Applecroft School



School Dog Policy

Person Responsible:	Headteacher
Review Cycle:	Annual
Date of Issue:	June 2026
Review Date:	June 2027

School Dog Policy

1) Introduction:

School Vision:
'To create a positive and inspiring community that nurtures each individual and empowers leaders for life'.

School Mission Statement:
'Nurturing Potential, Inspiring Minds, Changing Lives'.

School Values:

- Ambition and Leadership
- Kindness and Supportiveness
- Respect and Honesty
- Determination and Resilience.

2) Aims and Scope:

This policy sets out the procedures and conduct required for interacting with dogs in school, such as during therapy or literacy sessions.

This policy is non-statutory.

It aims to ensure the safety and welfare of pupils and staff. It also aims to ensure that the dogs involved in such sessions are healthy and happy, and treated with respect.

3) Roles and Responsibilities:

3.1 Headteacher/SLT staff with responsibility for the dog

The Headteacher/leadership team member with responsibility for the dog should:

- Ensure the purpose of the dog being in school is clear
- Ensure that the dog being used for the therapy/literacy session is appropriate for the age range of the pupils present
- Ensure all dogs used for therapy sessions are certified and appropriately trained
- Ensure the welfare needs of the dog are met
- Carry out a risk assessment for each interaction
- Consult staff in advance about any allergies or phobias
- Obtain parental consent before allowing any contact between pupils and the dog, and consult parents/carers on any allergies or phobias the pupils may have
- Ensure all staff and pupils have completed adequate training related to appropriate behaviour and conduct with the dog prior to any interactions
- Ensure staff and pupils are reminded of appropriate procedures and conduct prior to each session
- Put procedures in place for dealing with incidents, such as a dog bite
- Put clear hygiene procedures and responsibilities in place for cleaning up after the dog
- Ensure the measures set out in this policy are followed

- Ensure appropriate insurance cover is in place, whether through the school's/trust's policy or a third-party insurance policy
- Ensure that any dog on school premises is included in fire evacuation procedures, or any other evacuation or invacuation procedures, under the supervision of the dog handler
- Monitor and review this policy.

3.2 Dog's owner

The dog's owner and/or the organisation providing the dog should:

- Ensure the dog is fit and healthy before coming to school, with regular vet visits as and when necessary
- Ensure the purpose of the dog being in school is clear by having rules for staff and children to adhere to
- Ensure the welfare needs of the dog are met
- Ensure a space is allocated in school if the dog needs a child-free, quiet area to rest
- Make alternative arrangements for the care of the dog when the dog is unable to go into school
- Ensure the dog is supervised at all times on the school site
- Attend relevant training sessions with the dog as appropriate and ensure they and the dog are appropriately accredited
- Maintain a good understanding of dog communication and be able to quickly identify when the dog is showing signs of worry, stress or aggression
- Remove the dog immediately from any situation where the dog is displaying signs of worry, stress or aggression
- Keep the dog on a lead at all times when moving around the school site
- Ensure comprehensive insurance cover is in place that covers working dogs.

3.3 Staff

Staff should ensure:

- Pupils are aware of and follow the pupil code of conduct set out in section 8 of this policy
- Pupils are adequately supervised at all times during sessions with the dog
- Pupils with relevant allergies/phobias are kept separate from the dog
- They have checked that consent has been obtained from pupils' parents/carers before pupils are allowed to attend any sessions with the dog
- They are aware of the dog's whereabouts and who is responsible for supervising the dog at all times
- They check the records of all pupils, staff and visitors known to have an allergy to dogs and take steps to make sure they do not go near the dog
- They are aware of and follow the dog bite procedure set out in section 5.4 of this policy.

3.4 Pupils

Pupils should:

- Follow the code of conduct set out in section 8 of this policy.

4) Pre-Visit Procedures:

- Full parental consent must be received before allowing any contact between a pupil and the dog. Pupils whose parents/carers did not give consent are not allowed to attend dog therapy/literacy sessions
- Pupils and staff must attend a session to learn how to safely interact with the dog and read body language, prior to the dog starting at the school
- There must be appropriate insurance in place (school) to cover any incidents/accidents that may occur
- The dog must be pronounced fit and healthy (both in relation to physical and mental health) by a vet before taking part in any activities within the school, including being fully up to date with any vaccinations.

5) During School Visits:

5.1 Ensuring the dog's welfare

- The dog's welfare must be considered and carefully monitored throughout the dog's stay at the school
- The dog must be allowed some time to acclimatise to the school environment. This will allow the dog to get used to the busy atmosphere, smells and noise levels
- The dog must have appropriate access to food and water
- The dog must be able to express natural behaviours e.g. chew toys offered during breaks, time off lead, able to sniff
- There must be a suitable area away from pupils that the dog can use to rest when not taking part in activities
- When resting, the dog must be left alone and pupils must not touch or interact with the dog
- The dog must be walked regularly throughout the day and given free time outside of the sessions in a designated area to play and rest off-lead
- The dog must not be forced to interact with pupils or staff, and must be allowed to move away
- If the dog shows signs that they are unhappy or uncomfortable (e.g. flattened ears, showing teeth, tail between legs, growling), the dog will be removed from the situation immediately and the pupils asked to give the dog space
- The dog will not attend school every day of the week
- The dog will have a timetable in place for the days they are in school however, the frequency of visits will be determined with the dog's welfare as the primary consideration
- Sessions between dogs and pupils are kept to a maximum of 30 minutes each and limited to a total of 4 hours spread across the day.

5.2 Supervision

- The number of children individually interacting (e.g. talking directly to and/or touching the dog) at any one time should be kept to no more than 8
- For sessions where the dog is present and there are large groups of children (e.g. more than 12), there should be at least 1 other adult (as well as the owner/handler) present to ensure appropriate behaviour from the children
- The dog must be kept on a lead during sessions and when moving around the school site
- Pupils must never be left alone with the dog. There must be appropriate adult supervision at all times
- Provisions must be made for the dog to have a safe space and be supervised when the owner/handler isn't able to do so (e.g. toilet break)
- Person responsible for the dog must know its whereabouts and which staff are supervising the dog at all times.

5.3 Allergies

Pupils, staff and visitors known to have an allergy to dogs should be kept away from the dog. A list of those with allergies is kept and updated regularly.

On the days the dog is in school, a sign will be visible to visitors in the main office, informing them of his presence and inviting them to raise any concerns including allergies, phobias etc. to a member of staff.

5.4 Dog bite procedure

In the unlikely event of a dog bite in school, staff should follow our standard first aid procedure, in accordance with the first aid policy:

Parents/carers should be informed of the dog bite and the surrounding circumstances without delay

- The closest member of staff present will assess the seriousness of the injury and seek the assistance of a qualified first aider, if appropriate, who will provide the required first aid treatment
- The first aider should refer to NHS guidance on animal bites when assessing and treating the injury
- The first aider, if called, will assess the injury and decide if further assistance is needed from a colleague or the emergency services. They will remain on the scene until help arrives
- The first aider will also decide whether the injured person should be moved or placed in a recovery position
- If the first aider judges that a pupil is too unwell to remain in school, parents/carers will be contacted and asked to collect their child. Upon their arrival, the first aider will recommend next steps to the parents/carers
- If emergency services are called, the Headteacher will contact parents/carers immediately
- The Deputy Headteacher will complete an accident report form on the same day or as soon as is reasonably practical after an incident resulting in an injury.

Following a dog bite incident, an investigation into the circumstances shall take place and the suitability of having a dog in school shall be reassessed by the Headteacher.

6) Grooming:

There is no need to extensively groom the dog before each visit as depending on the frequency of visits this can have a significant impact on the dog's health and welfare. For example, dogs have sensitive skin and cleaning them too often can remove natural oils that will dry out their coat and can cause skin irritation.

We will maintain the following grooming routine every 1-3 months depending on the dog's needs:

- Regular baths with appropriate shampoo every 1 to 3 months,
- Regular claw trimming,
- Brushing of the coat to keep it tidy, remove knots and any dead hair/skin cells.

7) Zoonotic Disease Prevention:

Zoonosis is any disease that can be transmitted from animals to humans.

In order to minimise the risk of zoonoses, the school uses the following measures and procedures:

- All pupils and staff must santitise/wash their hands after interacting/touching the dog
- Avoid touching the face (especially mouth area) after touching the dog and before santitising/washing hands
- Prevent the dog from licking faces/hands and sanitise/wash hands/faces immediately if this should happen
- Provide separate food and water dishes for the dog. Wash these daily and store away from dishes used by pupils, staff and visitors
- Wear gloves when picking up dog faeces. All waste material should be disposed of promptly and safely
- All dog faeces should be picked up immediately, double bagged and disposed of appropriately and promptly. Gloves should always be worn. Pupils should never be responsible for picking up and disposing of dog faeces
- If a member of staff has any concerns about the germs that dogs can carry and the potential impact of this on their health, they should raise this with the Headteacher
- Arrange for the dog to see a vet promptly if showing any sign of illness
- The dog should receive a broad spectrum deworming product on a regular basis (as advised by a vet)
- The dog should receive flea and tick control products on a routine basis and preferably ones that also control skin mites (as advised by a vet).

8) Pupil Conduct:

In order to maintain both the pupils' and dog's welfare, it's important that all pupils who may come into contact with the dog understand how to interact with the dog safely and maintain positive dog welfare.

Pupils must:

- Not interact with the dog until invited to do so by the handler
- Follow all instruction given to them while interacting with the dog
- Only stroke the dog on its body, chest or shoulders, and not on the top of the head, face or tail - including putting hands in the dog's mouth

- Wait until the dog is stationary – standing, sitting or lying down – before touching it
- Remain calm around the dog
- Place school bags out of reach of the dog
- Wash their hands after interacting with the dog

Pupils must not:

- Kiss the dog
- Feed the dog, or taunt the dog with food
- Approach or disturb the dog whilst it is resting, sleeping or eating
- Force the dog to interact with them
- Attempt to play rough with the dog - this can over stimulate them
- Eat during interactions with the dog

Pupils who struggle to follow the rules will be removed from the session. They will be given an opportunity to learn why they were removed and what they can do to interact more positively with the dog.

If pupils are deliberately violent or threatening towards the dog this will be dealt with under the school's behaviour and discipline policy.

9) Links to Other Policies:

- Health and safety policy
- First aid policy
- Behaviour and discipline policy.

10) Monitoring and Review:

This policy will be reviewed annually by the policy review committee or when a significant change occurs.

Appendix 1

Applecroft School - School Dog Consent Form

Child's Full Name:

_____

Child's Class:

_____

1) Consent – please tick one of the options below:

☐ Option A – I give consent for my child to be involved with all interactions with the school dog including being able to stroke/touch him (under supervision and with the appropriate risk assessments in place)

☐ Option B – I DO NOT give consent for my child to be involved with any interactions with the school dog including not being able to stroke or touch him

2) Background Information – please let us now of any additional information about your child and interactions with dog e.g. are they nervous of dogs at present, have they had any previous incidents with a dog that would be beneficial to know etc.

3) Any other information – please let us know of any other information that you feel would be important for us to know:

Signed:

_____

Date:

_____