



# **St Gilbert of Sempringham Church of England Primary School Dog Policy**

**Policy written June 2024**

**Policy to be reviewed May 2026**

## **Introduction**

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. Appendix B sets out further reasons for why the school feels it will be beneficial to have a school dog.

## **Is there a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment?**

Of course, there are a variety of accidents which can happen within the school environment which far exceed the number of injuries or incidents caused by a dog. Therefore, it is just another risk that needs to be managed.

## **School Policy**

Arlo (the dog), is owned by Mrs Foston, Interim Executive Headteacher. Arlo is a mixed breed and has a very mild temperament. Mrs Foston is responsible for Arlo and he has regular visits to the vets for his flea and worming treatment and vaccinations. A copy of his vaccination card is kept in school.

Staff have been informed, through staff briefing, that the school will have a visiting dog. Parents have been informed by letter that a dog will make regular visits to school. At the start of each academic year there will be lessons around

the visiting dog and parents will be given an opportunity to speak to the headteacher with regards to Arlo. St Gilbert of Sempringham Church of England Primary School has produced a risk assessment and this will be reviewed annually. The risk assessment is attached as Appendix A

In the event of an emergency evacuation the adult supporting Arlo, will accompany him to the Fire Evacuation point.

Staff, visitors and students known to have allergic reactions to dogs must remain at a manageable distance. Parents are able to inform the school of any allergies on admission.

If Arlo is unwell he will not be allowed into school.

Arlo will normally be kept on a lead and harness when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of an adult.

There may be occasions when Arlo is working off lead, but this will only happen in an enclosed space and under the control of an adult. Before removing the lead, all those present will be consulted.

Children must never be left alone with Arlo and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times when the dog is present with students.

Children should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around Arlo. Children should remain calm around him. They should not make sudden movements and must never stare into a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for Arlo. Children should not put their face near a dog and should always approach him standing up. Children should never go near or disturb the dog that is sleeping or eating. Children must not be allowed to play too roughly with Arlo. Should any child intentionally cause Arlo harm or distress this will be dealt with in line with our Positive Relationships and Behaviour Policy.

If Arlo is surrounded by a large number of children, he could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of Arlo must ensure that they monitor the situation.

Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring of teeth indicate that the dog is feeling angry or threatened. Flattened ears, tail lowered or between their legs, hiding behind their owner, whining or growling are signs that the dog is frightened or nervous. If Arlo is displaying any of these warning signs he should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.

Children should not feed or eat close to Arlo.

Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog. As a school we will provide anti-bacterial gel.

Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by an adult.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in School.

The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy.

Teachers and staff and children are required to abide by this policy.

## Appendix A

### Risk Assessment

#### Introduction:

The value of pet 'therapy' is widely accepted as a powerful aid to stimulation and communication. Studies have shown that the presence of companion animals can improve the well-being of children and lower the rate of anxiety, simply by making the environment happier, more enjoyable and less forbidding. St Gilbert of Sempringham Church of England Primary School have considered a visiting dog as a school therapy dog and the decision was made in June 2024 to go ahead with welcoming the Headteacher's dog, Arlo in to school.

The rationale behind this decision was as follows:

- To have a dog that the children can interact with and benefit the children's social and emotional development.

It is accepted that interacting with animals is not appropriate for all children but for some it has the potential to provide many positive benefits. Any parent who does not want their child to interact with Arlo is invited to write to Mrs Foston and inform her of their wishes. There are no diseases associated with the dog as his vet will be responsible for vaccinations and completing regular health checks and necessary treatment. A copy of Arlo's health records will be updated and kept in school. Arlo will also be insured.

The risk assessment below is a working document and will be checked annually by key staff and the governing body.

Hazard Risk	Risk 1 - 5	Controls in place	Review date	Controls actioned- Risk level
Dog getting over excited when interacting with children, causing the child knocked to the ground.	1	The dog will always be in the care of a responsible adult and will never be allowed to roam freely around the school premises.	Ongoing	1
Child scratched by dog.	3	Children will not be left unsupervised with the dog.		1
Child bitten by dog.	2	The dog will always be on a lead when he is not in the Headteacher's Office or SLT Office and while the children are in school.  Pupils have been and will continue to be taught about the consequences of their actions.  Education of this nature is continually given to children, and often to the whole school through assemblies and PSHE sessions.		1

		<p>Arlo is not a puppy and has been brought up in a family home with children. He is used to children. The risk assessment will be reviewed as he progresses through his visits.</p> <p>The dog will attend the vets regularly to ensure he is in good health and that his claws are kept short.</p>		
The dog causing allergies - Children or staff have allergic reactions	1	<p>Parents have been asked to inform the school of any known allergies before the introduction of Arlo to the school.</p> <p>A list of any children/staff who should not interact with Arlo will kept in school.</p> <p>The children will have the opportunity to interact with Arlo as they wish and those with allergies will be able to opt out of interaction.</p> <p>Children will be taught to wash their hands after active participation with Arlo</p>	On-going	1
Health – Diseases and parasites Hygiene	1	<p>The dog has designated handler/s (Mrs Foston, Mrs S -J Millard, Mrs Tubb, Mrs Ogden) who are in charge of feeding and caring for the dog while on school premises, ensuring there is a supply of fresh water available.</p> <p>The handler is responsible for permitting people to touch the dog.</p> <p>The dog is not permitted in the school hall at mealtimes.</p> <p>The dog is given no opportunity to come into contact with wild rodents on or off the school premises.</p> <p>The dog is fully inoculated flea treated and worm treated regularly.</p> <p>The dog is suitably toilet trained. The designated area for the dog to defecate is situated away from students and staff – grass area in front of Church.</p> <p>All faeces are immediately picked up by the handler, using a clinical waste bag, and suitably disposed of into an appropriate bin.</p>	On-going	1

		<p>The handler immediately washes their hands with sufficient soap and water after picking up faeces.</p> <p>Any soiled dog bedding is immediately disposed of in sealed clinical waste bags, and into the clinical waste bin. The handler takes the dog's bedding home regularly to wash it.</p> <p>Any students/staff/visitors who touch the dog are advised to wash their hands afterwards, and sufficient hand washing provision is provided throughout the school.</p> <p>Anyone touching the dog, who has an exposed wound, must have the wound suitably covered.</p>		
Phobias -	1	<p>Students and staff known to have a phobia of dogs are given restricted access to the dog.</p> <p>The dog is prohibited from roaming freely around the school without the supervision of the handler.</p> <p>During busy times, such as breaks and time between lessons when lots of students and staff will be coming past Arlo, the dog will be kept in his area – Headteacher or SLT Office, so can easily be avoided.</p>	On-going	1

KEY: 1- Low risk

2

3 -Medium risk of injury

4

5-High risk of injury

## **Appendix B**

### **BENEFITS OF HAVING A DOG IN SCHOOL**

In summary, having Arlo working and helping in the school environment we would like to achieve the following:

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

#### **COGNITIVE**

Companionship with a dog stimulates memory, problem solving and game playing.

#### **BEHAVIOURAL**

Behaviour problems occur in school and these can interfere with learning. We would hope that by having Arlo in school we would see a difference in the behaviour of students in terms of improved attitude toward school and learning, and students also showed more confidence and responsibility. If students can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, then can hopefully better understand how classmates may feel.

#### **SOCIAL**

A dog provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, encourages responsibility, wellbeing and focused interaction with others. After experiencing unconditional love and trust from a dog we would expect to see enhanced relationships with peers and staff. Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching student's social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, teach kindness, responsibility, and boundaries. With a dog in school, children have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Involving students in the daily care of school dog is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The students also learn about responsibility, caring, and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school.

#### **EMOTIONAL**

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. Children would learn how to express their feelings and enter into more trusting relationships. Children are encouraged to gently pat or talk to the dog to teach sensitive touch and to help them to be calm and promotes provides tactile stimulation.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL**

A dog increases the sense of a family environment, being part of something, another purpose for coming to school. Some of these benefits listed above will continue for the young person long after the school day is over. It will hopefully also boost the child's connection to the school environment.

### **ACADEMIC**

Reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop their literacy skills and build confidence in reading. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even adults are likely to be less scared to read to a dog. Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practice reading aloud. This activity can create a calming effect on the pupil, as well the dog will listen to the pupil read with no judgement or criticism and they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. This in turn creates an environment where a student's enthusiasm for reading can grow and also develop the confidence to read aloud. Arlo will be able to support reluctant readers.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

Students will have opportunity to walk the dog on school grounds with supervision from one of the SLT - this would be on a rota basis. This in turn would allow for a potential improvement in student's attendance as they have a responsibility to the dog.

### **ATTENDANCE**

We would see an improvement in attendance for students given some additional responsibility regarding Arlo. It is also another reason for the pupil to want to come to school.

### **SPORTING**

Arlo will become a school mascot and could attend assemblies that are appropriate for him to be included in. Encouraging movement for some less active children.

### **REWARD SYSTEM**

Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the students. Those students who have performed incredibly well during the week or those who have made progress in a certain subject, or those who have achieved tasks set for them, will be rewarded with spending time to interact with Arlo. Walking, grooming, reading with, playing and training are some of the responsibilities children will be allowed to undertake. It could also be an incentive for positive behaviour or any form of pupil achievement. House points could be given for a variety of things, helping out, effort, could be linked to random acts of kindness, following the school rules, etc. These awards could be 'from' the school dog.

### **OVERCOMING PHOBIAS**

There are students who do have dog phobias, a school dog and careful de-sensitisation programme could help to reduce some of these fears.

## **SCHOOL DOG FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)**

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

The legal owner of the dog is Mrs Foston and her family. She bears the costs associated with owning the dog.

### **Will the dog be a distraction?**

When in school Arlo will be based in Mrs Foston's office. He will have access to quiet space and in the SLT office for some 'chill' time! Arlo will always be accompanied by an adult and will never be on his own with a pupil.

### **Has a risk assessment been undertaken?**

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 trainer has been used.

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

Mrs Foston, as the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for its training.

### **How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?**

In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks in the village. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed. Arlo will be toileted on the grassed area of the car park.

### **How will the dog's welfare be considered?**

Arlo will be well looked after. He lives with Mrs Foston and her family. Mrs Foston will bring Arlo into school regularly once he gets used to visiting us. Arlo is fully vaccinated, will visit the vet regularly for all the necessary injections, as well as regular check-ups. He will also be regularly groomed and is fully insured. If Arlo is unwell for any reason, he will stay at home. He will be walked, fed and hydrated during the day. He will have access to a quiet area in Mrs Foston's office where he will be able to have 'quiet time'.

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

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. (See Risk Assessment).

It is completely understandable that there will be some concerns about possible allergic reactions to a school dog. Arlo will be subjected to a very thorough cleanliness and grooming regime. Arlo will only work with children who have voluntarily expressed an interest to do so and after discussion with the school as to whether it would be a beneficial intervention. Permission would be sought in advance to any contact. Arlo will be based in the Headteacher office.

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

Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with him 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.

Some children may have had upsetting or traumatic experiences and therefore be fearful of dogs (or indeed other animals). Arlo will only come into contact with children whose parents have given their permission. Experience and research have shown that, with proper guidance, handling and time, children can learn to overcome their fear of animals and gain a greater appreciation for them.