ensure that the school's insurers have been notified of the presence of a school dog and that appropriate public liability and employer liability cover remains in place.

Any bite, scratch, near miss, allergic reaction or behavioural concern involving the dog will be recorded in accordance with the school's health and safety procedures, investigated, and the risk assessment reviewed.

Appendix 1 – Reasons to have a dog in school

In summary, academic research has shown that dogs working and helping in the school environment can achieve the following:

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

The following information has been taken from a range of sources to provide further detail about the benefits of having a dog in school:

Behaviour:

In some schools, dogs are making a difference in the behaviour of pupils. Researchers report that students can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel. Behaviour problems occur in school and these can interfere with learning. Some schools are using dogs to improve behaviour 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 school as a result of having a dog at school.

Attendance:

Case study: Alice was a student with poor attendance and truancy. Alice was encouraged back into school using caring for Jock, a dog, as an incentive. By telling Alice that "if she didn't come to school to care for him, he wouldn't get walks, water or love," Alice came to school almost every day for the rest of the year, only missing two days.

Education:

Reading programmes with dogs are doing wonders for some students. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even 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 judge or correct 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 join a group of children in the library whilst they are having a book reading session. Dogs give unconditional acceptance, as they are non-judgmental, which is especially crucial to struggling, emerging readers. Dogs also provide confidence to children as they do not make fun of them when they read, but above all they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. 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 intra and interpersonal skills among the students they mix with.

Social Development:

Dogs in schools offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching 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 school, 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 a 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 who 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 break to interact with these dogs. 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-to-one basis and will especially help children experiencing emotional, social or wellbeing difficulties or even those who are 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.

****** Examples cited are illustrative and outcomes may vary between individuals.

Appendix 2 - School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs*)*

Q Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?
A The legal owner of the dog is a member of staff; she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support insurance and staff training costs where appropriate.

Q Is the dog from a reputable breeder?
A Yes. The dog is from a home where both parents were seen and has been specifically chosen for its temperament.

Q Will the dog be a distraction?
A The dog will be kept in the Headteacher's office when on site for a long time. The office is separate from the classrooms / playground area to ensure the dog only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact, under strict supervision.

The dog will also have a space to spend time in classrooms, the library, the nest and in the outdoor areas where children can interact safely.

The dog will also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation, following consultation with staff beforehand.

Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?
A Yes, we have carefully considered having dogs in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog, and a reputable dog behaviourist (The Dog Mentor).

Q Who is responsible for training?
A The dog owner is the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for their training. Appropriate professional training will be obtained and the dog will be trained as a school dog through The Dog Mentor company.

Q How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?
A In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks just outside of the school grounds, or within the wider school grounds. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed.

Our policy of no other dogs in the playground is still applicable as we are unable to put effective control measures in place that guarantee temperament and safety when children come into unsupervised contact with unknown dogs.

Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?
A The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. Children will be able to walk with a member of staff and the dog during that time. This will also be used as a behaviour reward, in line with our behaviour policy. The dog will be kept in the designated area and will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have unlimited access to food and water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered.

Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?
A We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for children and adults that are allergic to dogs. Individual needs will always be met and we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies. The breed of our dog is known for minimal moulting, he is given high quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

Q My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?
A Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with him unless they wish to. We hope to work closely with parents of children who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.

Appendix 3 - School Dog Risk Assessment

RISK ASSESSMENT	Activity or location being assessed: Harrietsham CEP School The Dog Mentor: Max The Dog Mentor registration number: DMD241170	
Establishment: Harrietsham CE Primary School	Assessment by: Jenny Duckworth	Date of original Risk Assessment: 18/07/2024
Review Date: Yearly	Approved by: Jenny Duckworth	Review Date: August 2026 (Reviewed by Jackie Chambers) Next Review: August 2027

The Dog Mentor

RISK ASSESSMENT

Dog Mentor Programme UK

The use of dogs in school is part of the recognised 'Dog Mentor Programme UK'. The use of dogs in the schools is part of a recognised programme and more information can be found at https://www.thedogmentor.co.uk

The dog/s in school has/have undergone the Dog Mentor training and will work towards further awards within this programme. By working towards and gaining the awards the dogs are maintaining the high quality expected of Dog Mentors.

Jackie Chambers undertook her training on 18th July 2024.
Risk Assessment Reviewed: August 2026.

Only staff authorised by the Headteacher and appropriately trained in the school's dog procedures may handle or supervise the dog.

Risk ID	Description	Impact	Owner	Impact	Probability	Risk Rating (Value)	Mitigation Plan	Adj Impact	Adj Probability	Adj. Risk Rating	Contingency Plan	Status
Risk No	Risk written in terms of the issue that could occur	Impact on the school, pupil, handler or dog		select Low, Medium or high	select unlikely, likely, highly likely or certain	Green < 0.25 < Amber < 0.60 < Red	What can be done to prevent the risk being realised	Impact on Risk following mitigation activities	Probability of issue occurring following mitigation activities	Green < 0.25 < Amber < 0.60 < Red	What could be done to minimise the impact if the risk is realised	Commentary of dates, actions and progress to minimise and retire this risk
1	Minor injury to pupil by dog (such as scratches)	Could require medical treatment (in school). Could also impact pupil confidence of working with the dog/s in the future.	Dog Handler	**Low**	**Likely**		• Dog supervised at all times. • Educating pupils and staff on behaviour around dog. • Limiting tricks performed for smaller pupils (high five, etc). • Dog's claws trimmed regularly. • Dog on lead at all times or in crate/office when not being supervised by an adult – dog can be off the lead as long as it is under close control at all times. • Door to office to be locked if dog left for length of time, or signs put on the door, so that children cannot enter when the dog is on its own. • Supervising trained adult to ensure dog is kept on a lead whenever around children – dog can be off the lead as long as it is under close control at all times. If dog has a 'right to roam' all stakeholders are informed of this. Right to Roam means off lead but with owner and not left unsupervised. • Supervising trained adult to ensure dog is exercised away from children - this can be on the field and/or playground when not in use. If in use, dog taken off site to be exercised. • Monitoring of Dog's health and temperament at all times. • Dog trained to not pull while on walking lead. Smaller/younger children to have a second lead whilst adults hold first/main lead.	**Low**	**Unlikely**		• Minor first aid • Parents contacted • Risk assessment reviewed • Debrief from staff in attendance • Accident form completed • Adjustments made if appropriate	Mitigation actions are all in place
2	Serious injury to pupil by dog (such as biting or mauling)	Would require medical treatment (in school or at hospital) after assessment. Could also impact pupil confidence of working with dog/s in the future and being around other dogs outside school.	Dog Handler	**High**	**Unlikely**			**High**	**Unlikely**		• First aid after in school or in hospital after assessment by first aider • Parents contacted • Risk assessment reviewed • Debrief from staff in attendance • Accident form completed • Adjustments made if appropriate	Mitigation actions are all in place
3	Other injuries	Trips, slips or falls not directly related to dog.	Dog Handler	**Low**	**Likely**			**Low**	**Unlikely**		• First aid after in school or in hospital after assessment by first aider • Parents contacted • Risk assessment reviewed • Debrief from staff in attendance • Accident form completed • Adjustments made if appropriate	Mitigation actions are all in place

4	Allergic Reaction	Allergic reaction to dog. Deterioration of healthy child/adult.	Dog Handler / Headteacher	**High**	**Likely**		• All pupils to have completed consent form indicating any known allergies (when joining school). Pupils with severe allergies to not work directly with dog. • A list of pupils with identified animal allergies held by relevant staff. • If child allergic to dogs, consultation with parents before direct dog contact. • All pupils to follow hygiene controls to minimise risk of affecting other pupils - seek medical advice on pupils who may experience serious allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) as pupil's status becomes clear to school to enable additional controls to be put in place. • A letter about the dog will be put in all 'welcome packs' so children and families new to the school will have the information. • Dog will be chosen which is low/non-moulting resulting in low risk of allergic reaction. • Ensure that, in line with school asthma and allergy policy, pupil medication is always carried with/near to the child.	**High**	**Unlikely**		• If dog comes into contact with pupil who has allergy, remove pupil from environment and seek medical advice if symptoms arise.	Mitigation actions are all in place
5	Illness transferred from dog to pupil	Pupil could become unwell after infection requiring treatment and/or time off school. Examples are zoonotic infections, parasites, worms or fleas.	Dog Handler	**Medium**	**Likely**		• Dog to be inoculated against all recommended diseases as per recommended schedule and vaccinations/treatments to be kept up to date. • Worm and flea treatment to be carried out by handler regularly.	**Medium**	**Unlikely**		• Dog has up to date medical history from vets. Flea and worm treatment carried out monthly.	Mitigation actions are all in place
6	Dog excrement	Hygiene issues within school. In extreme cases, faeces can cause a disease which can cause blindness.	Dog Handler	**High**	**Likely**		• Any excrement or urine will be cleaned up immediately and thoroughly disposed of responsibly and hygienically by the owner or adult with responsibility at the time of the incident. • If indoors, the immediate area will be sprayed with a preparatory disinfectant spray and any children will be removed from the area until it is cleared up. • Staff responsible for cleaning animal waste will receive appropriate health and safety instruction. • The dog will be taken outside throughout the day by an adult. This will be: Before the start of the school day and every 2 hours - more if needed. • Dog is toilet trained and will use known strategies to alert staff member if they need to go to the toilet. • Poo bags will be placed in an external bin where the children do not go (where all school rubbish is disposed of).	**High**	**Likely**		• Appropriate action to completely clean area, all waste disposed of in correct manner.	Mitigation actions are all in place

7	General Hygiene	Germs could be spread between dogs and humans.	Dog Handler / Headteacher	**Low**	**Highly likely**		• All staff and pupils to wash hands/use hand sanitiser after coming into contact with dog. • Keep dog away from all food preparation areas and away from pupils during times when they are eating. • The dog will be fed in the owners office. • The dog will be groomed every 6-8 weeks and have additional baths if required throughout the week. • Grooming will also involve nail clipping. • Bedding in the dog crate will be taken home and washed on a regular basis (minimum every school holiday).	**Low**	**Unlikely**		• No contingency plan	Handler to request that handwashing is put in place or introduction of some other method such as alcohol gel or wipes.
8	Impacts on Dog from other animals	If other animals such as dogs, cats or foxes are around in the school grounds, the dog could be attacked or chased which could adversely impact both the dog and/or pupils and staff. The dog/s could react adversely to other animals in school.	Dog Handler	**Medium**	**Unlikely**		• Dog to be kept under control at all times. • Handler to be aware of environment at all times.	**Low**	**Unlikely**		• Dog training and control is required to reduce impact and likelihood of occurrence	Mitigation actions are all in place
9	Minor Injury to dog	Intentional injury to dog by pupil who is showing uncontrollable or unreasonable behaviour. This could also result in injury to pupil if dog reacts adversely. Environmental risks exist where dog could get injured (e.g. open stairways, heavy doors or gates or roads near to school).	Dog Handler	**Medium**	**Likely**		• Handler to be aware of situation at all times. • Pupil's temperament to be monitored. • Pupils showing unacceptable behaviour will not be allowed to work with dog. • On open stairways, dog to be walked on wall side. • Handler to always follow training methods on movement around school. • The dog should be kept on a lead while inside and outside - but can be off the lead as long as it is under close control at all times. • Site has been assessed by The Dog Mentor programme.	**Low**	**Unlikely**		• Handler to intervene if risk is realised. Pupil or dog to be removed from environment. • First aid may be required • Separate first aid kit should be kept on site for school dog.	Mitigation actions are all in place
10	Major Injury to dog	Intentional injury to dog by pupil who is showing uncontrollable or unreasonable behaviour. This could also result in injury to pupil if dog reacts adversely. Environmental risks exist where dog could get injured (e.g. open stairways, heavy doors or gates or roads near to school).	Dog Handler / Headteacher	**High**	**Unlikely**		• As per minor injury risk above.	**High**	**Unlikely**		• Handler to intervene if risk is realised. Pupil or dog to be removed from environment. • First aid to be administered and then taken to vet.	Mitigation actions are all in place

11	General welfare of dog	If overworked, dog could become tired and may display unwanted behaviour or become ill.	Dog Handler	**Medium**	**Likely**		• Handler to be aware of dog's characteristics. • Provide dog with regular breaks and access to water. • Limit the number of pupils working with dog at one time to reduce chance of dog being overwhelmed. • Dog to work according to established/agreed timetable.	**Medium**	**Unlikely**		• Extended rest period for dog	Mitigation actions are all in place
12	Noise, barking	Could cause alarm to children/staff/visitors.	Dog Handler	**Medium**	**Likely**		• If the dog barks at unknown adults– this will be managed by close instruction and positive reinforcement. • Key word to be used to help calm the dog 'settle' - if they do become agitated e.g. handlers to address behaviour and seek advice from The Dog Mentor if it continues.	**Low**	**Likely**		• No contingency plan	Mitigation actions are all in place
13	Training the dog	Dog being over stimulated or not responding to instructions given during training.	Dog Handler	**Medium**	**Unlikely**		• The training of the dog will always be supervised by an appropriately trained adult. • Pupils will be told how to feed the dog treats- on an open hand. • The dog will not be made to do things it doesn't want to do. • If the dog shows any distress, the training will stop immediately. • Pupils will be reminded to wash their hands after training.	**Low**	**Likely**		• No contingency plan	Mitigation actions are all in place
14	Fire drill and evacuation	Dog being left in building unattended following evacuation. This would be against the provisions of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and would cause undue distress for the dog and place it at considerable risk of harm.	Dog Handler	**High**	**Likely**		• Individual supervising the dog/young person will be responsible for safely leading the dog and others in their charge from the building to a place of safety. • The supervising trained adult will ensure the dog is placed on a lead if they aren't already. • Dog should be signed in and out of school so that staff know when he is on site.	**Medium**	**Likely**		• No contingency plan	Mitigation actions are all in place
15	Canine related diseases and parasites	Germs could be spread between dogs and humans.	Dog Handler	**Low**	**Likely**		• The dog has regular vet checks. • The dog will not come to school if poorly or has an injury. • Dog to have necessary and current vaccinations before coming into school. Vaccinations and other medical treatment are the responsibility of the owner- see above for dates. • Dog to have regular veterinary checks. • Dog to be bathed and groomed regularly- see above for dates.	**Low**	**Likely**		• No contingency plan	Mitigation actions are all in place

All visitors to the school are informed when the dog is on site and can request alternative arrangements.
The 'School Dog' sign will be displayed in the front office window whenever the dog is on site.

The school holds public liability insurance. The insurance company have been informed that the school dog attends site.
The dog owner holds insurance for the dog's medical needs.

Anyone who is uncomfortable to have contact with the dog will not be expected to do so.

Images of pupils engaging with the school dog will only be used in accordance with the school's Photography and Data Protection Policies.

The school dog will only be in school in the presence of Jackie Chambers, the named handler.
If Jackie Chambers is absent for any time, another member of the Senior Leadership Team will be allocated handler responsibilities.

The Headteacher reserves the right to immediately remove the school dog from site at any time if concerns arise regarding safety, welfare, behaviour or suitability.

REVIEWS:
To be reviewed yearly (by August 2027) or if any changes occur to the school community (pupils individual needs) or the dog.
Reviewed: August 2026.
Update needed August 2027or if any changes occur to the school community (pupils individual needs) or the dog.

DATE OF LAST REVIEW:	**REVIEWED BY:**	**COMMENTS:**
August 2026	**Jackie Chambers**	**Risk Assessment up-to-date. No major changes needed.**

Appendix 4 - School Dog Licences





