

Ballysally Primary School



Bringing Dogs into School Policy

June 2025

Signed:

Principal

Date:

Date of Next Review:

June 2028

Introduction

This policy provides guidance for schools on the safe introduction and management of dogs in the school environment. The purpose is to allow the educational, emotional, and developmental benefits that pupils can experience through interaction with dogs, whether brought into school for educational purposes or when parents bring their dogs while picking up their pupils. This policy aims to minimise risks and ensure that dogs are introduced safely, with full consideration of the health, safety, and wellbeing of the pupils, staff, and other school community members.

Legislation

The following legislation applies to the management of dogs within the school environment:

- **Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978**
- **Management of Health and Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000**
- **Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 and as amended**

Objectives of the Policy

- Ensure the safe integration of dogs into school settings, where appropriate.
- Establish clear guidelines for handling dogs in classrooms, on school grounds, and during school events.
- Identify and manage potential risks related to allergies, dog behaviour, and safety.
- Addresses issues related to dogs in school, such as dog fouling, aggressive behaviour, and supervision.

Guidance for Bringing Dogs into the classroom and relevant health and safety considerations when planning to do so

1. Prior Approval and Risk Assessment:
 - All dogs entering the school premises for educational or other reasons must have prior approval from the **Principal**.
 - A written **risk assessment** must be carried out before a dog is brought into the classroom. This will evaluate the temperament of the dog, the potential for allergies, and the suitability of the environment.
 - Parents/carers will be notified in advance of the intention to bring a dog into the classroom, especially if the dog is part of an educational activity.
2. Allergic reactions cannot be discounted from handling dogs, or just from being near them. Pupils known to have allergic reactions to dogs must have their access restricted.

3. Consideration should be given to the temperament and characteristics of the breed of dog being brought in, including the size of the dog and its age. Staff may wish to [consult the kennel club breed standards](#) if they have any concerns as to the suitability of a particular breed of a dog.
4. A puppy will not have its adult teeth and will be unlikely to cause the same degree of damage as an adult dog. Thought should also be given to the environment that the animal has been brought up in. Dogs and puppies which have been brought up in a family home environment should be well used to the behaviour and sounds of pupils.
5. Dogs with young puppies (those under the age of 8 weeks) must not be brought into school as there is the risk of the mother becoming overprotective, which may cause her to react out of character.

Supervision and Behaviour Guidelines:

1. Dogs must be kept on a lead at all times and under the full control of their owner. The owner must supervise the dog continuously.
2. Prior to the visit, pupils should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around dogs. Pupils are likely to become excited and it is important that they react calmly and carefully around the dog(s). They should not make sudden movements and must never stare into a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog. Pupils should be told not to put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up.
3. Pupils should be told never to go near or disturb a dog that is sleeping.
4. Pupils should not eat or have food near dogs.
5. Consider the number of pupils who would be patting/stroking or meeting the dog. A large number of pupils could cause the dog to become nervous and agitated. On-going monitoring of the situation is vital. Pupils to be taught prior to the event / activity that since dogs cannot speak, the only way they can be understood is 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. Dogs displaying any of these warning signs should be immediately removed from the environment.

Post-Interaction Hygiene:

After handling a dog, pupils must wash their hands with soap and water.

Guidelines for Parents Bringing Dogs into School Grounds

1. Control of Dogs:

- Dogs are not permitted on the school site as the school discourages parents/carers from bringing dogs onto school grounds when picking up or dropping off their pupils. However, in exceptional circumstances, the Principal may give permission for a dog to come into school grounds, provided the dog is kept on a lead and is under full control of the owner.
- The school reserves the right to use a therapy dog to support the social, behavioural, emotional and wellbeing needs of pupils. A separate risk assessment will be completed. The dog will be kept on a lead at all times by the counsellor. Any fouling will be cleaned appropriately with antibacterial cleaning agents.
- Pupils should never be left alone with the dog, and dogs must not be left unsupervised on school grounds.

2. Dog Fouling:

- Parents/Carers must immediately clean up after their dogs if they foul on school property.
- If a parent/carers fails to clean up after their dog, the school may take further action, including notifying local authorities.

3. Aggressive Dogs:

- Dogs that are known to be aggressive or have a history of aggression must not be brought into the school grounds.
- If any dog shows signs of aggression, parents/carers will be asked to remove the dog from school grounds immediately.
- Parents/Carers should keep their dog away from other dogs when near the school grounds as it is not always possible to gauge how dogs can react towards each other.

Handling Stray Dogs on School Property

1. Reporting Strays:

- In the event of a stray dog being found on school property, the school should contact the local Council Dog Warden who will remove the dog.
- If stray dog incidents are recurring, the school will consider enhancing its security measures, such as reinforcing perimeter fencing.

2. Exercising Dogs in School Grounds:

- School grounds, including playing fields and playgrounds, are private property and are not to be used for exercising dogs by members of the public.

- If an individual is found exercising a dog on school grounds, they should be asked to leave. If the individual refuses, or if the practice continues, the school will contact the **Council Dog Warden** or **local authorities**.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Board of Governors:

- The Board of Governors is responsible for ensuring that the school has a written policy regarding dogs and that this policy is reviewed periodically for its effectiveness.

2. Principal:

- The Principal is responsible for implementing this policy, ensuring that appropriate procedures are followed, and making the final decision on whether a dog can be brought into the school.
- The Principal will also ensure that staff and parents are fully informed about the policy.

3. Teachers and Staff:

- All school staff must abide by the guidelines outlined in this policy.
- Teachers are responsible for supervising pupils when dogs are in the classroom and for ensuring that pupils follow safety instructions.

4. Health and Safety Officer:

- The Health and Safety Officer is responsible for providing information, advice and guidance as and when required.

Communication and Education

Pupil Education:

The school will provide age-appropriate education for students on how to safely interact with dogs. This may include visits from external agencies such as Dogs Trust, which provides resources on how to be safe around dogs.

Parent/Carer Communication:

The school will communicate this policy to parents/carers via newsletters / Seesaw to ensure clear expectations are set regarding dog behaviour and supervision on school grounds.

Conclusion

This policy is designed to ensure that all interactions with dogs on school premises are safe and beneficial for both pupils and the dogs involved. By adhering to these guidelines, the school community can enjoy the educational, emotional, and developmental benefits of interacting with dogs while minimising any potential risks. The policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains effective and relevant.

Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

The Kennel Club – A club established for the registration of pedigree dogs in the UK.

Associated Documents

Dogs Trust ‘Be Safe Be Kind’ Learning about dogs and how to be safe around them.

[Dog Trust: Be Safe Be Kind](#)

[Dogs Trust Resources for Teachers](#)

The Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978

The Management of Health and Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000.

The Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 and as amended.