



Manor Drive Secondary Academy

WELLBEING DOG POLICY

**In force with effect from
June 2023**

Presented to: LGC

Date approved: ¹	June 2023
Date reviewed: ²	
Date of next review: ³	

¹ This is the date the policy was approved by the meeting

² This is the date the policy was reviewed prior to its approval above

³ This is the date as set by the policy review clause or the date approved plus three years

1.0 Introductory statement

Research has shown many benefits to therapy and reading dogs in school settings. Manor Drive Secondary Academy has introduced the use of a wellbeing dog into the SEN provision at school. This policy is designed to set out to students, parents, staff and visitors the reasons for having a school dog and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of all involved. Although there is a risk with introducing a dog into a school environment, this can be mitigated against with a robust risk assessment.

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 interactions with a dog.

2.0 The benefits of a school dog

School dogs have been proven to help develop student's reading skills, improve behaviour attendance and academic confidence, as well as increasing student understanding of responsibility and in the development of empathy and nurturing skills. At Manor Drive Secondary Academy we hope that a school dog will be a beneficial addition to our therapeutic offer in addition to the interventions we already offer, and promoting engagement for those children who have found it difficult to access therapies in the past.

- Animal assisted interventions (also known as AAI's) can:
- Teach empathy and appropriate interpersonal skills;
- Help individuals develop social skills;
- Be soothing;
- Improve a child's ability to pick up on social cues which are imperative to human relationships;
- Therapy dogs have been shown to support emotional regulation through the positive impact on the autonomic nervous system;
- Show that children working with therapy dogs have experienced improved motivation for learning, resulting in improved outcomes;

Therapy dogs are being used to support children with their social and emotional learning needs, which can also aid literacy development.

Research into the effects of therapy dogs in schools is showing a range of benefits including:

- Increase in school attendance;
- Improved confidence;
- Decreased pupil anxiety resulting in improvements in learning, such as increases in reading and writing levels;
- Improved motivation to learn;
- Enhanced relationships with peers and teachers due to experiencing trust and unconditional positive interactions with a therapy dog;
- Helping children learn how to express their feelings and enter into more trusting relationships;
- Increase social skills and self-esteem;
- Teach responsibility and respect to all life;

Confidence benefits

"When children are partnered with a dog to read to, for example, the dog provides comfort, encourages positive social behaviour, enhances self-esteem, motivates speech and

inspires children to have fun and enjoy the non-judgemental experience “ Bark and Read – The Kennel Club

SEND benefits

“Therapy dogs Nationwide dogs have also shown to help with special needs and autistic children and adults by given focus and providing a calming environment.”

2.0

- Responsibilities
- Student responsibilities:
 - Students whose parents / carers have withdrawn consent are not allowed to enter the room when the dog is present.
 - Students should be careful to stroke the dog on her body, chest, back and not by her face or the top of her head.
 - Students must always wash their hands before and after stroking and handling the dog.
 - Student must wait until the school dog is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking her.
 - Students are not allowed to approach or disturb the dog whilst he is sleeping or eating.
 - Students are not allowed to play roughly with the dog.
 - Students are not allowed to eat during animal sessions.
 - Students understand that any deliberate violence or threatening behaviour towards the dog will result in a fixed term exclusion.

Staff responsibilities:

- Mrs Magovern will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.
- Mrs Magovern is responsible for ensuring the training and accreditation of the dog.
- The dog will be kept in Mrs Magovern's office / classroom.
- The dog must be kept on a lead when moving around the school.
- Students must never be left on their own with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Students will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog before any interactions take place.
- Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the therapy dog. The school keeps a list of all students and staff with a reported allergy to dogs which is kept in the Therapy Dog Folder.
- 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 they are monitoring all situations. If the dog is displaying warning signs such as growling or flattening of the ears, he should immediately be removed from that particular situation or environment.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately, double bagged and disposed of appropriately by the trained dog handling staff.
- If the dog is ill, he will not be allowed into school. Mrs Magovern has responsibility for ensuring appropriate alternative care for the dog.
- Mrs Magovern will maintain records and collect evidence of impact of the school dog to better inform research into the benefits of animal assisted therapy.

3.0 Principles

The Headteacher and the Governors have agreed to the presence of the therapy dog at Manor Drive Secondary Academy.

Staff, parents and students will be informed in writing that a dog will be in school.

The presence of a school dog will be made clear to visitors, via a sign, upon their arrival at the Main Reception.

Parents will need to sign the Animal Assisted Therapy consent form in order for their children to be present during AAT.

Only the school dog is allowed on the premises. No other dogs are permitted – a risk assessment has been approved by the Headteacher and Health and Safety Lead. This will be reviewed annually.

The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Mrs Magovern or other trained staff members.

The dog is covered by the schools Public Liability insurance policy and the Trust Finance team have responsibility for ensuring this remains on the school's policy during the presence of a therapy dog at Manor Drive Secondary Academy.

Only trained staff are to handle the dog on school premises will be permitted to do so.

4.0 Frequently asked questions

Who is the legal owner of the dog?

The legal owner of the dog is Mrs L Magovern. She will bear the costs associated with owning the dog at home and school.

What breed is the dog?

Pomeranian

Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

A full risk assessment has been undertaken and measures put in place to reduce risk. The school has carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog.

Who is responsible for training?

Mrs Magovern will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for his training.

How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?

In the interests of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted when taken out for walks around the grounds.

Will the dog be a distraction to student's learning?

The dog will be kept in Mrs Magovern's office. To enable the dog to have more space to roam when he is not working, he also has access to the inclusion room. The dog is highly socialised and familiar with humans of all ages.

What if my child is scared of dogs? Will they be forced to be in the same room as the dog?

The dog will be kept away from students if necessary. The dog will only be brought into areas with students where no refusals have been made. A student will not be forced to be in contact with the dog at any time. 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 using evidence based interventions such as graded exposure.

How will this be managed where children have allergies?

Children will not need to touch the dog or be in the same room as the dog at any point which will expose them to possible allergic reactions. We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for children and adults that are allergic to dogs. The dog will be regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens. A letter will be issued to all students at the start of each year to ask about allergies or where parents refuse to allow their child to access the dog.

5.0 Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or at times of change.

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