

RAINHAM MARK GRAMMAR SCHOOL

DOGS IN SCHOOL POLICY

Review Body:	Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare
Leadership Group Responsibility:	Business Manager
Type of Policy:	Non Statutory
Reviewed:	January 2020

Introduction

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Trust policies: Health and safety, Child protection, Safeguarding and our governance guidance documents on Environment and on School premises.

Legislation

The following government legislation and advice can be applicable to the control and welfare of dogs in public places in general and in schools in particular.

- Health and Safety at Work etc., Act 1974.
- Environmental Protection Act 1991.
- The Litter (animal droppings) Order 1991.
- Dangerous Dogs (Amendment) Act 1997.
- Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005.
- Animal Welfare Act 2006. (See appendix 1).
- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.
- DFE advice on standards for School Premises 2015.

Possible scenarios include:

- Dogs being brought to the school gate/door by parents/carers taking children to or meeting them from school.
- Brief callers to school who bring a dog with them.
- Disabled staff bringing a guide or assistance dog to work.
- Dogs being brought into school for planned educational purposes.
- A school having their bespoke school dog.
- Dogs being exercised by the public on school land.
- Dogs straying on to school land.

Advantages of dogs in educational settings

We acknowledge that in school, children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog. The value of schemes such as 'Pets as Therapy' is widely accepted as a powerful aid to the stimulation of and communication with children especially those of primary school age. Studies have shown that the presence of companion animals can improve the well-being of children and lower their levels of anxiety simply by making the environment happier, more enjoyable and less forbidding.

Disadvantages of dogs in or near school buildings

However, the school also acknowledges that some families choose not to have dogs or other pets and we must respect their right to hold this view. We also recognise that bringing dogs on to the school premises could pose a health and safety risk to our students and others on site and it can be unsettling to some children if dogs are close by as they arrive and leave school.

There are added risks of dog fouling, dogs biting and dogs showing unpredictable or even aggressive behaviour. We recognise that even well-behaved dogs can behave uncharacteristically when placed in an unfamiliar, busy, noisy and crowded school environment and that this can leave to misbehaviour by even the best-trained pet. Children, too, can behave unpredictably when in the presence of dogs, especially if they are not used to being with them or indeed are actually frightened of them.

There is also the risk that contact with animals can result in infestation by parasites and infection including gastro-intestinal or fungal infections. This is particularly a risk for pregnant women or persons with a weakened immune system. There are also both adults and children who have an allergic reaction to the proximity of certain types of animal, including dogs.

View of the RSPCA

We are mindful of the fact that the RSPCA is opposed to the use of animals in education if distress or suffering is or is likely to be caused to the animal. They believe that children and young people can be taught about animals without keeping pets in the classroom, and therefore strongly discourage the keeping of animals in schools. Their literature states that schools can be noisy and frightening places for some animals and it is very difficult to look after any animal's needs properly in a classroom environment.

The trustees are insistent that the policy and code of conduct must be strictly adhered to at all times.

POLICY

The governors and staff of RMGS recognise that dogs are an important part of the lives of some of our families and, as such, are often included in day-to-day activities, such as walking children to and from school.

In our teaching, we promote good relationships with and treatment of animals. We acknowledge and accept the concept of pets as family members and encourage students to accept the responsibilities associated with pet ownership.

We must bear in mind too, that many of our staff and governors may themselves be dog owners.

We fully accept that there are legitimate concerns and risks associated with bringing dogs or other animals on to school premises.

Roles and responsibilities

- The school has the responsibility to ensure that the school has a written 'Dogs in school' policy in place.
- The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy
- All staff are required to abide by the policy.
- The health and safety officer is responsible for providing information, advice and guidance as and when required.

Code of conduct

The school requires all staff, parents and visitors whose dogs accompany them on site to adhere to this policy.

Authorised visits

- No dogs are allowed on school premises unless they are assistance dogs or are from an officially recognised organisation such as Guide Dogs for the Blind, PAT (Pets as Therapy) dogs, Dogs Trust workshops etc., on an educational visit or as part of a timetabled lesson and must be kept on a lead or harness at all times.
- Visiting dogs must not be left unsupervised on the school premises at any time and must not be left in the sole care of anyone under the age of 18.
- If a dog is going to be in school for educational purposes, staff must know in advance and parents must be informed by letter and/or online.
- If any staff, parents or children object to an animal's presence then, as far as possible, arrangements must be made to ensure the animal is kept away from them.
- If there is a member of staff or regular visitor who is reliant on a guide dog or dog assistance in any way, that animal must be allowed to accompany the staff member at all times.

Family dogs

- Dogs should be kept away from entrance ways so that children have a choice of whether or not to come into direct contact with dogs.
- No dog may be left tied up and unattended on or near the school site at any time.
- No dog should be left unattended in a vehicle on or near the school premises at any time and that vehicle should be properly ventilated at all times. In hot weather, this time must be considerably less.
- Dogs must not be allowed on children's outside play or sports areas.
- Members of the public may not walk or exercise their dogs on school land. If an offender persists after an initial warning, then the school should approach the local authority dog warden or the police.

- If there is a stray dog on the school grounds, the school should contact the local authority warden for advice. Students should be kept indoors until the animal has been safely recovered.

Guidance for using dogs in an educational context

The following guidance and code must be adhered to:

- A risk assessment is carried out before the visit.
- The organisation supplying the dog must show evidence that the dog has a suitable nature and temperament.
- The organisation must have public liability insurance.
- Parents and carers must be informed of the visit and the extent of interaction likely between students and the animal. Permission slips from parents should be obtained.
- Alternative arrangements must be made for any child who does not wish, or whose parents do not wish them, to participate in the lesson.
- All necessary arrangements must be put into place before the visit as agreed with the organisation bringing in the dog. This should take into account the breed of dog, age group of the students and numbers of children involved.
- Consideration must be taken of any allergic reaction to dogs that students and staff may have.
- All dogs coming into classrooms must be properly vaccinated and treated for parasites, regularly groomed and checked for signs of infection or illness.
- The dog's claws should have been trimmed.
- If the dog is ill, it must not come into school.
- Only authorised people should feed the dog. Students should not feed or eat close to the dog.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately
- Students should have been taught the appropriate behaviour around dogs before the visit.
- Good hygiene and handwashing procedures must be in place for students.

APPENDIX 1

Animal Welfare Act 2006

If an animal or animals come on to school premises, whether on a permanent or temporary basis, those adults involved are subject to the Animal Welfare Act 2006. This includes any member of staff or visitor who is reliant on a guide or other assistance dog, although of course such animals are always wholly welcome in school.

This Act equally applies to schools that may have a school dog, or keep animals in school. The Act places a legal obligation to ensure that the needs of an animal are met. The most important requirements of the Act are:

- The need for a suitable environment.
- The need for a suitable diet (food and fresh water).
- The need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns.
- Any need that the animal has to be housed with or apart from other animals.
- The need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

These responsibilities do not end at the finish of the school day, but continue as long as the animal remains in school, and includes evenings, weekends and holidays. Personal responsibility exists irrespective of whether the animal in question was bought by the school or owned by staff, students or parents.

If an animal's needs are not being adequately met while at school, criminal prosecutions could in theory be brought against all persons over the age of 16 who had responsibility for the animal.