



Blessed Robert Sutton
Catholic Voluntary Academy

Wellbeing Dogs Risk Assessment

Genesis 1:21

So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Date of Risk Assessment	22.02.2021
Author	Laura O'Leary
Review Date	<i>Reviewed September 2022</i>
Review Date	<i>Reviewed September 2023</i>

Blessed Robert Sutton is a Catholic school. Our mission is to work in partnership with parents and carers to provide a great Catholic education for all our young people.

Our mission statement is:

'Academic excellence, spiritual development and social awareness through Christ'

LO/JT/705
April 2020

Dear Governors

During this period of school closure we have remained open offering provision for children of 'Critical Workers' and the 'Vulnerable'. Working within the Government guidelines during this time we have continued to work on improving our school. I know that you will agree that Blessed Robert Sutton Catholic Voluntary Academy is a very special place to be. As a great school we are fully committed to looking at additional innovative ways to care and support all our students. As part of this, I am writing to you to seek your permission to introduce two Pastoral Dogs into school.

For a long while now, the Senior Leadership Team have been considering the possibility of getting a dog who would work in our school as part of the on-going provision for wellbeing and mental health. The use of dogs in schools is highly commended. The decision to put forward this proposal has been made following extensive research and discussions and visits to other schools that have School Dogs.

'Pet therapy' is widely accepted as benefitting children's wellbeing and communication skills. Studies have shown that the presence of companion animals can improve the wellbeing of children and lower the rate of anxiety, simply by making the environment happier, more enjoyable and less forbidding. Dogs are increasingly being used in schools with great success and you may have seen in the media that they are now being used in some hospitals, as the emotional health benefits they bring are so vast.

With your permission I would like, in principle, two Pastoral Dogs to join the school in September 2020. They would work alongside our SENDCo and new Wellbeing Hub, supporting vulnerable learners in many ways including individual reading and behaviour support, as well as bringing a positive sense of wellbeing to the entire school community. This will be after a long period of integration into the school over the course of the next term. The dogs will be ready to be trained to be PAT (Pets as Therapy) dogs from September and ready to work as soon as they are qualified.

The dogs will belong to myself and Mrs Wilson and we will be the main point of contact for any dog questions. The dogs would grow up in the school environment, becoming fully accustomed to the routines of the day and supportive of students within the school.

I understand that there may be some questions:

What are the benefits of School Dogs?

- A calming effect on students
- Improved behaviour and concentration, reduced stress and improved self-esteem
- Encouraging expression, participation and confidence for all children;
- Fostering a sense of responsibility
- Motivating students to think and to learn, as most children have a high level of natural interest in, enthusiasm for and enjoyment of animals
- Encouraging respect and thereby improving students' relationships with each other, parents and teachers
- Teaching children to nurture and respect life
- Helping work undertaken with the most vulnerable children

- Helping children build confidence in reading
- Improving attendance
- Further promote our 'Wellbeing' agenda for students.

As well as the benefits listed above one of our main motivations for using this unprecedented period of closure to train dogs is as a school many of our children have clear gaps in their reading age, whilst we are very proud of our Paired Reading and Accelerated Reader programmes and the care this offers to individuals, we would like to introduce a programme called Bark and Read.

How would we plan for this?

- A full risk assessment has been written and would be made available on the website
- When the dogs begin working with children, consent will be sought for each child to have contact
- All contact will be carefully planned and children will not be left unsupervised with the dogs

When not working, the dogs will be based in one of the school offices.

What about allergies?

- The dogs trained would be breeds with low allergy and non-shredding qualities
- All areas of the school are vacuumed and surfaces are wiped down daily
- Movement around the school will be controlled
- Any children working with the dogs will wash their hands

How can I find out more information?

We would put a regular blog onto our website to keep parents and children up to date on the progress of the School Dogs.

Looking at other successful schools, such as Pingle Academy and John Taylor Free School, they have both introduced School Dogs. Below are some further examples for your information -

<https://www.pingle.derbyshire.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=573&type=pdf>

<https://www.derbytelegraph.co.uk/burton/john-taylor-pluto-tatenhill-2514629>

<https://nottinghamgirlshigh.gdst.net/news-and-views/its-a-dogs-life>

<https://www.deerparkschool.net/news/?pid=3&nid=1&storyid=150>

<https://www.stedwardscatholicacademy.co.uk/page/?title=Frankie&pid=171>

We have visited schools including St Edwards within our Trust, who already have a School Dog and highly recommended the idea to us. The dogs would belong to myself and Mrs Wilson and live at home with us, but spend their days at school.

In an ideal situation I would have brought this suggestion to a future Governors meeting for approval. However, we will never get this opportunity again, whereby the school is closed, to be able to integrate four legged friends into our school.

As you will know, at the moment our school is open to children of key workers and vulnerable children. This project would enable us to do something really purposeful with this group of

children during this time, e.g. those children who are in school can help us to nurture the dogs and get them used to the school setting. The children working in school could also be involved with an enrichment project of making our school 'dog friendly' and helping the dogs learn to read! They would be involved with walking the dogs around the school and getting the dogs accustomed to the school environment.

Prior to putting forward this proposal to you, I have also sought Aidan Smith's approval and he is in support of the proposal.

We know that our students would gain a great deal of enjoyment from having the opportunity to work with schools dogs and look for your support with this proposal.

Kindest regards

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'L. O'Leary', written in a cursive style.

Laura O'Leary
Acting Headteacher

Pastoral School Dogs – Answers to some questions you may have -

Who would be the legal owner of the dogs and who pays for their costs?

The legal owners will be Mrs Wilson and Miss O'Leary who will care for them out of school hours in their own homes and will bear all the costs associated with having a pet dog, including the purchase of the dog.

Will the Dogs be from a reputable breeder?

Yes, we have spent many months researching for a reputable breeder. The breeder has monitored the puppies for eight weeks and has advised us as to which puppies would most suit our exacting requirements.

Will the Dogs be a distraction?

The dogs will be kept in the different supervised offices around school. These offices are separate from the classrooms to ensure the dogs only come into contact with students who are happy to have contact with a dog under strict supervision. We will be careful to ensure that time spent with the dogs is shared amongst students.

Has a Risk Assessment been undertaken?

Yes, a formal Risk Assessment would take place (draft attached) in accordance with Staffordshire County Council. We have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a School Dog. There would also be a School Dog Policy, available to view on the school website.

Who is responsible for the training?

Miss O'Leary and Mrs Wilson would be the legal owners and, as a result, will be responsible for training. Appropriate professional training will be obtained; initially they will complete basic puppy training and then work towards becoming a 'School Dog in Training'.

How will the Dogs be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?

In the interest of health and hygiene the dogs will be toileted in a sectioned-off area of the school site where children have no access.

When will the Dogs come into School?

It is recommended by 'Dogs Helping Kids' that dogs integrate gradually into school life from eight weeks of age, as this is a crucial stage in their socialisation.

How will the Dogs' welfare be considered?

They will be regularly walked by a member of staff (on a volunteer only basis) and have plenty of opportunities to use the toileting area. The dogs will be kept in school offices and will only have planned and supervised contact with students and visitors. They will be provided with food and unlimited access to water, a bed and favourite toys. The dogs will be carefully trained over a period of time and we will work very closely with other professionals to ensure their welfare is always carefully considered.

How will this be managed where students have allergies?

In order to interact with a dog, students will not need to touch them unless of course they wish to do so; this will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for students 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.

A student is afraid of dogs, how will you manage this?

Access to School Dogs would be carefully managed and supervised and students would not need to have close contact with them. We hope to work closely with students who are fearful of dogs (at parental request) to alleviate their fear and to help them manage this.

What would happen if Miss O'Leary / Mrs Wilson were not in school?

Being on the Senior Leadership Team we appreciate that at times it would not be feasible for us to bring the School Dogs into school and arrangements would be in place to keep the dogs at home.

Additional questions from the Governing Body:

Even though the breed might be a low allergy one, there are still some folk, particularly children, who are allergic to all dogs – does dealing with this feature in your risk assessment?
Prior to the launch of this project we would write to all parents, the school has researched that the best breed of dog which is hypoallergenic, so that we will aim to cater for all children to be able to have contact with the dog. However, parents and staff will be asked to inform the school if their child is allergic and if so we will work with the family to ensure that the child doesn't have contact with it if this is their wish.

What happens when you or Mrs Wilson are not in school and are for example away for a day or more in meetings/on course? Will the dogs still be in school or be left at home?

Each owner will have alternative dog care plans in place whereby the dogs will be left at home as and when needed.

What happens if a dog, however well trained, reverts to its natural way of being and bites a pupil?

Before allowing a dog to work with children on the Bark to Read programme, dogs will be assessed by a Certified Clinical Animal Behaviourist (CCAB) at the cost of the owner. Dogs will be temperament assessed regularly to determine suitability to participate in the school life.

Children will only have contact with the dog with a supervised adult. The closure of the Sixth form will give us more space around school to control how and when children engage with a dog. When moving around the school, the dog will always be on a lead. Children will receive training workshops, from the Dog Trust before and when the dog is introduced into the school setting to teach them how to behave safely around a dog.

Children can only participate with parental consent and with the child's consent.

How will you deal with children who tease/goad a dog?

As above children will receive training workshops, from the Dog Trust before and when the dog is introduced into the school setting to teach them how to behave safely around a dog. If a child did tease/goad a dog the school's sanction system would be imposed – this may include removing the opportunity for some children work with or around a dog.

How will you deal with children who don't like/are scared of dogs generally? Will the dog not be allowed in their classroom? It could be very stressful for any child forced to be in the company of a dog.

One of the aims of introducing a dog into the school is to reduce the number of children who have a fear for dogs by teaching them how to care and behave safely around them.

If a child has a fear for dogs we will ask parents to inform us of this so that we can be aware and work with the parents / child with advice and support from the dog trainer to build up their confidence so that they feel safe .

Will the dogs be at events where parents/external adults are present e.g. sports day?

In many schools School dogs are used for meet and greets. For example, At Pingle School and The John Taylor Free School their dogs were on hand to meet and greet parents at parents

evenings and open evenings. This would have to be considered on a case by case basis and following the completion of both the Good Citizen's Award and Pets as Therapy Training.

How the school is insurance affected?

Our School Insurance Provider (RPA) have stated this initiative will not affect the school insurance. On my behalf they have sent this information onto the Insurance underwriter who will confirm this in writing.

The dogs will be members of the Dog's Trust which means each individual will hold public liability insurance to cover any situations that might arise. This will be at the cost of the owner.

Who pays for the costs of feeding/caring for the dogs including medical costs? Are there tax implications for the school or member of staff?

All costs will be covered by the members of staff. The members of staff will also pay for the construction of dog friendly areas in offices/wellbeing hub. There are no tax implications

How long will each dog remain in this role? Do they retire as they get old? What happens if the members of staff leave?

If successful once the dog/s have been introduced into the school environment, we will establish a timetable and continue to monitor behaviour in school. We realise that a dog who is reasonably relaxed in school now may not be a in a few months' or years' time and as the dogs get older in age we may reduce the amount of time they spend in school as they age, or to retire them altogether from the role of school dog.

The school dog would not belong to the school; it would belong to the owner with whom it forms an important bond and lives as part of the family. Therefore should that member of staff leave sadly the dog would leave with them.

Draft Risk Assessment

Hazard	Risk	Risk 1-5 *	Likelihood 1-5*	Controls in place	Review date
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Dog getting over excited when interacting with students	Students knocked to ground	1	1	The dogs will always be in the care of a responsible adult and will never be allowed to freely roam the school premises.	Autumn Term 2020
	Students scratched by Dog	1	2	Children are not left with the dog unsupervised.	
	Students bitten by Dog	5	1	<p>The dogs will be trained not to jump up or bite the children.</p> <p>Students have been, and continue to be, taught the impact of their actions. Education of this nature is continually given to students, and often to whole school during Acts of Worship, Assemblies, Form Time and PSHE lessons.</p> <p>Students will be taught what to do to prevent the dogs from chasing them, i.e. stand still, cross arms.</p> <p>The dogs will attend the Vets regularly to make sure their claws are kept short and they will also be walked on concrete/tarmac to keep them trimmed.</p>	
The Dogs get loose from his pen or from his lead.	As above	1	2	<p>There are three members of staff who will be called upon in the event of the dog getting loose or if he needs attention at any other time, they are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mrs Talbot 2. Mrs Smith 3. Mrs McAulay <p>These staff have also volunteered to supervise the dogs and have a dog pen located in their office for times when Mrs Wilson / Miss O'Leary may be unavailable.</p>	Autumn Term 2020
Hazard	Risk	Risk 1-5 *	Likelihood 1-5*	Controls in place	Review date & signed

Dog hair causing allergies	Children have allergic reactions	1	1	<p>Parents/Carers have been asked to inform the school of any known allergies. A list of any children who should not interact with the dogs will be kept by both Miss O’Leary, Mrs Wilson and the medical team.</p> <p>Students will have the opportunity to interact with the dogs as they wish and those with allergies will be able to opt out of interaction.</p> <p>Students will be told to wash their hands after active participation with the dogs. There will be hand sanitiser available for students to use after contact with the dogs.</p>	Autumn Term 2020
Children getting germs from the dogs	Children/ staff will contract diseases that can be carried by dogs	1	1	<p>Should the dogs defecate on the school site, a member of staff will clear this up immediately and dispose of it in a safe manner. The area will then be disinfected with an appropriate animal disinfectant.</p> <p>All immunisations (including rabies vaccination) are kept up to date in accordance with the European Pet Passport scheme and a register of this is kept by Mrs Wilson / Miss O’Leary and the vet practice which the dog is registered.</p> <p>Flea treatment is carried out monthly. Worming treatment is carried out in line with European Vet guidelines, at monthly intervals.</p> <p>The dogs will not go in the school Dining Hall at meal times and they will never go into the food preparation area of the kitchen.</p>	Autumn Term 2020

Non Health and Safety Risks

Hazard	Risk	Risk 1-5 *	Likelihood 1-5*	Controls in place	Review date
Financial cost of the dogs' upkeep	School unable to afford ongoing cost of the dogs' day to day upkeep or medical bills	1	1	<p>The dogs are the responsibility of Miss O'Leary and Mrs Wilson and they would be financially responsible for all their care.</p> <p>The dogs are the responsibility of Mrs Wilson and Miss O'Leary outside of school hours.</p>	Autumn Term 2020
A claim is made against the Academy re: behaviour of the dogs.	School not adequately covered financially	Not Applicable		The academy's public liability insurance cover, covers the dog whilst on site and working with any students on site.	Autumn Term 2020

KEY:

- 1 - Low risk
- 2 -
- 3 - Medium risk of injury
- 4 -
- 5 - High risk of injury