



GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS KEY FACTORS WHEN CONSIDERING THE INTRODUCTION OF A DOG INTO YOUR SCHOOL

This factsheet is designed as guidance for schools considering introducing a dog into their school. It is not a complete checklist and much will depend on your individual circumstances.

Dogs for Good and Dogs Helping Kids believe there is significant potential for dogs to help young people in a range of educational environments, bringing benefits to their academic, emotional and social development.

Together we have built up considerable experience of working with specially-trained dogs and dedicated handlers in a range of schools and community environments and offer structured school dog programmes for schools.

Bringing a dog into your school is a significant commitment which should be carefully understood and planned. At the heart of the safety and success of any programme will be a clear focus on the wellbeing of the dog.

Detailed below are six key factors to help and inform any decision to introduce a dog to your school, plus details of where you can get further help and advice.

DOGS IN SCHOOLS – KEY CONSIDERATIONS 'GET IT RIGHT'



1. RIGHT REASONS

You know why you want a dog in your school and you've done your homework about what it involves.

- Ensure you understand the practical considerations of having a dog in school (eg toileting; hygiene standards; the need for a structured and planned timetable for your dog and his/her handler; space for the dog to rest for significant periods during the school day; areas of school that are unsuitable for a dog).
- You understand the costs associated with the dog and who will be responsible for them.
- Make appropriate insurance arrangements to cover your dog and its activities in school.
- Assess the risks and know what you will do if things do not go as planned.
- Have a back-up plan in place to care for the dog when he cannot attend school (eg if he/she is unwell).



2. RIGHT COMMITMENT/SUPPORT

You have support from governors, staff, parents and students to introduce a dog into your school.

- Engage all your stakeholders in your decision-making.
- Ensure you understand and manage any concerns up front (eg allergies; fears; cultural issues).
- Shape your plans based on the feedback you receive.



3. RIGHT PLACE

You have assessed that your school is an appropriate environment for a dog – and for the individual dog you select.

- Consider your school from a dog's perspective: remember, it is not a natural home for a dog.
- Take advice and make an informed choice for the right dog for your school.
- Understand how you will need to adapt the school environment.
- Consider the hours the dog will be in school and where he/she will be based.
- Remember if your dog does not feel safe, your students will not be safe.



4. RIGHT TRAINING

You have a suitable socialisation and training programme to prepare the dog for school life.

- A dog is unlikely to be mature enough to work in a school environment until he/she is at least one year old and has completed all his/her training
- Don't expect your dog to 'get' school life; you will need to prepare him/her. An effective socialisation process will help him/her to feel comfortable around children and introduce him/her gradually to the school environment.
- Get your dog assessed to ensure he has the right temperament and has reached the right levels of training to interact with students in school.
- Make sure you know where to get help.



5. RIGHT SUPPORT FOR YOUR DOG

You have a dedicated and experienced person who understands the dog's needs who will support the dog at school and at home (while also understanding the needs of your students).

- Your dog will need a person to handle and support him/her in school. A dog should never be left alone with students.
- They will need a good understanding of dog behaviour and body language – and, specifically, to have built a trusted relationship with the dog,
- Do the appropriate checks through DBS and referencing to assure yourself that the person you select is suitable to work with children.
- Ensure they are committed to positive training techniques and to responding to the changing needs of your dog over time.
- They need to be confident to set standards in school and ensure everyone sticks to them – the dog's wellbeing should never be compromised.
- They should not be distracted by other duties when handling the dog.



6. RIGHT PREPARATION

You have a clear plan and procedures to prepare your school for the introduction of a dog.

- Take time to educate students, teachers and other staff: to understand the dog's needs; know how to act around, and engage with, the dog.
- Produce a timetable for the dog with clear rest periods away from students.
- Review how things are going regularly and make changes as required (e.g. Reduce dog's time in school if there are signs of fatigue).
- Have a clear plan in place of what you will do if things do not go as planned.

FURTHER INFORMATION

To find out more about structured school dog programmes, please contact:

Dogs for Good: You can find more information about our Community Dog for Schools programme at www.dogsforgood.org

Dogs Helping Kids: You can find more information on our training programme for schools and potential school dogs at www.dogshelpingkids.co.uk

Other programmes:

Bark and Read: Supported by the Kennel Club Charitable Trust, the Bark and Read Foundation works with a range of charities that take dogs into schools as reading volunteers to help tackle the UK's literacy problems. For further information, please visit: www.thekennelclub.org.uk/barkandread

Advice on dog behaviour and training:

Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT): www.apdt.co.uk

Institute of Modern Dog Trainers (IMDT): www.imdt.uk.com

Puppy School: www.puppyschool.co.uk

Victoria Stilwell Positively Dog Training (VSPDT): www.positively.com