



SCHOOL DOG POLICY

**Reviewed by the Governing Body
MAY 2022**

1. School Policy

Research has shown many benefits to therapy and reading dogs in school settings. Pupils can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog. In particular, it is intended to have a positive impact upon literacy skills, pupil wellbeing, and behaviour. In its simplest form pupils of all ages can take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog, positively impacting upon school life. The benefits of a school dog are identified in more detail in Appendix A.

While having a dog in school is beneficial for pupils, it needs to be equally enjoyable for the dog. The needs and welfare of the dog is integral to this policy. The school dog (Dewi) is a red Cavapoo (King Charles Cavalier/ Poodle cross which is known for being intelligent and respond well to training). Dewi was picked for his calm temperament, is good with children, very sociable and does not shed hair. This policy is designed to safeguard Dewi and YPDVA pupils until he is a year old and has received his therapy dog training. This will be reviewed at least annually and updated accordingly.

The dog legally owned by YPDVA with Mrs Thomas being the purchaser on behalf of the school. For the purposes of this policy, Mrs Lucinda Rees is the owner of Dewi. All pupils, staff parents and visitor are required to abide by this policy, which will be published on the school website with answers to frequently asked questions (Appendix B).

The Headteacher, Mrs Rachael Thomas, Mr James White, Deputy Chief Education Officer, and the Venerable Paul Mackness, Chair of Governors have agreed to a school dog (Dewi) working within the school in accordance with this policy.

2. Risk Assessment

In common with other hazards, the risk of a school dog present on site needs to be managed through a comprehensive risk assessment (please see Appendix C). This risk assessment will be updated at least annually.

3. School Procedures

- The school dog is the only dog permitted in the school site at any time. This is to safeguard all pupils, staff and the school dog. Assistance, therapy and working dogs are allowed on school premises with agreement from the Head teacher.
- Staff, visitors and pupils known to have allergic reactions to dogs will not be permitted to interact with Dewi (see risk assessment).
- While on school site, Dewi will have a crate and dedicated supervised location as follows:
 - Dewi campus – Office Manager's office, supervised by LM
 - Non Campus – Staff Room, supervised by LR
 - Aidan campus-Office, supervised by NW
- These areas must enable Dewi to rest undisturbed and always be free to move away from child or situation if they chose to. There must also be easy access to water bowl and toys to help Dewi feel relaxed.

- If the dog is ill he will not be allowed into school. Mrs Rees will organise alternative care.
- As a puppy there may be times when it is appropriate for Dewi not be brought into school during the day, for example because he is tired. This is at the discretion of Mrs Rees.
- Dewi will receive regular vet checks and his immunisations will be kept up to date by his Mrs Rees.
- Dewi will be kept on a lead when moving around the school site or on a walk and will always be under the full control and supervision of an adult.
- The dog will only roam off lead in enclosed spaces under the supervision of the identified responsible staff member
- Pupils must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- There must be a designated area on each site away from pupils where Dewi can exercise and go to the toilet.
- Dewi will be based on one site on the allocated day and will only be transported by the responsible person for the day. All legal requirements for transportation of dogs will be adhered to including a crate or fitting of the harness within the car.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by the dog handler only.
- All visitors will be informed about the dog via the school visitor information page.
- The dog will be included in the relevant fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of the adult he is with at the time of the evacuation.
- If there are any issues raised regarding Dewi, this information should be passed to the Head teacher or Assistant Head teacher as soon as possible.
- Dewi will be assessed by a certified clinical animal behaviourist (CCAB).
- Dewi will attend appropriate puppy training classes which focus on positive reinforcement techniques
- Dewi will be trained as a therapy dog and certified by Pets as Therapy as well as being trained as a reading dog through his puppy training.
- The curriculum will support learning about dogs and how best to behave around the school dog. This will include highlighting that not all dogs are well trained and that caution must be used around unknown dogs outside school.
- YPDVA staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog to better inform research into the benefits of a school therapy/ reading dog.
- These procedures and code of conduct are non-negotiable for the dog's wellbeing.
- These procedures will be under constant review and will be amended as required in line with the dogs and pupils wellbeing

4. Codes of Conduct

- Once dog therapy sessions begin (following appropriate training), parents will be consulted regarding allowing their children to the dog and will give consent if they wish this intervention to occur.
- Pupils whose parents have withdrawn consent will not be allowed to interact with Dewi or attend dog therapy sessions
- Pupils should be careful to stroke Dewi on his body, chest, back and not by his face or on top of his head
- Pupils are not allowed to eat while in the presence of Dewi
- Pupils must always wash their hands after handling/ stroking Dewi
- Pupils understand that any deliberate threatening behaviour towards Dewi will result in exclusion
- In any interaction pupils should be reminded of appropriate behaviour around the dog ie. not make sudden movements, do not put their face near the dog, always approach standing up, never disturb when Dewi is sleeping or eating
- Everyone must wait for Dewi to be sitting or lying down before touching or stroking him



APPENDIX A

BENEFITS OF HAVING A DOG IN SCHOOL

In summary, having Dewi 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 Dewi in school we would see a difference in the behaviour of pupils in terms of improved attitude toward school and learning, and pupils also showed more confidence and responsibility. If pupils 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 pupil's social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help build self-esteem; learning about positive and negative reinforcement, teach kindness, responsibility, and boundaries. With a dog in school, pupils have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Involving pupils in the daily care of a school dog is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The pupils 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. Pupils would learn how to express their feelings and enter into more trusting relationships. Pupils encouraged to gently pat or talk to the dog to each sensitive touch and to help them to be calm and promotes tactile stimulation. Every school 'needs dog as stress-buster' - BBC News

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 a pupil'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 pupil's enthusiasm for reading can grow and also develop the confidence to read aloud. Dewi will be able to support reluctant readers. Dogs have also been shown to help people with Additional Learning Needs by giving focus and providing a calming environment [Schools - THERAPY DOGS NATIONWIDE \(tdn.org.uk\)](http://tdn.org.uk) [TWHF-School-Dog-Policy-V2.pdf \(ridgewayschool.com\)](http://ridgewayschool.com)

ATTENDANCE

We would see an improvement in attendance for pupils as it is another reason for the pupil to want to come to school. [School Dog Policy \(hazel-oak.co.uk\)](http://hazel-oak.co.uk)

REWARD SYSTEM

Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the pupils. Those pupils 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 Dewi. Walking, grooming, reading with, playing and training are some of the responsibilities pupils 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 pupils who do have dog phobias, a school dog and careful de-sensitisation programme could help to reduce some of these fears.

APPENDIX B

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 will be Mrs Rachael Thomas, Headteacher who has nominated this responsibility to Mrs Lucinda Rees. As part of the school team, Dewi's costs will be met by the school and by sponsorship.

Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

Yes, he is from a registered breeder with 25 years experience. The mother of the dog was seen and details of the father were received. The dog has been specifically chosen for its temperament.

Will the dog be a distraction?

When in school Dewi will be located in a quiet, secure area as follows:

Dewi Campus, Mrs Morris office

Aidan Campus, Admin office

Non campus, staff room

He will never be left on his own with a pupil and outside these areas will always be accompanied by an adult

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 will be used.

Who is responsible for training?

Mrs Rees, will be responsible for its training. Appropriate professional training will be obtained and the dog will work towards being trained as a school dog, he will complete an assessment for the Kennel Club Good Citizen award.

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 grounds. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed. Dewi will be toileted on the grassed area of the school grounds.

How will the dog's welfare be considered?

Dewi will be well looked after. He will live with Mrs Rees who will bring the dog in to school on agreed days. He will undergo puppy training classes. Dewi is fully vaccinated and will visit the vet regularly for all the necessary injections, as well as regular check-ups. He will be regularly groomed and fully insured. If Dewi 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 secure area 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 in 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. The breed of dog is known for minimal moulting, he is given a high quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

It is completely understandable that there will be some concerns about possible allergic reactions to a school dog. Dewi will be subjected to a very thorough cleanliness and

grooming regime. He is also a hypo-allergenic breed that is well known to be good with families with allergies. After he has received all the appropriate training, Dewi will only work with pupils who have expressed an interest to do so and after discussion with the inclusion team or class teacher as to whether it would be a beneficial intervention. Permission would be sought in advance to any contact. A timetable to be provided.

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 it unless permission for this has been given. We hope to work closely with parents of children who are fearful of the 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). Dewi will be based away from the main part of the school. He is a puppy and will grow up in the school environment surrounded by children. 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.