



THORNGUMBALD PRIMARY

Dog Policy

Issue Date: Spring 2026
Review Date: Spring 2028

Rationale

There is a strong evidence base from research that human-animal interactions (HAI) have a positive effect for people in a wide range of areas. Beetz et al 2012 stated that positive effects have been demonstrated in areas such as:

- Social behaviour.
- Interpersonal interactions.
- Mood.
- Stress-related parameters.
- Heart rate.
- Blood pressure.
- Fear and anxiety.
- Mental health.
- Cardiovascular diseases.

We also believe that children can benefit in other ways from regular interaction with animals. These ways include:

- Emotional regulation.
- Increased understanding of responsibility.
- Development of empathy.
- Many children also get great enjoyment out of caring for and interacting with animals.

Risk Management

Although there are a variety of accidents, which could happen within the school environment these can be effectively managed through a careful and thorough risk assessment for each dog working within school. A copy of the risk assessment can be obtained from school. These plans set out the specific risk involved and the control measures in place to mitigate the identified risks. Dogs other than those covered by a specific risk assessment are not allowed on the school site at any time unless specifically authorised by the Headteacher. This includes drop off and collection times at the beginning and end of the school day.

The following dogs have a risk assessment in place and are authorised to work with children within the school.

Table 1:

Dog Name	Breed	Owner
Ralph	Cockerpoo	Miss Sarah Norton

These dogs have been identified because they:

- Respond well to training.
- Are known to be good with children.
- Shed little hair.
- Are sociable and friendly.

Organisational and Operational Information

Only the school dog(s) is allowed on the premises during term time. All other dogs must not come on site in term time unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the Headteacher has been informed beforehand.

Staff, parents and children will be informed by the Headteacher in writing that a dog will be in school. This will be done at the start of each academic year for new starters, or if a new school dog starts at the school. This must set out clear arrangements for how parents should to contact school if they do not want their child to interact with the dog.

Risk assessments for each dog will be reviewed annually and signed off by the Headteacher.

Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog.

All visitors will be informed by reception staff on arrival that there is a dog in school. There will also be displays with information about the school dog(s) in the reception area.

If the dog is ill, they will not be allowed into school.

The dog will be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of a trained adult.

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

Children will be taught how to behave appropriately around the dogs i.e.

- Remain calm.
- Not make sudden movements.
- Never stare into a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog.
- Put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up.
- Children should never go near or disturb the dog that is sleeping or eating.
- Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.
- Children should wait until the dog is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking it.
- 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 and limit the number of pupils at any time around the immediate area of the dog.

Children will be taught to identify how a dog may be feeling and act appropriately e.g. Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or bearing of teeth indicates 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 is displaying any of these warning signs it should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.

Children should not eat close to the dog.

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

Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.

Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.

Appropriately trained staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog.

The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of a responsible adult.

If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to the Headteacher or senior leader as soon as possible.

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

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in school and to ensure that this policy is reviewed annually. The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy. Teachers, staff, pupils, parents and visitors are required to abide by this policy.

Appendix 1

Reasons to have a dog in school in summary, academic research has shown that dogs working and helping in the school environment can achieve the following:

- Improve academic achievement.
- Increase literacy skills.
- Calming behaviours.
- Increase social skills and self-esteem.
- Increase confidence.
- Teach responsibility and respect to all life.
- Help prevent truancy.
- Motivate children who are often less attentive.

The following information has been taken from a range of sources to provide further detail about the benefits of having a dog in school:

Behaviour:

In some schools, dogs are making a difference in the behaviour of pupils. Researchers report that:

- Students can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel.
- It was found that violent behaviour in participating students declined by 55%, and general aggression went down 62%.
- In a controlled study, students were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Students' behaviour improved toward teachers, and students also showed more confidence and responsibility. Additionally, parents reported that children seemed more interested in school as a result of having a dog at school.

Reading:

- Reading programmes with dogs are doing wonders for some students. 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. "It might be less stressful for a child to read aloud to a dog than to a teacher or a peer.
- Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud.
- With the presence of a "calm and well-trained dog," students find social support and peer interaction.
- Dogs give unconditional acceptance, as they are non-judgmental, which is especially crucial to struggling, emerging readers.

- Dogs can also provide confidence to children as they do not make fun of them when they read, but above all they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love.
- Research has shown that students who read to dogs show an increase in reading levels, word recognition, a higher desire to read and write, and an increase in intra and interpersonal skills among the students they mix with.

Social Development:

- Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching student's social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help older students build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries.
- Older students use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower students.
- With a dog in school, students have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving students in the daily care of classroom dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The students also learn about responsibility, caring, and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school.

Appendix 2

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 will be Miss Norton; she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support insurance.

Q: Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

A: Yes, a full risk assessment is in place, which will be reviewed regularly. We have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources, including other local schools that successfully have a school dog.

Q: Who is responsible for training?

A: Miss Norton will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for its initial training.

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 taken to an area outside of the school grounds that has no access to students during the school day - The staff in charge of the dog will ensure that this is cleared away appropriately, leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed.

Q: How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A: The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. The dog will have its own space in Miss Norton's office where it will not be disturbed by pupils. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have unlimited access to food and water. He will visit regularly but not daily to ensure he does not become overwhelmed. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered and remove the dog from the school environment if we don't feel it is happy.

Q: How will this be managed where children have allergies?

A: Students will not need to touch the dog, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for students 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. Any students with allergies to dogs will be built into the risk assessment as they are made known to the school.

Q: My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?

A: Access to the dog will be carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with him if this has been expressed by parents. 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.

Q: Will other school dogs be allowed in school?

A: Allowing a dog onto the school site can only be approved by the Headteacher and for educational purposes. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Q: What type of dog is the puppy?

A: Ralph, is a Cockerpoo. This breed is known to be child friendly, lively, gentle mannered, demonstrably affectionate yet sensitive and have an outstanding trainability.