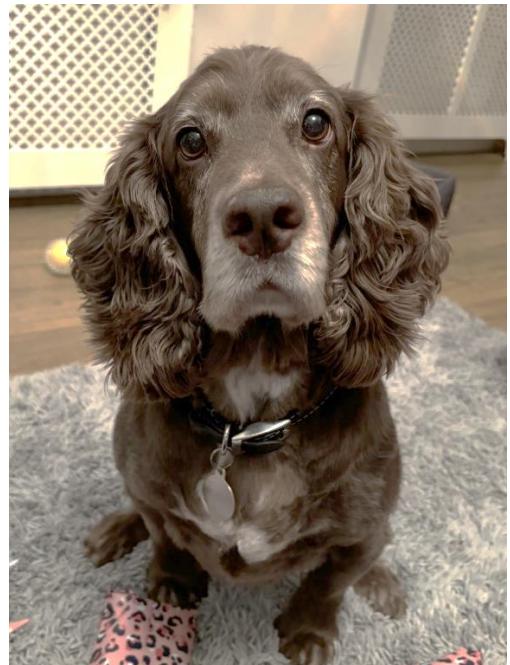
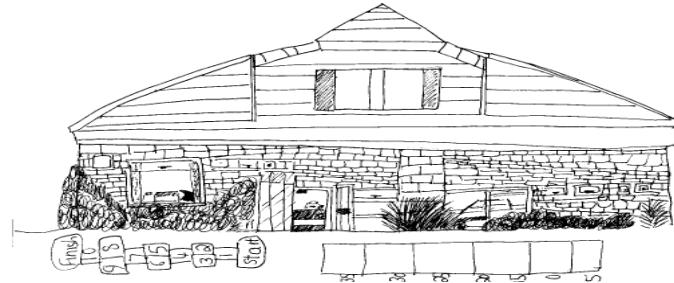


Graveley Primary School



School Dog Policy

Date policy agreed by Governing Board	21/5/2025
Date of next review	May 2026

1. Introduction

Research has shown many benefits to therapy and reading dogs in school settings. Graveley has a school dog who works with our students to improve literacy and student behaviour and wellbeing. This policy is designed to set out to students, parents and visitors the reasons for having a school dog at Graveley Primary School (*Section 2 – The benefits of a school dog*) and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of students, staff, visitors and the school dog (*Sections 3 and 4 – Principles and Code of Conduct*). Although there is a risk to 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 A - Risk Assessment*).

2. The benefits of a school dog

School dogs have been proven to help develop students' reading skills, improve behaviour, attendance and academic confidence, as well as increasing student understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills. At Graveley, we have a school dog to support our staff team in bringing all of these benefits to our students. Graveley's school dog will be trained as a therapy dog and certified by 'Pets As Therapy' charity, as well as being trained as a reading dog through his puppy training (*see Section 4 – code of conduct*).

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 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>)

"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>)

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

"Mandy was a student with poor attendance and truancy. Mandy was encouraged back into school using caring for River, a dog, as an incentive. By telling Mandy: "if she didn't come to school to care for him, he would find it difficult to get walks, water or love without her being there too," 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/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/School-Dog-Policy.pdf>)

2.4 Behaviour & rewards

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

- Hazel Oak School Dog Policy (<https://hazel-oak.co.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2018/02/School-Dog-Policy.pdf>)

3. Principles

- 3.1. The Head teacher, Mrs Nicola Hand, and Chair of Governors, Mr David Marriott, both agree to a school dog ("Bella") working in the school.
- 3.2. Only the school dog ("Bella") is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the Head teacher has approved their presence prior to the visit.
- 3.3. Bella is a Cocker Spaniel and was chosen because it is an intelligent and calm breed that will respond well to training and which is known to be good with children, sheds little hair or dander, and is very sociable and friendly.
- 3.4. Bella's legal owner is Mrs Forster. Mrs Forster has full responsibility for the welfare of the school dog and shares the expenses relating to pet insurance, food and other expenses and ensuring that the dog is vaccinated, wormed and flea treated with the school.
- 3.5. Mrs Forster, the legal owner of the school dog, has produced a risk assessment, which has been approved by the Safeguarding Lead (Mrs Nicola Hand), and this will be reviewed annually.
- 3.6. The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Mrs Forster or other trained staff members.
- 3.7. Bella has public liability insurance as part of her pet insurance cover.
- 3.8. Staff, parents and students 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 therapy sessions by emailing admin@graveley.herts.sch.uk or calling 01438 351377 to inform the office.
- 3.10. The presence of a school dog will be sign posted to visitors at reception and on the school website. Reception staff will relay visitor issues to the Head teacher as soon as possible.
- 3.11. Bella will only have student therapy and reading sessions once she is settled and children have been identified.
- 3.12. Only staff trained to handle the dog in student sessions will have permission to do so.
- 3.13. In cases of extreme weather, i.e. cold or high temperatures, follow the risk assessment: ensure that Bella is appropriately dressed, stays within the appropriate room (e.g. Badger Class in cases of hot temperatures) and only allowed outside to toilet.

4. Code of Conduct

4.1 Staff Responsibilities

4.1.1 Mrs Hand and Mrs Forster will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising him at all times.

4.1.2. If the dog is ill, she will not be allowed into school. Mrs Forster has responsibility for ensuring appropriate alternative care for Bella if she is not able to be in the school on a given day.

4.1.3. Mrs Forster are responsible for ensuring Bella is trained.

4.1.4. Bella 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 3.12).

4.1.5. Bella will be kept in the Head teacher's; Deputy Head teacher's or the school office (in hot weather conditions she will be based in Badger Class where there is adequate air conditioning) when not interacting with students for therapy or reading sessions.

4.1.6. Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near Bella. The appointed person for First Aid (Mrs Laura Forster) keeps a list of all students and staff with a reported allergy to dogs (dander) and ensures that all trained handlers for Bella know who these students and staff are.

4.1.7. Staff leading therapy or reading sessions with Bella have a responsibility to ensure all staff, students or visitors present are happy for Bella to enter the room.

4.1.8. Students must never be left alone with Bella and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.

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

4.1.10. 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 they monitor the situation. If the dog is displaying any warning signs such as growling or flattening of his ears, she should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment by the trained staff member handling him.

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

4.1.12. Graveley 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 therapy / reading dog.

4.2. Student Responsibilities

- 4.2.1. Students whose parents have withdrawn consent are not allowed to attend dog therapy sessions.
- 4.2.2. Students should be careful to stroke Bella on her body, chest, back and not by her face or top of head.
- 4.2.3. Students are not allowed to approach Bella or disturb her whilst she is sleeping, eating or in her designated area where she is to be left alone (her bed).
- 4.2.4. Students are not allowed to play roughly with the dog.
- 4.2.5. Students must wait until Bella is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking her.
- 4.2.6. Students are not allowed to eat during sessions with Bella.
- 4.2.7. Students must always wash their hands after handling or stroking Bella.
- 4.2.8. Students understand that any deliberate violence or threatening behaviour towards Bella will result in a fixed term exclusion.

Appendix A – School Dog Risk Assessment

School Dog Risk Assessment

Risk Assessment for: School Dog			
Establishment: Graveley Primary School			
Assessment by: Mrs L Forster	Date: May 2025	Date for review: May 2026	
Approved by: Mrs N hand (Head teacher)	Signed:	Date:	

Hazard/ Risk	Who is at risk?	How can the hazard cause harm?	Are control measures Y/N/NA		Additional Control Measures (to take account of local/ individual circumstances)	Residual risk rating
			In place	Adequate		
Animal health: Disease/ parasites	Staff Pupils Visitors	Disease Parasites	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bella is fully vaccinated and under the care of a vet, (Vets for Pets, Biggleswade). - She is taken immediately for any signs of ill health. - Bella receives up to date flea and worming treatments. - If unwell, Bella will not be brought into school/ will be immediately removed from site. - Arrangements in place for care during holidays / weekends - Someone involved is experienced in the housing, feeding, handling and care requirements. - Bedding kept clean for the well-being of the animal, students and staff. - Bella is regularly groomed and bathed. 	Low
Bites Scratches Injuries	Staff Pupils Visitors	Infections Disease Parasites	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Full training given, relating to key dog behaviours to all staff and pupils before dog is introduced to pupils. - Key information displayed introducing Bella. Leaflet to be given to all visitors. 	Low

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students are instructed in the handling of Bella and closely supervised by adults at all times. - Key adults work with specialist dog trainers and cascade this information to all staff. - No student will be unsupervised at any time with Bellai. - If Bella is displaying any warning signs, she will be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment. - Expectations regarding student and adult behaviour explicitly articulated in the school's Behaviour Policy and School Dog Policy. - Students regularly reminded during assemblies and within classrooms of expectations. - Bella has her own area for rest and relaxation to avoid becoming over stressed. - Bella is walked off of the school premises at least once a day. 	
Bella snatching food	Staff Pupils Visitors	Injuries	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pupils reminded not to approach Bella with food, as this is a desirable reward for her. - Bella is to be kept away from areas containing food for a period of time until she will no longer attempt to snatch high value treats. 	Low
Allergies	Staff Pupils Visitors	Skin rashes, irritation to the eyes and nose or breathing difficulties	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff, visitors and students known to have allergic reactions to Bella must not go near her. - Parents will be asked to advise if their child does not desire contact with the Bella for health/emotional reasons. - A timetable for Bella will be produced, and the school will ensure that such students have no direct, school-initiated contact with Bella. <p>NB: this does not include visits to classrooms by Bella on learning walks or walking around site during the day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bella will be under the full control and supervision of an adult. - Students will never be left alone with Bella and there will be appropriate adult supervision at all times when Bella is present with students. 	Low

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good general hygiene and hand washing followed rigorously. - Supply staff advised of the school dog both before working at the school and on arrival. - School dog information built into all recruitment processes to make candidates aware of his presence and role within the school. 	
Phobias Hurting Bella	Dog	Harm to Bella	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Headteacher to be made aware of any children with phobias or pupils that may hurt Bella. - Monitor pupil behaviour closely when interacting with Bella. - S.L.T. to take appropriate action if required, in line with the school Behaviour policy. 	Low
Dog slipping on surfaces	Dog	Harm to Bella	Yes	Yes	Bella may slip on shiny surfaces (i.e. in the halls) and injure herself. Bella is to walk, accompanied on these surfaces.	Low
Dog excrement in school	Staff Pupils Visitors	Diseases	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The dog is to have a fenced area, on the school site to toilet (the area behind the bins next to the four car parking spaces). - This to be immediately cleaned by staff. - Bella is to be walked a minimum of once daily and encouraged to toilet then. - Bella will be taken to designated toileting area at regularly periods throughout the day. 	Low
Hygiene	Staff Pupils Visitors	Diseases	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adequate provision for hand washing (soap and hot water) readily available. - All wounds on exposed skin are suitably covered. - Soiled bedding disposed of in sealed plastic bags. - Toileting completed away from student areas and disposed of appropriately. - Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by an adult only. - Bella is not allowed near the school kitchen area. 	Low
Extreme weather i.e. hot temperatures	Dog	Harm to Bella	Yes	Yes	- When there are high temperatures, Bella is to be based in the coolest room within the school (Badger Class) and must only go	

					outside to toilet and not to walk on any surfaces that may harm her paw pads or she will remain at home. - When there are very low temperatures, follow the school closing policy, ensure that Bella wears warm dog clothing and is only allowed outside to toilet.	
--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Reviews:

Date of review:	Reviewed by:	Comments:
-----------------	--------------	-----------

Appendix B: School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (F.A.Q.s) – *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 Mrs Forster. She will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support a share of the costs along with Friends of Graveley (F.O.G.) as a part of their enrichment funds put forward for the pupils.

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 students' learning?

A. The dog will be kept in the Head teacher's; Deputy Head teacher's or the Receptionist's office area (in hot weather conditions he will be based in Badger Class where there is adequate air conditioning). The dog will only spend time in classrooms, the library and the playground at specific planned sessions where students can interact safely outside of lesson times and therefore the dog will not be a distraction to students 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, vets and dog trainers as well as the 'Pets As Therapy' charity.

Q. Who is responsible for training?

A. Mrs Forster will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for his training, which will then be checked by the Head teacher. Bella received training until she was 3 years old. Appropriate professional training will be completed if required.

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 and inside the school grounds by pupils supervised by a trained adult, with the permission of the Head teacher, and will toilet in a specific area that is fenced off.

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 the Head teacher's; Deputy Head teacher's or Receptionist's office area (in hot weather conditions he will be based in Badger Class where there is adequate air conditioning). The office is separate from the classrooms and 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 not be allowed into the main playground area without a trained adult or the Head teacher's permission and will only visit the playground and field for short supervised interaction with students. Therefore, a student will not be forced to be in contact with Bella 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 the Head teacher's; Deputy Head teacher's or Receptionist's office area (in hot weather conditions she will be based in Badger Class where there is adequate air conditioning), 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 the dog's welfare is always considered. Bella will also have a specific area where he is not allowed to be approached by others to ensure she has a break from contact.

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's 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 will be regularly groomed to reduce the 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>