

# School Dog Policy

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a school dog. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with Robbie.

## Our school values

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**Inspiring** – Robbie is fun! He will greet you with a wagging tail and unconditional love which will inspire you to come into school on time each day.

**Discovering** – Robbie will provide children with the opportunity to experience something special which they may not in their home environment.

**Caring** – Robbie is part of the Inspire family. Just like humans, Robbie feels emotion and pain and so you must ensure that you care for him.

**Improving** – Robbie teaches us how to be patient. He does not always do as he is asked first time. Keep trying and don't give up!

**Achieving** – Robbie can't wait to share your achievements with him. Work hard and aim high to make him proud.



The Inspire Academy school dog, Robbie, will live with Miss Richards, the SENDCo. Robbie has regular pet insurance alongside further third party liability insurance. Robbie joined the Inspire team when he was 8 weeks old and has been trained and socialised from an early age. Robbie will regularly visit the vet for check-ups and will be up to date with all his immunisations.

- The dog will be owned by Miss Richards
- The governors have agreed for the school to have a dog.
- Staff have been informed, through staff briefing, that the school will have a dog.
- Parents were originally informed by letter that a dog will be in school.
- A risk assessment has been written
- Staff, visitors and pupils known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog.
- 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 adult.
- Pupils must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times when the dog is present with pupils.
- Pupils should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog. Pupils should remain calm around the dog. They should not make sudden movements and must never stare into a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog.
- Pupils should never go near or disturb the dog if it is sleeping or eating.

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- Pupils must not be allowed to play too roughly with the dog.
- If the dog is surrounded by a large number of pupils, the dog could become nervous and agitated. Therefore the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that s/he monitors the situation.
- Pupils should wash their hands after handling the dog
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately, with the affected area appropriately disinfected.
- Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring 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.

## Reasons to have a School Dog

### Attendance

Pupils with poor attendance can be encouraged back into school using caring for a Robbie, as an incentive. Robbie often greets children on the school gate which supports our anxious pupils.

### Behaviour

Some of our children find it very difficult to regulate their behaviour for a range of reasons and this can interfere with learning. Some schools are using dogs to improve behaviour problems by promoting positive behaviour in pupils. In a controlled study, pupils were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Pupils' behaviour improved toward teachers, and pupils 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.

### Reading

Reading programmes with dogs do wonders for some pupils. 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," pupils find social support and peer interaction. Dogs prove to be incredibly calm and happy to have a student 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. Above all they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. Research has proved that pupils 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 pupils they mix with.

## Social Development

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching pupils social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help pupils build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. With a dog in the classroom, pupils have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving pupils in the daily care of classroom dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The pupils also learn about responsibility, caring, and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities pupils will be allowed to undertake. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem.

## Therapy

Dogs can work with pupils on a one-one basis and will especially help those pupils who have been bullied, abused, going through upsetting/difficult times or even scared/phobic of dogs. The dog will bring much joy and help to all the pupils they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the pupils they are spending time with. Pupils who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

## Routine

- Robbie has a space near Mrs Armstrong's office – secured by a doggy gate
- Robbie has a crate down in KS1
- Robbie will come into school with Miss Richards
- Robbie will take regular breaks on the front field – any dog foul is immediately disposed of in the appropriate waste disposal bin
- Robbie will visit classrooms / individual pupils
- Robbie can greet pupils on the gate when coming into school / leaving school
- Robbie will always be supervised by an appropriate adult