



Therapy Dog
Compliance Code

Reviewed: January 2026

1.0 Introduction

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Research has shown many benefits to therapy and reading dogs in school settings. This policy is designed to set out to students, parents and visitors the reasons for having a school dog at any school associated with West Norfolk Academies Trust and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of students, staff, visitors and the dog.

School dogs have been proven to help develop students' reading skills, improve behaviour, attendance and academic confidence, as well as increasing student understanding of responsibility and developing empathy and nurturing skills. 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 students, staff and visitors

2.0 Principles

2.1 The Executive Principal agrees to a dog working within a school setting

2.2 Only the approved dog is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the Head has approved their presence prior to the visit.

2.3 The dog owner has full responsibility for the welfare of the dog and all expenses relating to pet insurance, food and other expenses and ensuring that the dog is vaccinated, wormed and flea treated.

2.3 A risk assessment must be in place and must be reviewed at regular intervals

2.4 The owner of the dog has viewed the risk assessment and has agreed to uphold the requirements stated within the control measures

2.5 The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of the owner or other staff members where agreed.

2.6 The Trust liability insurance must cover the school for risk related to a working dog on site.

2.7 Staff, parents and students must be informed that a dog will be in school. Parents can indicate that their child is not allowed to be present during dog therapy sessions by emailing the relevant school to inform the Head Teacher. Information must be shared with relevant staff

2.8 The presence of a dog onsite will be posted to inform visitors at reception and the school website. Reception staff will relay visitor issues to the SLT as soon as possible.

3.0 Code of Conduct

3.1 Staff Responsibilities

3.1.1 The owner will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.

3.1.2 If the dog is ill it will not be allowed into school.

3.1.3 The dog must be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of an adult at all times.

3.1.4 The dog will be kept in a secure area when not interacting with students. The dog will only visit designated lessons and not be allowed in other areas of the school.

3.1.5 Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog. A list of all students and staff with a reported allergy to dogs must be maintained and shared.

3.1.6 Staff leading sessions with the dog have a responsibility to ensure all staff, students or visitors present are happy for it to enter the room.

3.1.7 Students must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.

3.1.8 Staff will remind students of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog before any interaction during a session.

3.1.9 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. If the dog is displaying any warning signs such as growling or flattening of her ears, he should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.

3.1.10 Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by staff only.

3.2 Student Responsibilities

3.2.1 Students whose parents have withdrawn consent are not allowed to attend sessions where the dog is present

3.2.2 Students should be careful to stroke the dog on the body, chest, back and not the face or top of head.

3.2.3 Students are not allowed to approach the dog or disturb it whilst sleeping or eating.

3.2.4 Students are not allowed to play roughly with the dog.

3.2.5 Students must wait until the dog is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking.

3.2.6 Students are not allowed to eat during sessions with the dog.

3.2.7 Students must always wash their hands after handling / stroking the dog.

3.2.8 Students understand that any deliberate violence or threatening behaviour towards the dog will be dealt with through discipline measures.