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Responsibility: KB

# Bishop Challoner School



## School Dog Policy

## 1 Introduction

Research has shown many benefits to wellbeing and reading dogs in school settings. Bishop Challoner School has a school dog who works with our pupils to improve literacy and pupil behaviour and wellbeing. This policy is designed to set out to pupils, parents and visitors the reasons for having a school dog at Bishop Challoner School. (*Section 2 – The benefits of a school dog*) and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of pupils, staff, visitors and the school dog (*Sections 3 and 4 – Principles and Code of Conduct*). Although there is a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment, this can be mitigated against with a robust risk assessment to ensure the safety of all pupils, staff and visitors (*Appendix A – Risk Assessment*).

## 2 The Benefits of a School Dog

School dogs have been proven to help develop pupils' reading skills, improve behaviour, attendance and academic confidence, as well as increasing pupil understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills. At Bishop Challoner School we have a school dog to support our staff team in bringing all of these benefits to our pupils.

### 2.1 Literacy benefits

*“Reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop literacy skills and build confidence, through both the calming effect the dogs' presence has on children and the fact that the dog will listen to the children read without being judgmental or critical. This comforting environment helps nurture children's enthusiasm for reading and provides them with the confidence needed to read aloud. When dogs are in a room of children trying to read they become less stressed, less self-conscious and more confident because dogs are non-judgmental. If children are partnered with a dog to read to, the dog provides comfort, encourages positive social behaviour, enhances self-esteem, motivates speech and inspires children to have fun and enjoy the experience of reading.”*

- **Bark & Read – The Kennel Club**  
(<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/barkandread>)

*“Children who read to dogs are less likely to be embarrassed reading aloud and find the experience less stressful. Research has proved that children who read to dogs show an increase in reading levels, word recognition, and a higher desire to read and write.”*

- **School Dog Policy – The White Horse Federation**  
(<https://www.ridgewaysschool.com/downloads/default/TWHF-School-Dog-Policy-V2.pdf>)

### 2.2 Therapy benefits

*“Therapy Dogs Nationwide dogs have also shown to help with special needs and autistic children and adults by giving focus and providing a calming environment.”*

- **School Dogs - Therapy Dogs Nationwide** (<http://www.tdn.org.uk/schools/>)

### 2.3 Attendance & punctuality benefits

Pupils with below average attendance are encouraged back into school using caring for the dog as an incentive. By telling a pupil that “if he/she didn't come to school to care for the dog, they wouldn't get walks, water or love”, is a real incentive for pupils.

## 2.4 Behaviour & rewards

Researchers report that pupils 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 pupils 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 pupils. In a controlled study, pupils were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Pupils' behaviour improved towards teachers, and pupils also showed more confidence and responsibility.

Additionally, parents have reported that children seemed more interested in school as a result of having a dog at school.

## 3 Principles

- 3.1 The Headteacher, and Chair of Trustees, both agree to a school dog ("Beryl") working in the school.
- 3.2 Only the school dog ("Beryl") 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 approved their presence prior to the visit.
- 3.3 Beryl is a pug. She was chosen because pugs are bred to be a companion and a pleasure to their owners. Pugs have **an even and stable temperament, great charm, and an outgoing, loving disposition**. Pugs live to please people, so they are generally easy to train. Their feelings are easily hurt, because it is an intelligent breed that will respond well to training and which is known to be good with children, sheds little hair, and is very sociable and friendly.
- 3.4 Beryl's legal owner is Ms Chamberlain. Ms Chamberlain has responsibility for the welfare of the school dog and all expenses relating to pet insurance, food and other expenses and ensuring that the dog is vaccinated, wormed and flea treated.
- 3.5 Ms Chamberlain the legal owner of the school dog, has produced a risk assessment which has been approved by the Safeguarding Lead and this will be reviewed annually.
- 3.6 The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Ms Chamberlain or other trained staff members.
- 3.7 The school's liability insurance covers the school for risk related to a working dog on site. The Bursar has responsibility for ensuring this remains on the school's policy during Beryl's time working at Bishop Challoner School.
- 3.8 Staff, parents and pupils will be informed in writing that a dog will be in school.
- 3.9 Parents can indicate that their child is not allowed to be present during dog wellbeing sessions or have contact with the dog by emailing [office@bishopchallonerschool.com](mailto:office@bishopchallonerschool.com) or calling the school.
- 3.10 The presence of a school dog will be sign posted to visitors at reception and the school website. Reception staff will relay visitor issues to the Headteacher's PA as soon as possible.

## **4 Code of Conduct**

### ***4.1 Staff Responsibilities***

- 4.1.1 Ms Chamberlain will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.
- 4.1.2 If the dog is ill she will not be allowed into school. Ms Chamberlain has responsibility for ensuring appropriate alternative care for Beryl if she is not able to be in the school on a given day.
- 4.1.3 Beryl must be carried or kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of a trained adult. Beryl must be carried on staircases.
- 4.1.4 Beryl will be kept in Ms Chamberlain's office or the SEND room when not interacting with pupils for wellbeing or reading sessions. Beryl will only visit designated wellbeing or reading lessons and not be allowed in other areas of the school.
- 4.1.5 Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near Beryl. The office keeps a list of all pupils and staff with a reported allergy to dogs and ensures that all trained handlers for Beryl know who these pupils and staff are.
- 4.1.6 Staff leading wellbeing or reading sessions with Beryl have a responsibility to ensure all staff, pupils or visitors present are happy for Beryl to enter the room.
- 4.1.7 Pupils must never be left alone with Beryl and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- 4.1.8 Pupils will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog before any interaction during a wellbeing session or visit.
- 4.1.9 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. If the dog is displaying any warning signs such as growling or flattening of her ears, she should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment by the trained staff member handling her.
- 4.1.10 Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by the trained dog handling staff only. The designated dog toilet area is on the front grass near the Cottage. The designated bin for bags of dog waste is near the Cottage.
- 4.1.11 Bishop Challoner School staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog to better inform research into the benefits of a school wellbeing / reading dog.

## **4.2 Pupil Responsibilities**

- 4.2.1 Pupils whose parents have withdrawn consent are not allowed to attend dog wellbeing sessions.
- 4.2.2 Pupils should be careful to stroke Beryl on her body, chest, back and her head.
- 4.2.3 Pupils are not allowed to approach Beryl or disturb her whilst she is sleeping or eating.
- 4.2.4 Pupils are not allowed to play roughly with Beryl.
- 4.2.5 Pupils must wait until Beryl is sitting or lying down before touching or stroke her.
- 4.2.6 Pupils are not allowed to eat during sessions with Beryl.
- 4.2.7 Pupils must always wash their hands after handling / stroking Beryl.
- 4.2.8 Pupils understand that any deliberate violence or threatening behaviour towards Beryl will result in a sanction.

## **5 Beryl**



Reviewed by: K Brooker  
Reviewed: January 2024  
Next Review Date: January 2025

Appendix A – School Dog Risk Assessment

Hazard	At risk			Existing Control measures
	Pupils	Staff	Visitors	
<p><b>Animal behaviour</b></p> <p>Staff, pupils or visitors could be injured if the Beryl is not comfortable in a specific school environment and reacts badly, including bites or scratches</p>	Medium	Medium	Medium	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 The dog will receive ongoing formal training, socializing and conditioning within the school environment</li> <li>2 Pupils and parents are warned of the hazard before wellbeing sessions with Beryl and take part only with consent.</li> <li>3 Pupils are taught appropriate behaviour around Beryl and what to do to prevent over stimulating or upsetting the dog and how to remain calm around her. Pupils are closely supervised by an adult during dog wellbeing sessions</li> <li>4 Pupils are never left with Beryl unsupervised</li> <li>5 Beryl will always be in the care of a responsible adult who will have received handling</li> <li>6 training.</li> <li>7 If Beryl exhibits any warning behaviours such as growling or lowered ears she will be removed immediately from pupils</li> <li>8 Beryl resides in Ms Chamberlain’s office or the SEND office and is not out in the school community outside of designated wellbeing, reading and reward sessions unless with an adult. Beryl will always be on a lead or carried when she is out of Ms Chamberlain’s office or the SEND room. Signage will indicate that pupils are only allowed in this area unless with staff supervision.</li> <li>9 In the event that a pupil, staff member or visitor is bitten or scratched (even if only a “play” bite) a first aid trained member of staff will inspect and assess the injury. The suitability of Beryl will then be reassessed by Ms Chamberlain.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Disease, Illness &amp; Allergic Reactions</b></p> <p>Staff, pupils or visitors could suffer ill health if they come into contact with animal feces or</p>	Medium	Medium	Low	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 All immunisations (including rabies vaccination) are kept up to date in accordance with European Pet Passport scheme and Ms Chamberlain is responsible for keeping a register of this.</li> <li>2 Flea treatment is carried out at monthly intervals. Worming treatment is carried out in compliance with European Vet guidelines, at 3 monthly intervals.</li> <li>3 Beryl will not go in the school dining hall at meal times; she will not be permitted into the food preparation area of the kitchen or the cooking room.</li> </ol>

urine or have an allergy to dogs				<p>4 The office will keep at all times an up to date list of pupils with known allergic reactions and these pupils are not present during wellbeing, reading or reward sessions with the dog</p> <p>5 Beryl is taken regularly outside the school building for toilet facilities by a designated member of staff trained to handle the school dog. The designated dog toilet area is on the front grass near the Cottage.</p> <p>6 All waste produced by the dog, whether accidental or routine, is handled and disposed of hygienically by designated staff members. Contaminated items and surfaces are immediately washed and disinfected.</p> <p>7 Pupils and adults are not allowed to eat around Beryl.</p> <p>8 Pupils and adults must always wash their hands after handling Beryl.</p> <p>9 Immediate medical assistance will be sought where an allergic reaction does not subside once the animal and afflicted person are kept apart.</p>
<p><b>Animal Phobias</b></p> <p>Staff or pupils could suffer distress themselves or distress Beryl if they become scared or upset around her</p>	Medium	Low	Low	<p>1. Pupils are encouraged but never forced to take part in dog wellbeing or reading sessions.</p> <p>2. Where there are pupils with phobias, every effort is made to segregate Beryl from those with phobias – this may mean moving a pupil to another room until a wellbeing or reading session is over.</p> <p>3. Outside of wellbeing or reading sessions Beryl is kept in Ms Chamberlain’s office or the SEND office and enters and exits the building outside of break and lesson change over periods.</p> <p>4. Wellbeing, reading and reward sessions will take place only in specific areas of the school (SEND office or specified Preparatory room) where pupils can avoid contact with Beryl if desired.</p>
<p><b>School emergency evacuation (including drills)</b></p> <p>Beryl could become distressed by the evacuation and behave in an unexpected way, e.g. become defensive or try to escape.</p>	Medium	Medium	Low	<p>1. Beryl is accompanied by a trained adult at all times. In the event of an emergency evacuation, immediately proceed to the nearest fire exit and then the adult walks as far as possible from other people evacuating whilst maintaining a safe distance from the building.</p> <p>2. Where possible, Beryl is to be present for sounding of the alarms outside of school hours to observe her response.</p> <p>3. If Beryl manages to escape from an adult during the evacuation, the adult must still evacuate immediately and notify staff outside Beryl’s absence.</p>

<p><b>Claim is made against school</b></p> <p>A parent or visitor could make a claim against the school relating to the behaviour of Beryl</p>	Low	High	Medium	1. The school has public liability insurance which covers liability for a working school dog with certification.
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## **Appendix B: School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) – to *publish to parents***

### **Q Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?**

A The legal owner of the dog will be Ms Chamberlain. She will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support liability insurance and staff training costs only 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 to pupils' learning?**

A The dog will be kept in Ms Chamberlain's office or the SEND room. The dog will only spend time in classrooms for specific planned sessions where pupils can interact safely outside of lesson times and therefore the dog will not be a distraction to pupils during lessons.

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 a dog in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog.

### **Q Who is responsible for training?**

A Ms Chamberlain will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for her training.

### **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 outside the school by staff members to the designated toilet area by the Cottage.

### **Q What if my child is scared of dogs? Will they be forced to be in the same room as the dog?**

A The dog will be kept in Ms Chamberlain's office or SEND room. The office is separate from the classrooms / playground area which will ensure the school dog only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision of a trained member of staff.

The school dog will only be in designated areas for short supervised interaction with pupils. Therefore a pupil will not be forced to be in contact with dog at any time against their wishes. 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.

### **Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?**

A 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. This will also be used as a behaviour reward.

The dog will be kept in Ms Chamberlain's office or SEND room, 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 appropriate access to food and water. We will work carefully to ensure that the dog's welfare is always considered the top priority.

**Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?**

A Children will not need to touch the dog or be in the same room as the dog at any point 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 parents to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies. The school dog was specifically chosen for being a breed known for sociable dispositions and minimal moulting, she will be given a high quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

**Appendix C: Advice on School Dogs**

**The Dogs Trust – School Dogs**

<https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/help-advice/factsheets-downloads/school%20dogs.pdf>

**The Kennel Club – Bark and Read** <https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/barkandread>

**BBC News – “Every school ‘needs dog as stress-buster’”**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-47655600>