



# School Dog Policy

June 2022

## 1. Introduction

Research has shown many benefits to having dogs in school settings. Elmsleigh Infant and Nursery School has a school dog 'Sprocket' who works with our children to support with academic as well as emotional development. This policy is designed to set out to children, parents, and visitors the reasons for having a school dog at Elmsleigh Infant and Nursery School (Appendix A)– The benefits of a school dog) and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of students, staff, visitors and the school dog (Sections 2 and 3 – Principles and Code of Conduct).

Sprocket has been chosen because of his intelligence and that he will respond well to training and which is known to be good with children, sheds little hair and is very friendly.

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 students, staff, and visitors (Appendix B- Risk Assessment).

## 2. Principles

The Headteacher, Karen Burton and Esteem Trust agree to a school dog ("Sprocket") working at Elmsleigh Infant and Nursery School. Only the school dog ("Sprocket") 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.



Sprocket is Sprocker Spaniel chosen because they are an intelligent breed that will respond well to training and which is known to be good with children and is very sociable and friendly. This breed is a success in another local school.

Sprocket's legal owner is Karen Burton. Mrs Burton has full responsibility for the welfare of the school dog and all expenses relating to pet insurance, food and other expenses and ensuring that he is vaccinated, wormed and flea treated.

Mrs Burton, the legal owner of Sprocket, has produced a risk assessment which has been approved by Governors and the Trust and this will be reviewed annually. Sprocket will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Mrs Burton or other trained staff members.

The academy's liability insurance covers the school for risk related to a working dog on site.

The Chief Operating Officer has responsibility for ensuring this remains on the school's policy during Sprocket's time working at Elmsleigh Infant and Nursery School.

Staff, parents, and students have been informed in writing that a dog will be in school. Appendix B is available for any FAQ's.

Parents can indicate that their child is not allowed to be present during dog sessions by emailing [enquiries@elmsleigh.derbyshire.sch.uk](mailto:enquiries@elmsleigh.derbyshire.sch.uk) or calling 01283 216883.

The presence of a school dog will be signposted to visitors at reception and the school website. Office staff will relay visitor issues to the Headteacher as soon as possible.

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

## **Code of Conduct**

### **Staff Responsibilities**

Mrs Burton will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.

If Sprocket is ill, he will not be allowed into school. Mrs Burton has responsibility for ensuring appropriate alternative care for Sprocket if she is not able to be in the school on a given day. Mrs Burton is responsible for ensuring Sprocket is trained using 'The Dog Mentor' programme. <mailto:https://www.thedogmentor.co.uk/> and has attained his Bronze certificate. Additional dog handlers have also been trained and these members of staff have the authorisation to handle Sprocket when working with children.

Sprocket 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.

Sprocket will be kept in the Headteacher's office when not interacting with children. The office will know the whereabouts of Sprocket at all times. Sprocket will only visit designated areas or reading lessons and a risk assessment will be completed if he is to enter an assembly or the school playground for an event.

Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near Sprocket. The School Office keeps a list of all children and staff with a reported allergy to dogs and ensures that all trained handlers for Sprocket to know who these children and staff are.

Staff working with Sprocket have a responsibility to ensure all staff, students or visitors present are happy for Sprocket to enter the room. Children must never be left alone with Sprocket and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.

Children will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around Sprocket before any interaction during sessions or visits.

If Sprocket is surrounded by a large number of children, he could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that s/he monitors the situation. If Sprocket is displaying any warning signs such as growling, wrinkling his nose, he should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment by the trained staff member handling him.

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

Elmsleigh Infant and Nursery 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 mentor / reading dog.

### **Children's Responsibilities**

- Children whose parents have withdrawn consent are not allowed to attend dog mentor sessions.
- Children must not approach Sprocket when they are on their own.
- Children should be careful to stroke Sprocket on his body, chest, back and not by his face or top of head.
- Children are not allowed to approach Sprocket or disturb him whilst he is sleeping or eating.
- Children are not to be allowed to play roughly with the dog.
- Children must wait until Sprocket is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking him.
- Children are not allowed to eat during sessions with Sprocket.
- Children must always wash their hands after handling / stroking Sprocket.
- Children understand that any deliberate violence or threatening behaviour towards Sprocket will result in a fixed term exclusion.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that Elmsleigh Infant and Nursery School has written a policy for dogs in school.

The Headteacher at Elmsleigh is responsible for implementing this policy.

Teachers, staff, pupils, parents, and visitors are required to abide by this policy.

The curriculum will support learning about dogs and how best to behave around Sprocket. The Headteacher has introduced a special assembly to share responsibilities to children.

## RESEARCH-BASED EVIDENCE FOR HAVING A SCHOOL DOG

### The benefits of a school dog

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility, and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

School dogs have also been proven to help develop children's' reading skills, improve behaviour, attendance, and academic confidence, as well as increasing children understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills. At Elmsleigh Infant and Nursery School we have a school dog to support our staff team in bringing all of these benefits to our children. Elmsleigh Infant and Nursery School's school dog will be trained as a dog mentor.

In summary, academic research has shown that dogs working and helping the school environment can achieve the following:

- Improve academic achievement
- Increase literacy skills
- Calming behaviours
- Increase social skills and self-esteem
- Increase confidence
- Teach responsibility and respect to all life
- Help prevent truancy
- Motivate children who are often less attentive.

### 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 with 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>)

“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.ridgewayschool.com/downloads/default/TWHF-School-Dog-Policy-V2.pdf>)

## **Behaviour & rewards**

Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for children. Those children who have tried their best during the week or who have made progress in a certain subject or through reflecting our school values may be asked to spend time during lunch or break to interact with Sprocket. Walking, grooming, playing, and training are some of the responsibilities that children will be allowed to undertake. It has been proven that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem.

"Researchers report that children 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 children 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 children. In a controlled study, children were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Children's' behaviour improved toward teachers, and children 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."

APPENDIX B

The Dog Mentor Risk Register

Organisation: Elmsleigh Infant and Nursery School

Last Updated: 10-05-2022

Author: Jenny Duckworth

Risk ID	Description	Impact	Owner	Impact	Probability	Risk Rating (Value)	Mitigation Plan	Adj Impact	Adj Probability	Adj. Risk Rating	Contingency Plan	Status
Risk No	Risk written in terms of the issue that could occur	Impact on the school, pupil, handler or dog		select Low, Medium or high	select unlikely, likely, highly likely or certain	Green < 0.25 < Amber < 0.60 < Red	What can be done to prevent the risk being realised	Impact on Risk following mitigation activities	Probability of issue occurring following mitigation activities	Green < 0.25 < Amber < 0.60 < Red	What could be done to minimise the impact if the risk is realised	Commentary of dates, actions and progress to minimise and retire this risk
1	Minor injury to pupil by dog (such as scratches)	Could require medical treatment (in school). Could also impact pupil confidence.	Dog Handler	Low	Likely		Dog supervised at all times. Educating pupil on behaviour around dog. Limiting tricks performed for smaller pupils (high five, etc). Dog's claws trimmed. Dog on lead at all times	Low	Unlikely		Minor first aid	Mitigation actions are all in place
2	Serious injury to pupil by dog (such as biting or mauling)	Would require medical treatment (in school or at hospital) after assessment. Could also impact pupil confidence.	Dog Handler	High	Unlikely		Dog supervised at all times. Educating pupil on behaviour around dog. Monitoring Dog's health and temperament at all times. Dog on lead at all times.	High	Unlikely		First aid after in school or in hospital after assessment by first aider	Mitigation actions are all in place
3	Other injuries	Trips, slips or falls not directly related to dog.	Dog Handler	Low	Likely		Children supervised at all times. Dog trained to not pull while on walking on lead.	Low	Unlikely		First aid after in school or in hospital after assessment by first aider	Mitigation actions are all in place
4	Allergic Reaction	Allergic reaction to dog	Dog Handler / Head of School	High	Likely		All pupils to have completed consent form indicating any issues. Pupils with severe allergies to not work directly with dog All pupils to follow hygiene controls to minimise risk of affecting other pupils Seek medical advice on pupils who may experience serious allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) as pupil's status becomes clear to school to enable additional controls to be put in place	High	Unlikely		If dog comes into contact with pupil who has allergy, remove pupil from environment and seek medical advice if symptoms arise	Mitigation actions are all in place
5	Illness transferred from dog to pupil	Pupil could become unwell after infection requiring treatment and/or time off school. Examples are worms, rabies, fleas, etc	Dog Handler	Medium	Likely		Dog to be inoculated against all recommended diseases as per recommended schedule. Worm and flea treatment to be carried out by handler regularly.	Medium	Won't Happen		Dog has up to date medical history from vets. Flea and worm treatment carried out monthly.	Mitigation actions are all in place
6	Dog excrement	Hygiene issues within school. In extreme cases, faeces can cause a disease which can cause blindness.	Dog Handler	High	Likely		Dog to be removed from indoor environment. Taken to appropriate location. Faeces removed from school grounds.	High	Won't Happen		Appropriate action to completely clean area, all waste disposed of in correct manner	Mitigation actions are all in place

7	General Hygiene	Germs could be spread between dogs and humans.	Dog Handler / Head of School	Low	Highly likely		All staff and pupils to wash hands after coming into contact with dog. Keep dog away from all food preparation areas and away from pupils during times when they are eating.	Low	Unlikely		No contingency plan	Handler to request that handwashing is put in place or introduction of some other method such as alcohol gel or
8	Impacts on Dog from other animals	If other animals such as dogs, cats or foxes are around in the school grounds, the dog could be attacked or chased which could adversely impact both the dog and/or pupils and staff.	Dog Handler	Medium	Unlikely		Dog to be kept under control at all times. Handler to be aware of environment at all times	Low	Unlikely		Dog training and control is required to reduce impact and likelihood of occurrence	Mitigation actions are all in place
9	Minor Injury to dog	Intentional injury to dog by pupil who is showing uncontrollable or unreasonable behaviour. This could also result in injury to pupil if dog reacts adversely. Environmental risks exist where dog could get injured (e.g. open stairways, heavy doors or gates or roads near to school).	Dog Handler	Medium	Likely		Handler to be aware of situation at all times. Pupil's temperament to be monitored. Pupils showing unacceptable behaviour will not be allowed to work with dog. On open stairways, dog to be walked on wall side. Handler to always follow training methods on movement around school. The dog should be kept on a lead while inside and outside.	Low	Unlikely		Handler to intervene if risk is realised. Pupil or dog to be removed from environment. First aid may be required	Mitigation actions are all in place
10	Major Injury to dog	Intentional injury to dog by pupil who is showing uncontrollable or unreasonable behaviour. This could also result in injury to pupil if dog reacts adversely. Environmental risks exist where dog could get injured (e.g. open stairways, heavy doors or gates or roads near to school).	Dog Handler / Head of School	High	Unlikely		Handler to be aware of situation at all times. Pupil's temperament to be monitored. Pupils showing unacceptable behaviour will not be allowed to work with dog. On open stairways, dog to be walked on wall side. Handler to always follow training methods on movement around school. The dog should be kept on a lead while inside and outside.	High	Unlikely		Handler to intervene if risk is realised. Pupil or dog to be removed from environment. First aid to be administered and then taken to vet.	Mitigation actions are all in place
11	General welfare of dog	If overworked, dog could become tired and may display unwanted behaviour or become ill.	Dog Handler	Medium	Likely		Handler to be aware of dog's characteristics. Provide dog with regular breaks and access to water. Limit the number of pupils working with dog at one time to reduce chance of dog being overwhelmed.	Medium	Unlikely		Extended rest period for dog	Mitigation actions are all in place
12	Unsettled/scared pupils and staff	There is a risk that staff and pupils are in school who are unsettled or scared by dogs. They could become upset and reluctant to interact with the dog and/or school.	Dog Handler / Head of School	Medium	Likely		Effective time-tabling of the dog's working practices to avoid direct contact as necessary.  Dog to be handled by staff trained on the programme only who should be made aware of and manage the dogs needs and to be aware of the risk of coming across people impacted by this risk.  Consider putting in place therapy to assist pupil/staff member that is impacted by this risk in order to reduce or remove the risk completely.	Medium	Unlikely		Dog to avoid specific areas of school where contact could happen.  School to work with impacted pupil/staff member to reduce levels of phobia.	Mitigation actions are all in place

## **School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

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

**A** The legal owner of the dog is the headteacher; she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support insurance and staff training costs 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?**

**A** The dog will be kept in the office area. The office is separate from the classrooms / 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, the library and in the outdoor areas where children can interact safely. 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 and a reputable dog behaviourist.

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

**A** The dog owner will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for its training. Appropriate professional training will be obtained, and the dog will work towards being trained as a school dog through The Dog Mentor company.

### **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 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 in the playground 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.

### **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, in line with our behaviour policy. The dog will be kept in the designated area 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 unlimited access to food and water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered.



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

**A** 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 breed of dog is known for minimal moulting, he is given a high-quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

**Q My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?**

**A** Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with it unless permission for this has been given. 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.