



**IncludEd Learning**

Independent Specialist Education Provider



**SCHOOL THERAPY DOG  
POLICY**

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## Therapy Dog

### 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.

The relationship between children and dogs has been well documented for hundreds of years. Potential benefits from a child coming into contact with a dog consist of the following:

- a child's best friend, a confidant
- provides emotional support and love
- promotes positive self-esteem
- teaches responsibility and empathy
- helps cope with death and loss
- can have a lifelong influence on their attitudes towards animals

Sigmund Freud believed that dogs had a 'special sense' that allowed them to judge a person's character. His dog Jo-Fi (a Chow) attended all his therapy sessions. Freud believed that the presence of his dog had a calming influence on all of his patients, especially children. It was the academic work of Boris Levinson and his dog Jingles in the 1960's that brought the world evidence that dogs were good for children but more importantly that they could help children overcome some trauma's.

The rationale to have an Therapy Dog is as follows:

- For the school to have access to a pet therapy dog
- For the animal to be properly cared for outside of the school day
- To have a pet therapy dog that the students could interact with and also be of benefit to the students social and emotional development

The dog lives with its owners in their home at their own expense and is to be introduced to the school environment and the students gradually. The owner will have had the dog thoroughly checked for any illnesses by a credible Vets Practice and is responsible for the dogs vaccination programme. There are no diseases that could be caught from the dog as the dog is kept up to date with immunisations including rabies and the worming treatment is in line with national vet guidelines. A register of the dog's annual health check is kept both by the owner and the vets' surgery.

It is accepted that interacting with the dog is not appropriate for all students but that for some it has the potential to provide many positive benefits. This risk assessment will be reviewed annually and the impact of a school dog will be evaluated by the school senior leadership team.

It is a requirement that as a Pet Therapy Dog the Owner follows these recommended guidelines:

- All animals should be regularly groomed and checked for signs of infection or other illness.
- Pets that are ill should be diagnosed and treated by a vet and should not be allowed in the school premises until their health is restored.
- All animals should have received relevant inoculations.
- All animals should be wormed regularly every six months.
- Claws should be kept trimmed to reduce the risk of scratches.
- Pets should have been exercised before being allowed to work with children.
- All pets should have their coats cleaned regularly.

The dog owner/handler has the responsibility to ensure that:

- Dogs are physically fit before visiting the school environment
- Dogs are kept on a lead throughout the visit/work
- Staff/owner remain with the dog at all times
- The dog is discouraged from jumping, scratching and licking
- The dog is of an acceptable hygienic standard, i.e. not wet, muddy etc.
- Natural relief for dogs is taken into account prior to visiting



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Dear Parents & Carers,

I am writing to inform you that we will be having a well-being/therapy dog visit the school on a weekly basis.

Dogs are increasingly being welcomed into schools with great success and have a positive effect on health and emotional well-being.

Deb Burton, a member of staff will be the dog handler whilst at the school.

There will always be a designated member of staff present during any interaction with pupils.

Deb Burton has visited the home of the dog to ensure that the dog's temperament and that of its parents, was suitable for interaction with our pupils. The dog will be fully vaccinated, wormed and have flea treatment in line with current expectations and will be under a Pet Health Care Plan which will ensure future treatments will continue.

Please understand that we will do everything we can to reassure any pupil who may be fearful and that under no circumstances will they be forced to meet with the dog. We hope that your child will gain a great deal of enjoyment from having a school dog.

There are many benefits to having a school dog, including:

- the presence of companion animals can improve the well-being of children and lower anxiety levels, simply by making the environment happier and more enjoyable.
- dogs can be used to calm fears, relieve anxieties and teach skills.
- improved behaviour and concentration, reduced stress and improvement in pupils' self-esteem;
- encouraging expression, participation and confidence for all children;
- fostering a sense of responsibility;
- motivating pupils 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 pupils' relationships with each other, parents and teachers;
- teaching children to nurture and respect life;
- helping children build confidence in reading;
- improving overall attendance;
- further promoting our well-being agenda for pupils and staff.

Please know that we are aware of those pupils with allergies and that a full risk assessment has been completed. The dog will not be based in any classrooms and therefore contact with any pupils who may have an adverse reaction can be avoided. The dog's main place of residence will be in the inside office area, where Deb is based.

However, should you have any queries or questions on the matter then please do not hesitate to contact the school. Equally should you wish your child NOT to meet with or spend any time with the dog please withdraw your child by completing the permission form attached.

Yours sincerely,  
Head Of Centre



Ms Noreen Khan





## How do we look after and care for our School Dog

**Always be gentle and kind!**

### Doggy Dos:

- Do make sure you have permission from your parent
- Do make sure the dog is with an adult
- Do wash your hands before and after touching the dog
- Do talk to an adult if you feel nervous
- Do make sure there are only 2 pupils at a time
- Do let them sniff the back of your hand first
- Do use a quiet voice
- Do move slowly and calmly
- Do always follow the dog handler adult's instructions

### Doggy Don'ts:

- Don't touch the dog with anything other than your hands Don't think that all dogs are the same – always ask dog owners before touching an unknown dog
- Don't enter the school office without permission or without an adult present to see the dog
- Don't disturb the dog when the dog is eating or sleeping



## **School Therapy Dog**

### **Frequently asked questions**

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

The legal owner of the dog is a local resident. The owner will bear the costs associated with the dog; the school budget will remain unaffected. The dog is insured by the owner, and is also covered by the school's public liability insurance.

#### **Q. Has the school dog come from a reputable breeder?**

We will only use dogs whose owners are responsible and the home has been visited and checked to be suitable.

#### **Q. Will a school dog be a distraction?**

The dog will be kept in the internal office area. We will be careful to ensure that time spent with the dog is shared among the pupils fairly. We will also ensure that pupils who are not involved in regular, direct contact with the dog are still able to participate in a number of ways, over the course of the school year, should they wish to do so.

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

Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and we have sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog. The risk assessment will be available to view on our website in the School Therapy Dog Policy.

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

The owner who is the legal owner of the dog will be responsible for the dog's training. Appropriate training has already been investigated.

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

In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted away from areas where pupils have access. Thus, there will be no chance of the pupils coming into contact with any faeces.

We are unable to put effective control measures in place that guarantee temperament and safety when children come into unsupervised contact with unknown dogs.

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

Pupils, along with the handler will be able to walk the dog in the park. The dog will only have planned and supervised contact with pupils and visitors. The dog will have unlimited access to water.

#### **Q How will she be managed where pupils have allergies?**

We already manage a number of allergies at school. This will be no different for anyone 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. Parents will be given a form to sign if they are happy for their child to have contact with the dog.

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

Access to the dog will be carefully managed and supervised and pupils do not need to have regular, close contact with the dog, unless parental permission for this has been given. We hope to work closely with parents of children who may be fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this in a safe and caring environment.

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## Dogs in School - Pupil Permission Form

Please complete the form by selecting the appropriate option from below - please only select one option.

By adding your name you are signing for the option selected for the child named.

Pupil Name:	
I am happy for my child to be involved with all aspects of caring for the school dog, including supervised walks in the park.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
My child is a little nervous of dogs, but I am happy for him/her to be involved with all aspects of caring for the school dog, including supervised walks in the park.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
My child is fearful of dogs, but in time, I would like them to work with the dog to develop their confidence with and understanding dogs.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
My child has an allergy which means they must not come into contact with the dog.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
I do not give permission for my child to come into direct contact with the dog.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Parent Name:	
Parent Signature:	
Date:	

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## Dog Owner Declaration Form

Please complete the form and provide as much information where relevant.

Owner Name:		Dog's Name:	
Does your dog have Pet Insurance? If so, please give details.			
Has your dog ever shown any unpredictable behaviour? If so, please give details.			
Has your dog ever shown any sign of aggression, this could include but not limited to, growling, lunging, snapping, guarding or biting? If so, please give details.			
Has your dog ever shown any displacement behaviours, this could include but not limited to, excessive licking, yawning, stretching, jumping up, barking? If so, please give details.			
For existing volunteers only, has your dog's behaviour or demeanour changed within the last 12 months? If so, please give details.			
<b>Owner Declaration:</b> To the best of my knowledge, I can confirm that my dog named above is of sound temperament and, therefore I know of no reason why my dog should not be considered as a registered School Therapy Dog.			
Owner Sign:		Date:	

If you are unsure about any of the above, please describe any observed behaviours and we will contact you to discuss.

# Therapy Dog in School Risk Assessment

Hazard	Controls in Place	Risk Rating	Review Date
Policies and procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policy in place, all staff to read and policy and where appropriate, pupils and their parents/carers are aware of and adhere to the policy.</li> <li>- The Head ensures that the school's insurance covers using the dog for the specific planned activities, e.g. having a therapy dog.</li> <li>- The Head ensures that the dog is cared for in accordance with the Animal Welfare Act 2006.</li> </ul>	Low	Ongoing
Dog's welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The dog has access to fresh, clean water at all times.</li> <li>- The dog has access to a cool and quiet place where it can be left undisturbed.</li> <li>- Pupils leave the dog alone when instructed by their teachers.</li> <li>- The dog's welfare is considered as a priority when planning the activities that it will participate in.</li> <li>- If an activity risks the dog's welfare, the activity is amended.</li> <li>- Noise is kept to a minimum during the activities that the dog is participating in.</li> <li>- The dog handler/staff member ensures that the dog has adequate and frequent toilet breaks and any waste is appropriately disposed of. (A set area will be used for this that is not used by any staff, pupils or parents).</li> <li>- The dog is not over-stimulated, as this can lead to potentially dangerous behaviour.</li> <li>- The dog is not made to participate in potentially distressing activities.</li> <li>- The school complies with the Animal Welfare Act 2006.</li> <li>- The dog is familiar with the members of staff and pupils who are participating in the activity with the dog.</li> <li>- Flash photography is not used when the dog is present.</li> <li>- The dog is given opportunities to exercise and move around independently in a secure area.</li> <li>- The dog handler/staff member ensures that the dog is fit to participate in specific activities and is</li> </ul>	Low	Ongoing

	<p>not brought into the school if it is unwell.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If the dog becomes unwell while at school, the dog's owner takes it home.</li> <li>- Before any activity is carried out, the dog handler/staff member ensures everyone participating in the activity understands how to treat and behave around the dog, e.g. not using flash photography, not shouting or clapping and not running around.</li> <li>- Activities do not cause harm, discomfort or stress to the dog.</li> </ul>		
Site security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- At least two adults are appointed to be responsible for the dog.</li> <li>- The Deputy manager ensures that the site is secure and that precautions are in place to limit the chance of the dog getting loose.</li> <li>- The dog is kept on a lead when it is not in its housing or in a secure location, e.g. in the headteacher's office.</li> <li>- All appropriate doors are closed when the dog is participating in an activity.</li> <li>- The Deputy manager ensures that the premises are secure, e.g. fences are not broken.</li> </ul>	Low	Ongoing
Evacuation procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Where necessary, the school's Lockdown and Evacuation Policy is reviewed to ensure it includes provisions for the dog.</li> <li>- The person handling the dog during specified activities is responsible for the dog's safety during a lockdown or evacuation.</li> <li>- Where the handler is a pupil, e.g. if the dog is participating in a school performance, another appointed member of staff is responsible for the dog's safety.</li> </ul>	Low	Ongoing
Disobedience and dangerous behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The handler is equipped and trained to react to and control any dangerous behaviour.</li> <li>- If the person handling the dog for a specific activity is a pupil, they are given training to handle the dog, and the pupil and dog are given an opportunity to bond.</li> <li>- Pupils are not expected to handle the dog unless: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Their parents have provided permission.</li> <li>- They feel safe and confident in doing so.</li> <li>- They have received training to handle the dog.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- The dog's obedience is ensured as far as reasonably possible; however, staff, pupils, visitors and parents' understand that animals can be unpredictable.</li> <li>- The Head/dog handler or dog owner ensures that a plan is in place if the dog is unable to carry out an activity, e.g. if the dog is stressed, and participating in the activity would cause further distress or could lead to dangerous behaviour.</li> </ul>	Low	Ongoing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If the dog is not behaving appropriately during an activity, e.g. it is barking excessively or running away, the dog handler/staff member removes the dog and a contingency plan is implemented. For example, if the dog is participating in a school performance, but is nervous about going onto the stage, a toy dog is used instead.</li> </ul>		
Parent/carer notification/permission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Head informs parents that the dog will be present on the school's premises.</li> <li>- Parents are informed of the activities that the dog will be participating in, e.g. the dog will be performing in a school production or used as a therapy dog.</li> <li>- The Head obtains consent from parents for pupils to be in proximity with, or to handle, the dog.</li> <li>- Parents are informed if they are likely to come into contact with the dog, e.g. at a school performance.</li> <li>- Parents are asked to inform the school if their child has an allergy to dogs.</li> </ul>	Low	Ongoing
Dog's Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The dog's designated handler is in charge of feeding and caring for the dog while on the school premises.</li> <li>- The handler is responsible for permitting people to touch the dog.</li> <li>- The dog is permitted to go into designated areas, which is kept clean and secure for the wellbeing of the animal, pupils, staff and visitors.</li> <li>- The dog is given no opportunity to come into contact with wild rodents on or off the school premises.</li> <li>- The owner ensures the dog is fully inoculated.</li> <li>- The owner ensures the dog goes to the vet for a termly check-up, to identify whether the dog has any transmittable diseases.</li> <li>- On hot days, the handler ensures there are appropriate provisions in place to keep the dog cool and ensure the dog avoids too much activity during the hottest part of the day.</li> </ul>	Low	Ongoing
Hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The dog is suitably toilet trained.</li> <li>- The designated area for the dog to defecate is situated away from pupils and staff.</li> <li>- All faeces are immediately picked up by the handler, using a clinical waste bag, and disposed of into a waste bin.</li> <li>- The handler immediately washes their hands with sufficient soap and water after picking up faeces.</li> <li>- Any soiled dog bedding is immediately disposed of in sealed clinical waste bags and placed into a waste bin.</li> <li>- The handler takes the dog's bedding home regularly to wash it.</li> </ul>	Low	Ongoing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Any pupils, staff and visitors who touch the dog are advised to wash their hands afterwards, and sufficient hand washing facilities are provided.</li> <li>- Anyone with an exposed wound who touches the dog has the wound suitably covered.</li> <li>- If the dog is ill with an infection or a disease, it does not return to the school until it has recovered.</li> <li>- Hand sanitiser is provided for anyone who touches the dog.</li> </ul>		
Injuries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The dog is well trained and is used to coming into close contact with people.</li> <li>- Pupils, staff and visitors around the dog are closely supervised by the handler.</li> <li>- Pupils, staff and visitors are advised not to put their face close to the dog.</li> <li>- The dog is prohibited from roaming freely around the school without the supervision of the handler.</li> <li>- Pupils, staff and visitors are only permitted to stroke the dog during allocated timeslots.</li> <li>- The dog is provided with a place it can go to get away from people.</li> <li>- The dog is trained to not pull on the lead or jump up at people.</li> </ul>	Low	Ongoing
Dog's housing equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The dog handler ensures that the dog has housing that meets its physical and psychological needs.</li> <li>- The dog handler ensures that the dog's housing is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secure, e.g. escape proof.</li> <li>- Clean and free from parasites and vermin.</li> <li>- Free from hazards, e.g. sharp edges.</li> <li>- Well-ventilated.</li> <li>- Sheltered from extreme weather.</li> <li>- Set at a suitable temperature, humidity and light level.</li> <li>- Sheltered from noises that may upset it.</li> <li>- Capable of providing a darkened sleeping area.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- The dog handler ensures that the dog's housing has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A comfortable resting area.</li> <li>- A suitable amount of clean bedding material.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The dog handler ensures that the dog is able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lie fully stretched out.</li> <li>- Turn around without touching either the walls or the ceiling.</li> <li>- Stand in its natural posture.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Low	Ongoing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Move in its natural manner.</li> <li>- Rest comfortably.</li> <li>- All dog's bedding/housing is checked for defects on a weekly basis by the dog handler.</li> <li>- All dog equipment is stored in a secure place when not in use.</li> <li>- The dog's food and water bowls are kept out of the path of people to avoid any trips.</li> <li>- Any spillages from the dog's bowls are wiped up immediately.</li> </ul>		
Allergies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pupils and staff known to have allergies to animals have restricted access to the dog.</li> <li>- All pupils, staff and visitors are advised not to touch their face after touching the dog.</li> <li>- All pupils, staff and visitors are advised to wash their hands thoroughly after touching the dog.</li> <li>- A supply of antihistamine tablets is kept in the First Aid Box in case anyone has an allergic reaction.</li> <li>- The Head establishes whether parents have allergies to dogs, and activities where parents may come into contact with the dog, e.g. at a school performance, are amended as necessary.</li> </ul>	Medium	Ongoing
Phobias	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pupils and staff known to have a phobia of dogs are given restricted access to the dog.</li> <li>- The dog is prohibited from roaming freely around the school without the supervision of the Handler.</li> <li>- During busy times, such as breaks, the dog is kept in a safe and secure area away from any commotion.</li> </ul>	Low	Ongoing
Infection control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contact with the dog is limited only to those participating in the session or visit.</li> <li>- Sessions are limited to 2 pupils in addition to the handler and 1 member of school staff.</li> <li>- Before and after each contact with the dog, the handler and all individuals wash their hands - individuals do not touch any part of their face with unwashed hands.</li> <li>- Handlers and pupils should only touch the dog with their hands.</li> <li>- Individuals who are, or have been, displaying symptoms of an infection/virus/cold/flu do not come into contact with the dog until they have fully recovered.</li> <li>- Individuals who have weakened immune systems are advised to stay away from the dog;</li> <li>- The handler and the dog do not move around the school during busy times and stay within their allocated room as much as possible.</li> <li>- Where possible, the windows of the allocated room are kept open to improve air flow.</li> <li>- All allocated rooms are cleaned before and after use for therapy visits and sessions.</li> </ul>	Low	Ongoing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The dog's lead, collar, harness and other supplies are disinfected regularly.</li> <li>- Individuals are not permitted to handle objects that could go in the dog's mouth, e.g. treats or toys.</li> </ul>		
Dog getting over excited when interacting with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students knocked to the ground</li> <li>- Students scratched by a dog</li> <li>- Students bitten by a dog</li> <li>- The dog will always be in the care of a responsible adult and will never be allowed to freely roam the school premises.</li> <li>- Students are not left with the dog unsupervised.</li> <li>- The dog will be trained not to jump up or bite the students.</li> <li>- 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 the whole school during form time and PSHE lessons.</li> <li>- Students will be taught what to do to prevent the dog from chasing them. (i.e. stand still, cross arms) .</li> <li>- The owner of the dog will attend the vets' regularly to make sure the dog's claws are kept short and is also walked on concrete/tarmac to keep them trimmed.</li> </ul>	Medium	Ongoing
The Dog gets loose from his carer or from his lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students knocked to the ground</li> <li>- Students scratched by a dog</li> <li>- Students bitten by a dog</li> <li>- Senior 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ms Khan</li> <li>2. Mr Dearden</li> <li>3. Mr Kean</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Medium	Ongoing
Financial cost of the dog's upkeep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- School unable to afford ongoing cost of the dog's day to day upkeep or medical costs.</li> <li>- The dog is the responsibility of the owners and they are financially responsible for all the dogs' care.</li> <li>- The dog is the responsibility of the owners outside of school hours.</li> </ul>	Low	Ongoing

A claim is made against the school re: behaviour of the dog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- School not adequately covered financially.</li> <li>- The school's public liability insurance covers the dog whilst on site and working with any staff/students on site.</li> </ul>	Low	Ongoing
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## Approval and Adoption

This policy has been reviewed and approved by:

**Noreen Khan / JP - Advisory Panel Chair**

Head of School / Advisory Panel

**(Date): 15.02.25**