

The Federated Schools of
Wood Street Infant School
&
Worplesdon Primary School



School Dog Policy

Policy Reviewed	September 2026
Next Review	September 2027



Contents

1. Philosophy	3
2. Introduction.....	3
3. Aims	3
4. Objectives.....	3
5. The benefits.....	3
5.1 Literacy benefits	3
5.2 Therapy benefits.....	4
5.3 Attendance and punctuality benefits	4
5.4 Behaviour and rewards.....	4
6. Principles	4
7. Code of conduct.....	5
7.1 Staff Responsibilities.....	5
7.2 Children Responsibilities	6
7.3 Bertie Rules.....	6

1. Philosophy

At the Federation of Wood Street Infant School & Worplesdon Primary School we give pupils opportunities to develop the skills needed to become well-rounded, articulate, independent and confident members of a constantly evolving society, valuing themselves and others and feeling inspired by the world around them. At the Federation of Wood Street Infant School & Worplesdon Primary School we aspire to promote a love for learning and life and we achieve this with the following four drivers at the core of our delivery of the National Curriculum (2014)

- building resilience
- inspiring curiosity
- promoting teamwork and independence
- instilling empathy.

2. Introduction

This policy is designed to set out to children, parents and visitors the reasons for having a school dog and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of children, staff, visitors and the school dog. 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 children, staff and visitors (Appendix A - Risk Assessment).

3. Aims

Wood Street Infant School & Worplesdon Primary School has a school dog called Bertie who will work with our children to improve academic achievement, behaviour and wellbeing.

4. Objectives

We will achieve our aims by using Bertie to promote children's:

- Cognitive development – companionship with a dog stimulates memory, problem-solving and game-playing.
- Social development – a dog provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, encourages responsibility, wellbeing and focused interaction with others.
- Emotional development – 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 development – interaction with a furry friend reduces blood pressure, provides tactile stimulation, assists with pain management, gives motivation to move, walk and stimulates the senses.
- 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.

5. The benefits

Research has shown many benefits to therapy and reading dogs in school settings. School dogs have been proven to help develop children's reading skills, improve behaviour, attendance and academic confidence, as well as increasing children's understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills.

5.1 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 judgemental or critical. This comforting environment helps to 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-judgemental. 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>)

5.2 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/>)

5.3 Attendance and punctuality benefits

“Mandy was a child with poor attendance and truancy. Mandy was encouraged back into school using caring for River, a dog, as an incentive. By telling Mandy that “if she didn’t come to school to care for him, he wouldn’t get walks, water or love,” Mandy came to school almost every day for the rest of the year, only missing two days.” - Case Study – Hazel Oak School Dog Policy (<https://hazel-oak.co.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2018/02/School-Dog-Policy.pdf>)

5.4 Behaviour and rewards

The classroom can be a stressful and overwhelming environment due to social challenges and peer pressure. Therapy dogs can reduce the effect of this allowing a child to feel more at ease and open to social behavior. Researchers have found that children with autism are more social when playing with therapy dogs as opposed to toys. New research offers further proof that animals can also have a therapeutic effect. – Alliance of Therapy Dogs (<https://www.therapydogs.com/therapy-dogs-classrooms-campuses>)

6. Principles

6.1 The Governing Body have agreed that the schools can benefit from a Therapy dog called Bertie.

6.2 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 the headteacher has approved their presence prior to the visit.

6.3 Bertie, whose legal owner is Mrs Kareen O’Brien, is a Bordoodle, which is a cross between a Border Collie and a Poodle. The advantages of this mixed breed are:

- No shedding: reducing the possibility of exacerbating pet allergies.
- Easy training: although he is still young Bertie has proved himself to be a fast learner and is well behaved.
- Good with children: this is a suitable breed for children and is known to be playful and affectionate around them.

Mrs Kareen O’Brien 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.

Bertie O’Brien spends time across both schools.

6.4 The legal owner of the school dog has produced risk assessments which have been approved by the Governing Body and this will be reviewed annually.

6.5 The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of their legal owners or other trained staff members.

6.6 The school’s liability insurance covers the school for risk related to a working dog on site. The SBM has responsibility for ensuring this remains on the school’s policy during Bertie’s time working at the federation.

6.7 Staff, parents and children will be informed in writing that a dog will be in school.

6.8 Parents can indicate that their child is not allowed to be present during dog therapy sessions by emailing kobrien@sfet.org.uk or calling the school office on 01483 232126.

6.9 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 dog handlers as soon as possible.

6.10 Only staff trained to handle the dog in children sessions will have permission to do so.

7. Code of conduct

7.1 Staff Responsibilities

7.1.1 The legal dog owners will know the whereabouts of their dogs and which staff are supervising at all times.

7.1.2 If the dog is ill he will not be allowed into school. The legal dog owner has responsibility for ensuring appropriate alternative care for the dog if he is not able to be in the school on a given day.

7.1.3 The dogs must be 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 (see clause 6.12).

7.1.4 When not interacting with children, Mrs O'Brien's Bertie will be kept in the headteacher office.

7.1.5 Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near Bertie. The School Office & SENDCo keep a list of all children and staff with a reported allergy to dogs and ensure that all trained handlers have this information.

7.1.6 Staff leading dog therapy sessions with Bertie have a responsibility to ensure all staff, children or visitors present are happy for Bertie to enter the room.

7.1.7 Children must never be left alone with Bertie and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.

7.1.8 Children will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog before any interaction during a therapy session or visit.

7.1.9 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 as set out in the dog handlers training, he should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment by the trained staff member handling her.

7.1.10 Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by the trained dog handling staff only.

7.1.12 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 dog.

7.2 Children Responsibilities

7.2.1 Children whose parents have withdrawn consent are not allowed to attend dog therapy sessions

7.2.2 Children should be careful to stroke Bertie on his body, chest, back and not by his face or top of head.

7.2.3 Children are not allowed to approach Bertie or disturb him when he is sleeping or eating.

7.2.4 Children are not allowed to play roughly with the dog.

7.2.5 Children must wait until the school dog's handler says it is ok to touch or stroke him. Bertie will be sitting or lying down.

7.2.6 Children are not allowed to eat during sessions with Bertie.

7.2.7 Children must always wash their hands after handling / stroking Bertie.

7.2.8 Children understand that any deliberate violence or threatening behaviour towards Bertie will result in the headteacher following the school's Behaviour Policy.

7.3 Bertie Rules

7.3.1 Bertie rules as displayed below will be shared termly with parents via the schools' newsletter.

7.3.2 Bertie rules will be shared with children half termly via assemblies.

7.3.3 Bertie rules will be displayed in every classroom.

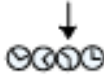
7.3.4 Bertie contract will be displayed in every classroom.

Bertie Rules

- 






Wait for Bertie's grown up to say it is okay to stroke
- 






the dog. Sometimes Bertie is not having strokes.
- 







When Bertie is working, adults and children must ignore him.
- 





Use a quiet voice near the dog.
- 







Walk slowly when you are moving around the school.
- 





Always listen to Bertie's grown up.
- 








Keep the school clean, pick things up off the floor.
- 








Some food will make Bertie very sick. If your
- 






space is not safe, Bertie can not come in.