

Nurture Dog Policy

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1 Policy Statement

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Therapy Dog Risk Assessment which is a separate document.

Grace Mary Primary School is committed to the safety of its students, employees and visitors. This policy has been put in place to ensure that the welfare of the Nurture Dog is a priority, whilst ensuring the safety of all persons on the school site.

Grace Mary Primary School does not allow dogs on the school site unless specifically authorised by the head teacher or are assistant dogs (dogs for the blind etc.). This includes drop off and collection times.

This policy outlines the measures put in place to allow for the school to authorise for a nurture dog on the school site.

2 Rationale

The value of pet 'therapy' is widely accepted to aid in benefitting students' communication, educational and emotional skills, as well as the development of responsibility and empathy.

As well as the additional benefits, students take great enjoyment from interacting with pets on the school site.

3 Information

The dog's owner's are identified as: Simon Cains/Elizabeth Sturmeay

School Base: Grace Mary Primary School

Dog will be situated: Luna- The Main School Office
Buddy- The Wellbeing Office

4 Communication and introduction of the dog

The school has ensured that prior to the placement of the dog that all stakeholders have been informed.

Employees will be communicated via staff briefing and notices.

Letters will be sent to all parents/carers informing them of the school's decision to have a nurture dog placed within the site and the benefits and risks of the nurture dog. Letters will be forward to the parents/carers of any new students.

Students will be informed via assemblies and through class time. Any new students will be informed as part of our open evening.

All visitors will be informed that there is a dog on site via a sign on the office window. This will be openly advertised on our website.

It is acceptable that interacting with animals is not appropriate for all children but that for most it has the potential to provide many positive benefits. Any parents who do not wish their child to interact with the dog are invited to write to inform the school of their wishes.

5 Health and safety

To ensure the safety and welfare of our students, employees, visitors and the nurture dog, the following actions are in place:

- The dog will be kept on a lead at all times when moving around the school site or on a walk.
- The dog will be under the full control and supervision of an adult at all times
- Students will never be left alone with the dog
- The dog may be let off lead with a small group of students if appropriate. Dog handler will judge the dog's mood, ensure a calm atmosphere and ensure the dog has his jacket on.
- Students and employees will be informed on how to act around the dog e.g. no sudden movements, do not put face near dog, approach whilst standing up, and do not stroke face. The visitors leaflet will contain information on how to act around the dog to ensure all persons on site are fully informed.
- Students will be informed not to disturb the dog whilst sleeping or eating. The dog will have a designated quiet place where it can rest and eat.
- The number of students having access at one time will be monitored and limited to a reasonable amount
- Students and employees will be trained to read the dog's body's language and adults will remove the dog from situations if body language shows uncomfortable behaviours e.g. Dog is growling and bearing teeth – dog is angry
Dog's ears are back, tail lowered between legs – dog is frightened
- Dog will be kept away from any area of the school where food is being prepared e.g. breakfast club, lunch hall and playgrounds at break/lunch time
- Anyone who has access to the dog will be encouraged to wash their hands following interaction
- Dog will be discouraged from jumping, scratching or licking
- Students will only access the dog when they are scheduled to meet or work with the dog.
- The dog will be kept in the office when not working.

The dog will not be linked with a student where there is a high risk of the student injuring the dog or putting themselves in danger with the dog.

6 Allergies and phobias

All employees and students have been asked to inform the school of any allergies or other reasons they do not wish to be in contact with the dog. This will be collated on the ARBOR system and a list held by the dog's owner and handlers. Any person with an allergy or phobia of the dog will be kept away from the dog as much as possible.

All visitors will be informed via our visitor leaflet about the dog, and any issues will be reported directly to the dog owner.

7 Welfare of Nurture Dog

It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that:

- The dog is regularly groomed and checked for signs of infection or other illness
- If the dog is unwell then he will not be allowed on the school site until health is restored
- The dog will be diagnosed and treated by a registered vet as necessary
- The dog will receive relevant vaccinations. The owner will be responsible for keeping a record of dates when vaccinations are undertaken.
- The dog will be wormed every six months
- Claws will be trimmed to reduce risk of accidental scratching
- The dog will be required to wear a collar with a tag at all times stipulating his name and the contact numbers of the owner. The dog will be microchipped and will be registered to the owner
- Pet insurance will be in place to ensure that the dog is covered for any injury which occurs during the school hours
- The dog will have rest periods scheduled throughout the day to allow them to rest and eat without disruption
- The dog and its handlers will be fully trained by a professional, registered organisation
- The dog will be kept out of circulation at lesson changeover, social times and drop off/pick up
- The dog will not be allowed around site immediately after break/lunch time. This will allow for any dropped food to be cleared, to prevent the dog from eating foods which may be poisonous to their system e.g. chocolate
- In relation to mitigating noise from the dog, the dog will be situated in an office which is away from communal areas and classrooms which should reduce noise disruption.

Any dog excrement will be cleaned up immediately by an adult using the appropriate cleaning products. Students will not be permitted to clean up any excrement from the dog. A designated toilet area has been identified for the dog away from the playgrounds, this can be located in an area of the school which is not frequented by staff and students. The area will be cleaned using animal safe disinfectant.

8 Curriculum

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

The dog will be supporting students with

- Reading – Students to read to the dog to help build their confidence in reading to someone who is non-judgemental
- Responsibility and Life Skills – students responsible for walking and feeding the dog to learn the importance of taking responsibility for a living creature
- Welfare – the dog to be involved with students who may require someone to talk to or stroke/play with when feeling overwhelmed
- Rewards – to be involved in rewarding students, particularly those who have an interest in dogs and would like to be involved in their care.

Trained staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the Nurture dog.

Training

A credited training provider has been identified to complete training with the dog and owner. The dog will undergo a training programme through the 'Dog Mentor programme'. The mentor programme uses Animal Assisted Activities to help teach and engage children with educational needs working on areas such as self-esteem, behaviour, peer relationships and better engagement skills. It builds upon the benefits of the human/animal bond by providing children with positive experiences with dogs that can help them educationally, developmentally, emotionally and socially.

Copies of all certificates will be maintained on the school site.

9 Complaints and Allegations

Grace Mary Primary School has completed a thorough risk assessment to allow for the dog to be present on the school site. The risk assessment will be reviewed and updated annually unless required earlier than the review date.

If anyone reports having an issue with the dog, they will be asked to raise their concerns in writing and this will be responded in line with our complaints procedure.

Should anyone get hurt by the dog:

- Parents will be informed immediately (if student)
- First aid will be administered and an incident form will be completed
- Employee or students will be released for medical attention (if required)
- A full investigation of circumstances will be undertaken. The dog will not be permitted on site until the investigation is complete
- The suitability of the dog will be reassessed by the school once the investigation has been completed

Should the dog get hurt by someone:

- Owner will be informed immediately
- Owner will visit a registered vet if deemed necessary and an incident form will be completed
- A full investigation of circumstances will be undertaken
- The access of the person responsible for injuring the dog will be reassessed by the school once the investigation has been completed

10 Contingency

Contingency if dog escapes

If the dog escapes from the school, is loose on the school grounds, and will not return, the following process needs to be followed:

- Owner will be informed immediately
- Owner and other identified handlers/staff members will be asked to secure exits to prevent the dog from leaving the grounds
- Students will be informed not to approach the dog and not to chase the dog
- Owner will secure dog with lead using training commands
- The dog will be required to wear a collar with a tag at all times stipulating his name and the contact numbers of the school and owner

If the dog escapes from the school grounds the following process needs to be followed

- Owner will be informed immediately

- Owner and other identified handlers/staff members will be asked to search the surrounding area. Students will be informed not to approach the dog and not to chase the dog.
- If found, owner will secure dog with lead using training commands.
- If not found the missing dog will be reported to the correct outside agencies e.g. dog warden.
- The dog will be required to wear a collar with a tag at all times stipulating his name and the contact numbers of the school and owner.

In case of an emergency evacuation/fire drill the following process needs to be followed:

- The appropriate adult will walk the dog on a lead to the assembly post.
- The dog will be passed to the owner who will stand with the dog.
- The dog will remain with the owner until the building is deemed safe and all students have re-entered classrooms.
- If the owner is not on site when there is an evacuation, then another member of staff will be responsible for the ownership of the dog during this time.

In case of severe weather, the following process needs to be followed:

In cases of severe hot weather:

- The dog will only be walked during cooler periods of the day (during morning or evening) to prevent overheating and burns to paws.
- The dog will have a supply of water throughout the day.
- A fan will be provided to keep the dog cool during rest periods if required.

In cases of severe cold weather:

- The dog will only be walked if the ground is deemed appropriate (e.g. clear of snow and ice) to prevent frostbite.
- The dog will be kept in a room which is warm during rest and work periods.

The school will ensure that the welfare of the dog is its priority and the owner will not take unnecessary risks to bring the dog onto site in severe weather conditions.

11 Further reading

www.dogstrust.org.uk

www.dogshelpingkids.co.uk

www.rspca.org.uk

www.booktrust.org.uk/news-and-features/features/2017/august/how-these-adorable-dogs-are-helping-children-love-reading/

www.pdsa.org.uk

Appendix 1 – Responsibilities

School Name:	Grace Mary Primary School
The Owners:	Simon Cains Elizabeth Sturmev
The Handlers:	Simon Cains Elizabeth Sturmev Lisa Smith Fiona Garner
In case that the owner is absence at a time of an emergency evacuation, the dog will be cared for by:	Clare Sturmev
The dogs base will be:	Main School Office Wellbring Room
The School will be responsible for: • To ensure that the policy is adhered to by staff, students and visitors to the site • To ensure that the dog has an appropriate rest area, feeding area and toilet area away from busy school areas • To ensure adequate insurance is in place for the dog whilst within the school • That all handlers have received appropriate training	
The Owner will be responsible for: • Ensuring that the dog is on site every day during term unless the dog is unwell. • The dog is regularly groomed and checked for signs of infection or other illness • If the dog is unwell, that he will be diagnosed and treated by a registered vet • That the dog will receive relevant vaccinations and that a record of dates of vaccinations are held on the school site. • The dog will be wormed every six months • That the dog's claws are trimmed to reduce risk of accidental scratching • That the owner is office based and available when needed in case of emergency • That the dog is cared for outside of the school to a high standard • To ensure that the dogs rest and food area within the school is kept clean and in line with health and safety standards • To ensure adequate insurance is in place for the dog outside of school hours • To ensure adequate insurance is in place for the dog whilst within the school	
The Handlers will be responsible for: • For undertaking training to handle the dog • Ensuring that the dog is cared for whilst being handled by students • To be available in case of emergency e.g. dog escaping	

Appendix 2 – Reasons for a dog

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) Calming behaviours
- 4) Increase social skills and self-esteem
- 5) Increase confidence
- 6) Teach responsibility and respect to all life
- 7) Help improve attendance
- 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. It was found that violent behaviour in participating students declined by 55%, and general aggression went down 62%. 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.

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 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. The 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 school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching student's 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-one basis and will especially help those students 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 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.

Appendix 3 – FAQ

School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

Yes. The dog is from a home where both parents were seen and has been specifically chosen for its temperament.

Will the dog be a distraction?

The dog will be kept in the office area. The office is separate from the classrooms and playground area to ensure it only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision.

The dog will also have a space to spend time in classrooms and in the school grounds where children can interact safely.

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

Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in the school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog.

How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?

In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks in the 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, apart from assistant dogs, on the school grounds 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.

How will the dog's welfare be considered?

The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. Parents will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to be able to walk with a member of staff and the dog during that time.

The dog 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.

How will this be managed where staff, students or visitors have allergies?

People may not need to touch a dog, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. 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 all to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies. The dog will be given a high quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens and the school will be cleaned daily. A list of all known staff and students with allergies will be held on our SIMS system.

Someone is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?

Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and staff, students and visitors do not need to have close contact with it unless permission for this has been given. We hope to work closely with all who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.

Appendix 4 – DO's and DON'Ts when handling the dog

DO'S	DON'T
• Be polite and kind to the dog • Learn to recognise the dogs behaviours (see below) • Play appropriately • Keep the dog on the lead when around school site • Approach the dog whilst standing • Only approach the dog if there is an adult present • Keep the number of people with the dog to a low amount • Stand still and cross your arms to stop the dog running after you • Approach the dog with the back of your hand when stroking, and stroke the back only • Wash your hand once you have interacted with the dog	• Rough play with the dog • Don't tease the dog • Don't disturb the dog when he is sleeping or eating • Don't make sudden movements • Don't put your face near the dog • Do not touch the dogs face, ears, tail or legs • Do not approach the dog without an adult present • Do not allow the dog in areas where food is being prepared or eaten • Don't encourage the dog to jump up

A happy dog



- Dog has a relaxed body posture, smooth hair, mouth open and relaxed, ears in natural position, wagging tail, eyes normal shape.
- Dog is inviting play with bottom raised, smooth hair, high wagging tail, eyes normal shape, ears in natural position, may be barking excitedly.
- Dog's weight is distributed across all four paws, smooth hair, tail wagging, face is interested and alert, relaxed and open mouth.

A worried dog



- Dog is standing but body posture and head position is low. Tail is tucked under, ears are back and dog is yawning.
- Dog is lying down and avoiding eye contact or turning head away from you and lip licking and ears are back.
- Dog is sitting with head lowered, ears are back, tail tucked away, not making eye contact, yawning, raising a front paw.

An angry or very unhappy dog



- Dog is standing with a stiffened body posture, weight forward, ears are up, hair raised, eyes looking at you – pupils dark and enlarged, tail is up and stiff, wrinkled nose.
- Dog is lying down cowering, ears flat, teeth showing, tail down between legs.
- Dog is standing with body down and weight towards the back, head is tilted upwards, mouth tight, lips drawn back, teeth exposed, eyes staring, ears back and down, snarling.

Appendix 5 – Letter to parents introducing dog/Permission Letter

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are very excited to let you know about a new member of staff who will be joining us at Grace Mary Primary School. Next half term we will be welcoming a nurture dog who will come to the school each day as an integral part of our school community.

The dog chosen will be a which are a breed of dog that are known for their gentle and loving temperament and ability to learn. They are also a breed which is hypoallergenic meaning children who suffer from Asthma or allergies should not be affected by the fur.

- The main reason for having a school dog is to work towards providing a means of helping the students to develop and improve their positive welfare and mental wellbeing.
- Emotional – spending time with an animal, a school dog improves self-esteem, acceptance from others and lifts mood, often provoking laughter and fun. Dogs can also teach compassion and respect for other living things as well as relieving anxiety.
- Physical – interaction with a furry friend reduces blood pressure, provides tactile stimulation, assists with pain management, gives motivation to move, walk and improve fitness and stimulates the senses.
- Social – a dog provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, encourages responsibility, wellbeing and focused interaction with others.
- Learning – companionship with a dog stimulates memory, problem-solving and game-playing
- Reading – reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop literacy skills and build confidence, through both the calming effect the dog's presence has on children as well as the fact that a dog will listen to children read without being judgemental or critical. This comforting environment helps to nurture children's enthusiasm for reading and provides them with the confidence to read aloud.
- Environmental – a dog in a school increases the sense of a family environment, with all of the above benefits continuing long after the school day is over.

Some questions you might have:

My child has/I have allergies:

Our dog will be subjected to the most thorough cleanliness and grooming regime. She will also only be allowed in situations with persons who voluntarily wish to work with him. Your permission will of course be sought in advance of him having access to, and working with, your child in the school/Your permission of course will be sought in advance of him working with you.

Will he be properly cared for?

The dog will be extremely well looked after. She will live with a member of staff and their family and will come to the school daily. She will remain on a lead and under the control of an adult at all times. She will listen to our students read and will take part in lessons where the focus is on emotional and mental wellbeing. The work she does will develop and involve as she grows and matures. She will undergo thorough and rigorous training so he will quickly learn to become extremely well-behaved. He will also be assessed by a 'Dog mentor' Assessor when she is the right age. When at school, the dog will have access to his crate in a quiet office area where he can relax during the day. He will visit the vet regularly for all of his injections as well as regular check-ups. If he is unwell for any reason she will stay at home with a dog sitter. A set of rules have been drawn up with the staff and will be

shared with all students via assembly as part of the build up to the dog starting at the school. These will be agreed by all staff and students and the adults in the school will ensure that they are adhered to.

My child is /I am scared of dogs

Some people may have had upsetting experiences and thus have a fear of dogs (or another animal). Our dog will only be in direct contact with persons whose permission has been given. However, his training will help him to be calm and be gentle. With proper guidance and handling, you can learn to overcome a fear of animals and grow in respect and appreciation for them. Some people may never learn to love animals, but to learn to accept them within their environment is important in this age, where people come across dogs everywhere within our community.

The school has a 'no dogs' policy

Our nurture dog would be regarded as having similar impact as a member of staff, supporting the student. For this reason, he would be an exception to this rule. His documents and qualifications will be held on file in the office in the same way as staff members' documentation is kept. These would include:

- Full and up-to-date vaccination and professional health records
- Personal pet insurance document
- Public liability insurance document
- Full risk assessment
- Record of 'qualifications' which he may be awarded at the appropriate time such as the Dog mentor accreditation.

The dog will be kept on a lead at all times when moving around the school site.

We hope you will join us in welcoming our new dog to the Grace Mary family and embrace all the benefits that he has to offer the school. A letter to seek your permission regarding contact with our nurture dog will be sent home at the appropriate time before his arrival. If you have any further questions regarding our Nurture Dog, please do not hesitate to email office@gracemary.sandwell.sch.uk



Dear Parents and Carers

Nurture and therapy dogs

We are excited to introduce you to our newest staff members.

These two gorgeous labradoodles will be joining us at the school at the end of this term to eventually become Nurture and Therapy Dogs.

These dogs were chosen for their gentle and loving temperament and ability to learn. They will be attending the school daily to work alongside our staff members in the promotion of positive wellbeing.

We at the school are aware that some students may have reasons on why they do not wish to have direct contact with the dogs. Please can you complete and return the below slip to the school office by Friday 28th January to allow us to ensure that your wishes and feelings are known prior to the dogs joining us.

Although we will attempt to ensure that any student who does not have permission to have contact with the dogs does not come into contact with him, this may be unavoidable when moving the dogs to different rooms around the school. However, we will ensure that the dogs will be kept on a lead at all times when moving around the school site.

Yours sincerely

S Cains

Deputy Head

I do/do not give permission for _____ to have contact with the Nurture Dog during the school day.

I/My Child has an allergy to dogs

Yes ☐

No ☐

Parent name: (please print) _____

Parent signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 7

Name of staff member

I have read and understood the school Dog policy

Signed..... Date

Please tick as many as appropriate:

I am happy to around dogs ☐

I am a little nervous of dogs ☐

I am fearful of dogs but, in time, I would like them to work with the dog to develop their confidence with and understanding of dogs ☐

I am scared of dogs and would not like to meet her ☐

I would be happy to be involved with aspects of caring for the school dog if required ☐

I would be happy see the school therapy dog in my classroom ☐

I do not want to come into direct contact with the dog ☐

Other information that you feel is relevant:

