Lady Joanna Thornhill (Endowed) Primary School

Learning for the Head, Heart and Hand

Dogs in school policy

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Date of next review	**December 2026**
Reviewed by	**Rachael Foster, Headteacher**
Co-chairs of Governors	**Ellie Brown & James Coumbe**

Article 31 – 'Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities'

Rationale

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.

The value of a school dog is widely accepted as a powerful aid to stimulation. Communication studies have shown that the presence of companion animals can improve the wellbeing of children and adults, lowering the rate of anxiety, simply by making the environment happier and more enjoyable.

This policy is designed to set out to children, staff, parents, carers and visitors the reasons for having a school dog at Lady Joanna (Endowed) Primary School and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of all on site including the school dogs. Although there is a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment, this can be mitigated against with a robust risk assessment to ensure the safety of all. (See Appendix: Risk Register)

Introduction

We have consulted the school community and we have agreed that having a school dog would be a positive contribution to our school community. One of our school dogs, Wolfie, is owned by Mrs Foster, Headteacher. Wolfie is a Cavapoochon and he has a mild temperament and non-moulting coat. Mrs Foster will be responsible for Wolfie's regular visits to the vets, injections and inoculations. The second school dog, Maddie, is owned by Mr Nettleship, Site Manager. Maddie is a cocker spaniel and has already been a school dog at his previous school. Mr Nettleship will be responsible for Maddie's visits to the vets, injections and inoculations.

All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the Headteacher has approved their presence prior to the visit.

Principles

Roles and responsibilities

The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in School and the Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy. Teachers, staff, children, parents and visitors are required to abide by this policy. The Headteacher will complete a risk assessment which will be reviewed annually.

Staff responsibilities

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.

- The dog will normally be kept on a lead and harness when moving around the school and will be under the full control and supervision of an adult. There may be occasions when the dog is walking off lead, but this will only happen in an enclosed space and under the control of an adult.
- All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school.
- If the dogs are unwell, they will not be allowed into school.

- If the dog is surrounded by a large number of children, the dog could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that s/he monitors the situation.
- Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or bearing 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 the dog's displays any of these warning signs they should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.
- All visitors will be informed about the dog and related protocols on arrival and office staff will relay visitor issues to the Headteacher.
- The office will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.
- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of the Responsible Person.
- Children must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult present.
- Staff should teach children as to what is appropriate behaviour around the dog.

Children's responsibilities

- Children must not approach Wolfie or Maddie when they are on their own.
- Children should be careful to stroke Wolfie and Maddie on their body, chest, back and not by their face or top of head.
- Children are not allowed to approach Wolfie and Maddie or disturb him/her whilst they are sleeping or eating.
- Children are not to be allowed to play roughly with the dog.
- Children must wait until Wolfie and Maddie are sitting or lying down before touching or stroking them.
- Children are not allowed to eat near Wolfie and Maddie.
- Children must always wash their hands after handling / stroking Wolfie and Maddie.
- Children should not put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up.
- Children should never go near or disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating.

The curriculum

The curriculum will support learning about dogs and how best to behave around our dogs. This will include highlighting that not all dogs are well trained, and that caution must be used around unknown dogs outside school.

Literacy

"Reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop literacy skills and build confidence, through both the calming effect the dogs' presence has on children and the fact that the dog will listen to the children read without being judgemental or critical. This comforting environment helps to nurture children's enthusiasm for reading and provides them with the confidence needed to read aloud. When dogs are in a room with children trying to read, they become less stressed, less self- conscious and more confident because dogs are non-judgemental. If children are partnered with a dog to read to, the dog provides comfort, encourages positive social behaviour, enhances self-esteem, motivates speech, and inspires children to have fun and enjoy the experience of reading."

Bark & Read – The Kennel Club

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School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?
A The legal owner of the dog is the Headteacher and the Site manager; she/he will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support insurance and staff training costs where appropriate.

Q Is the dog from a reputable breeder?
A Yes. The dog is from a home where both parents were seen and has been specifically chosen for its temperament.

Q Will the dog be a distraction?
A The dog(s) will be kept in the office area/site-manager's hut. Both areas are separate from the classrooms / playground area to ensure it only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision. The dog will also have a space to spend time in classrooms, the library and in the outdoor areas where children can interact safely. The dog will also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation, following consultation with staff beforehand.

Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?
A 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 behaviourist.

Q Who is responsible for training?
A The dog owner will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for its training. Appropriate training will be obtained, and the dog will work towards being trained as a school dog through The Dog Mentor company.

Q How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?
A In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks in the grounds. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed. Our policy of no other dogs in the playground is still applicable as 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 dog's welfare be considered?
A The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. Parents will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to be able to walk with a member of staff and the dog during that time. This will also be used as a behaviour reward, in line with our behaviour policy. The dog will be kept in the designated area and will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have unlimited access to food and water. We will work carefully to ensure the dogs' welfare is always considered.

Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?
A 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.

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Q My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?
A Access to the dogs is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with it 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.

Appendix

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Dog Risk Register

Organisation – Lady Joanna Thornhill (Endowed) Primary School

Risk ID	Description	Impact	Owner	Impact	Probability	Risk rating	Mitigation plan	Adjusted Risk rating	Contingency Plan	Status
Risk number	Risk written in terms of the issue that could occur	Impact on the school, pupil, handler or dog		Select low, medium or high	Select unlikely, likely, highly likely, or certain		What can be done to prevent the risk being realised?	Impact on risk following mitigation	What could be done to minimise the impact if the risk is realised?	Commentary of dates, actions and progress to minimise and retire this risk
1	Minor injury to pupil by dog (such as scratches)	Could require medical treatment (in school). Could impact pupil confidence.	Dog handler	Low	Likely		Dog supervised at all times. Educating pupils on behaviour around dog. Limiting tricks performed for smaller/younger pupils. Dogs' claws trimmed. Dog on lead at all times.	Low Unlikely	Minor first aid	Mitigation actions are in place.
2	Serious injury to pupil by dog (such as biting or mauling)	Would require medical treatment (in school or at hospital) after assessment. Could also impact pupil confidence.	Dog handler	High	Unlikely		Dog supervised at all times. Educating pupils on behaviour around dog. Monitoring dog's health and temperament at all times. Dog on lead at all times.	High Unlikely	First aid in school or in hospital after assessment by first aider.	Mitigation actions are in place.
3	Other injuries	Trips, slips or falls not directly related to dog.	Dog Handler	Low	Likely		Children supervised at all times. Dog trained to not pull while on walking on lead, or is handled by dog handler.	Low Unlikely	First aid after in school or in hospital after assessment by first aider	Mitigation actions are all in place
4	Allergic Reaction	Allergic reaction to dog	Dog handler/Headteacher	High	Likely		All pupils to have completed consent form indicating any issues. Pupils with severe allergies to not work directly with dog All	High Unlikely	If dog comes into contact with pupil who has allergy, remove pupil	Mitigation actions are all in place

							pupils to follow hygiene controls to minimise risk of affecting other pupils Seek medical advice on pupils who may experience serious allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) as pupil's status becomes clear to school to enable additional controls to be put in place		from environment and seek medical advice if symptoms arise	
5	Illness transferred from dog to pupil	Pupil could become unwell after infection requiring treatment and/or time off school. Examples are worms, rabies, fleas, etc	Dog Handler	Medium	Likely		Dog to be inoculated against all recommended diseases as per recommended schedule. Worm and flea treatment to be carried out by handler regularly	Medium Won't happen	Dog has up to date medical history from vets. Flea and worm treatment carried out monthly	Mitigation actions are all in place
6	Dog excrement	Hygiene issues within school. In extreme cases, faeces can cause a disease which can cause blindness.	Dog Handler	High	Likely		Dog to be removed from indoor environment. Taken to appropriate location. Faeces removed from school grounds	High Won't happen	Appropriate action to completely clean area, all waste disposed of in correct manner	Mitigation actions are all in place
7	General Hygiene	Germs could be spread between dogs and humans.	Dog handler/Headteacher	Low	Highly Likely		All staff and pupils to wash hands after coming into contact with dog. Keep dog away from all food preparation areas and away from pupils during times when they are eating	Low Unlikely	No contingency plan	Handler to request that handwashing is put in place or introduction of some other

										method such as alcohol gel or wipes.
8	Impacts on Dog from other animals	If other animals such as dogs, cats or foxes are around in the school grounds, the dog could be attacked or chased which could adversely impact both the dog and/or pupils and staff	Dog Handler	Medium	Unlikely		Dog to be kept under control at all times. Handler to be aware of environment at all times	Low Unlikely	Dog training and control is required to reduce impact and likelihood of occurrence	Mitigation actions are all in place
9	Minor Injury to dog	Intentional injury to dog by pupil who is showing uncontrollable or unreasonable behaviour. This could also result in injury to pupil if dog reacts adversely. Environmental risks exist where dog could get injured (e.g., open stairways, heavy doors or gates or roads near to school).	Dog Handler	Medium	Likely		Handler to be aware of situation at all times. Pupil's temperament to be monitored. Pupils showing unacceptable behaviour will not be allowed to work with dog. On open stairways, dog to be walked on wall side. Handler to always follow training methods on movement around school. The dog should be kept on a lead while inside and outside.	Low Unlikely	Handler to intervene if risk is realised. Pupil or dog to be removed from environment. First aid may be required	Mitigation actions are all in place

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10	Major Injury to dog	Intentional injury to dog by pupil who is showing uncontrollable or unreasonable behaviour. This could also result in injury to pupil if dog reacts adversely. Environmental risks exist where dog could get injured (e.g. open stairways, heavy doors or gates or roads near to school).	Dog handler/Headteacher	High	Unlikely		Handler to be aware of situation at all times. Pupil's temperament to be monitored. Pupils showing unacceptable behaviour will not be allowed to work with dog. On open stairways, dog to be walked on wall side. Handler to always follow training methods on movement around school. The dog should be kept on a lead while inside and outside.	High Unlikely	Handler to intervene if risk is realised. Pupil or dog to be removed from environment First aid to be administered and then taken to vet	Mitigation actions are all in place
11	General welfare of dog	If overworked, dog could become tired and may display unwanted behaviour or become ill.	Dog Handler	Medium	Likely		Handler to be aware of dog's characteristics. Provide dog with regular breaks and access to water. Limit the number of pupils working with dog at one time to reduce chance of dog being overwhelmed.	Medium Unlikely	Extended rest period for dog Dog not in school all week.	Mitigation actions are all in place.