



Name of Policy	The Pilgrim School Dog Policy
School Lead	Executive Assistant Head Teacher
Governor Lead	FGB
Date of last Review	25.09.2024
Date of Approval	25.09.2024
Date of next Review	September 2025
Chair of Governors signature:	<i>B. Temple</i> 25.9.24

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I Introduction

Research has shown many benefits to dogs in school settings.

The Pilgrim School has a school dog who works with our pupils to enhance social and academic learning and improve attendance and wellbeing.

This policy is designed to set out to pupils, parents and visitors the reasons for having a school dog and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of the whole community.

Although there is a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment, this can be mitigated against with a robust risk assessment.

2 The benefits of a school dog

School dogs have been proven by multiple research projects to bring extensive benefits to the community. These include:

2.1 Cognitive: companionship with a dog stimulates memory, problem-solving and game-playing. Encouraging expression, participation and shared attention.

2.2 Social: a dog provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, encourages responsibility, wellbeing and focused interaction with others. Encouraging respect and thereby improving pupils' relationships with each other, parents and teachers.

2.3 Emotional: 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, improving behaviour, attendance and concentration, reduced stress and improved self-esteem.

2.4 Physical: interaction with a furry friend reduces blood pressure, provides tactile stimulation, gives motivation to move and stimulates the senses.

2.5 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.

2.6 Reading: reading to dogs has been proven to help pupils develop literacy skills and build confidence, through both the calming effect the dog's presence has as well as the fact that a dog will listen to them read without being judgemental or critical.

3 Principles

- 3.1 The Head Teacher and Chair of Governors both agree to a school dog working in the base settings and wider community.
- 3.2 Only the school dog is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and their presence has been approved prior to the visit.
- 3.3 **Otto** is an F1B Labradoodle chosen 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 **Otto's** legal owner is Bev Lee, Executive Assistant Head Teacher. She has full 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 Bev Lee, the legal owner of the school dog, has produced a risk assessment which has been approved and this is reviewed annually.
- 3.6 The dog is included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of staff members (primarily Bev Lee).
- 3.7 The school's liability insurance covers the school for risk related to a dog on site if a comprehensive risk assessment has taken place.
The School Business Manager has responsibility for ensuring this remains on the school's policy during **Otto's** time working at The Pilgrim School.
- 3.8 Staff, parents and pupils are informed in writing and on initial home visits that a dog will be in school. This information is also available on the school website.
- 3.9 Parents can indicate that their child is not allowed to have contact with the dog by emailing enquiries@pilgrim.lincs.sch.uk A register is kept of any staff or pupils who should not have contact.
- 3.10 The presence of a school dog will be signposted to visitors at reception and the school website. Reception staff will relay any visitor issues to relevant staff as soon as possible.

4 Code of Conduct

4.1 Staff Responsibilities

- 4.1.1 Bev Lee knows the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times. **Otto** is still a young dog (born 2022) and whilst building independence and joining pupils on activities such as lessons, meetings, reading and play, he still spends the majority of his time with his owner as a trusted person and has regular food/exercise/sleep breaks in his day.
- 4.1.2 If the dog is ill he will not be allowed into school. Bev Lee has responsibility for ensuring appropriate alternative care if he is not able to be in the school on a given day.
- 4.1.3 Bev Lee is responsible for ensuring **Otto** is completing Kennel Club approved training sessions. He is currently working towards being a 'gold good citizen' having completed puppy, bronze and silver.
- 4.1.4 **Otto should** be kept on a lead when moving around the school unless all pupils and staff are confident to be approached by him. He is under the full control and supervision of a suitable adult at all times.
- 4.1.5 **Otto** rests in the office area when not interacting with students and this is his identified safe space with access to a bed.
- 4.1.6 Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs should not go near the dog.
The School keeps a record of all pupils and staff with a reported allergy to dogs (dander) and ensures that the handler knows who these are.
- 4.1.7 Pupils must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times. Appropriate adults are identified as those who have built up a familiar and trusting relationship with **Otto** and are aware of his training commands and needs. Supervision may be direct or indirect depending on the confidence of the pupils interacting with **Otto**, for example, pupils may conduct a training session with him (as directed by his owner) and are therefore in control of the dog but adults are always present.
- 4.1.8 Pupils are regularly reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog before interaction or visits and during activities if excitement levels rise.
- 4.1.9 If the dog is surrounded by a large number of children, or boisterous activity, he could become nervous/excited 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 his ears, he should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment by the staff member handling him.

- 4.1.10 Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by staff only.
- 4.1.11 Most pupil interactions with **Otto** are planned and pre-requested by named handlers to avoid overwhelm. However, there are occasions where this may not be the case should a pupil become distressed/request some time. These ad hoc interactions are carefully monitored to prevent fatigue.

4.2 Pupil Responsibilities

- 4.2.1 Pupils whose parents have withdrawn consent are not allowed to interact with the dog.
- 4.2.2 Pupils should be careful to stroke **Otto** on his body, chest, back and not by his face or top of head.
- 4.2.3 Pupils are not allowed to approach **Otto** or disturb him whilst he is sleeping/ eating.
- 4.2.4 Pupils are not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.
- 4.2.5 Pupils are not allowed to eat during sessions with **Otto**.
- 4.2.6 Pupils must always wash their hands after handling / stroking **Otto**.
- 4.2.7 Pupils understand that any deliberate violence or threatening behaviour towards the dog may result in sanctions.