ST ALBAN'S CE (AIDED) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Love, Courage and Fellowship

'Inspired to make a difference in God's world with excellence and love'

Dogs in School Policy 2026-2028

Meet Maple: Our School Dog

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The Dogs Trust defines a school dog as a dog that is *'…resident within the school each day, for the majority if not the whole of the school day'*. However, the school does not own the dog. The dog should belong to an owner and live with them – usually a member of school staff (at our school this is the Headteacher).

Animals can "bring comfort and happiness to people with a range of disabilities and emotional needs"

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1. Aims and scope

This policy sets out the procedures and conduct required for interacting with dogs in school, such as during therapy or literacy sessions.

This policy is non-statutory.

It aims to ensure the safety and welfare of pupils and staff. It also aims to ensure that the dogs involved in such sessions are healthy and happy, and treated with respect.

2. Roles and responsibilities

Headteacher with responsibility for the dog

The Headteacher with responsibility for the dog should:

- Ensure the purpose of the dog being in school is clear
- Ensure that the dog being used for the therapy session is appropriate for the age range of the pupils' present
- Ensure all dogs used for therapy sessions are certified and appropriately trained
- Ensure the welfare needs of the dog are met
- Carry out a risk assessment for each interaction
- Consult staff in advance about any allergies or phobias
- Obtain parental consent before allowing any contact between pupils and the dog, and consult parents/carers on any allergies or phobias the pupils may have
- Ensure all staff and pupils have completed adequate training related to appropriate behaviour and conduct with the dog prior to any interactions
- Ensure staff and pupils are reminded of appropriate procedures and conduct prior to each session
- Put procedures in place for dealing with incidents, such as a dog bite
- Put clear hygiene procedures and responsibilities in place for cleaning up after the dog
- Ensure the measures set out in this policy are followed
- Ensure appropriate insurance cover is in place, whether through the school's policy or a third-party insurance policy

- Ensure that any dog on school premises is included in fire evacuation procedures, or any other evacuation or invacuation procedures, under the supervision of the dog handler
- Monitor and review this policy

2.2 Dog's owner

The dog's owner (the Headteacher) providing the dog should:

- Ensure the dog is fit and healthy prior to each visit, with confirmation from the dog's vet
- Ensure the purpose of the dog being in school is clear by having rules for staff and children to adhere to
- Ensure the welfare needs of the dog are met
- Ensure a space is allocated in school if the dog needs a child-free, quiet area to rest
- Make alternative arrangements for the care of the dog when the dog is unable to go into school
- Ensure the dog is supervised at all times on the school site
- Attend relevant training sessions with the dog as appropriate and ensure they and the dog are appropriately accredited
- Maintain a good understanding of dog communication and be able to quickly identify when the dog is showing signs of worry, stress or aggression
- Remove the dog immediately from any situation where the dog is displaying signs of worry, stress or aggression
- Keep the dog on a lead at all times when moving around the school site
- Ensure comprehensive insurance cover is in place that covers working dogs

2.3 Staff

Staff should ensure:

- Pupils are aware of and follow the pupil code of conduct set out in **section 7** of this policy
- Pupils are adequately supervised at all times during sessions with the dog
- Pupils with relevant allergies/phobias are kept separate from the dog
- They have checked that consent has been obtained from pupils' parents/carers before pupils are allowed to attend any sessions with the dog
- They are aware of the dog's whereabouts and who is responsible for supervising the dog at all times
- They check the records of all pupils, staff and visitors known to have an allergy to dogs and take steps to make sure they do not go near the dog
- They are aware of and follow the dog bite procedure set out in section 5.4 of this policy

2.4 Pupils

Pupils should:

- Follow the code of conduct set out in **section 7** of this policy. This will be displayed in all classrooms and throughout the school.

3. Pre-visit procedures

- Full parental consent must be received before allowing any contact between a pupil and the dog. Pupils whose parents/carers did not give consent are not allowed to attend dog therapy sessions
- Pupils and staff must attend a session to learn how to safely interact with the dog and read body language, prior to the dog starting at the school
- There must be appropriate insurance in place (owner and school) to cover any incidents/accidents that may occur
- The dog must be pronounced fit and healthy (both in relation to physical and mental health) by a vet before taking part in any activities within the school, including being fully up to date with any vaccinations

4. During the visit

4.1 Ensuring the dog's welfare

- The dog's welfare must be considered and carefully monitored throughout the dog's stay at the school
- The dog must be allowed some time to acclimatise to the school environment. This will allow the dog to get used to the busy atmosphere, smells and noise levels
- The dog must have appropriate access to food and water
- The dog must be able to express natural behaviours e.g. chew toys offered during breaks, time off lead, able to sniff
- There must be a suitable area away from pupils that the dog can use to rest when not taking part in activities
- When resting, the dog must be left alone, and pupils must not touch or interact with the dog
- The dog must be walked regularly throughout the day and given free time outside of the sessions in a designated area to play and rest 'off-lead'
- The dog must not be forced to interact with pupils or staff, and must be allowed to move away
- If the dog shows signs that they are unhappy or uncomfortable (e.g. flattened ears, showing teeth, tail between legs, growling), the dog will be removed from the situation immediately and the pupils asked to give the dog space

As the dog will be a permanent school dog, the following - to protect her welfare - will be adhered to:

- The dog must not need to attend school daily
- The frequency of visits will be determined with the dog's welfare as the primary consideration
- Sessions between dogs and pupils are kept to a maximum of 30 minutes each and limited to a total of 2 hours spread across the day

4.2 Supervision

- The number of children interacting with the dog at any one time should be kept to no more than 8
- For each session where the dog is present, there should be at least 1 other adult (as well as the owner/handler) present to ensure appropriate behaviour from the children

- The dog must be kept on a lead during sessions and when moving around the school site
- Pupils must never be left alone with the dog. There must be appropriate adult supervision at all times
- Provisions must be made for the dog to have a safe space and be supervised when the owner/handler isn't able to do so (e.g. toilet break)
- Person responsible for the dog must know its whereabouts and which staff are supervising the dog at all times

4.3 Allergies

Pupils, staff and visitors known to have an allergy to dogs should be kept away from the dog. A list of those with allergies is kept and updated regularly.

4.4 Dog bite procedure

In the event of a dog bite, staff should follow our standard first aid procedure, in accordance with the first aid policy:

- Parents/carers should be informed of the dog bite and the surrounding circumstances without delay
- The closest member of staff present will assess the seriousness of the injury and seek the assistance of a qualified first aider, if appropriate, who will provide the required first aid treatment
- The first aider should refer to NHS guidance on animal bites when assessing and treating the injury
- The first aider, if called, will assess the injury and decide if further assistance is needed from a colleague or the emergency services. They will remain on the scene until help arrives.
- The first aider will also decide whether the injured person should be moved or placed in a recovery position
- If the first aider judges that a pupil is too unwell to remain in school, parents/carers will be contacted and asked to collect their child. Upon their arrival, the first aider will recommend next steps to the parents/carers
- If emergency services are called, the Admin Officer will contact parents/carers immediately
- The First Aider/Admin Officer will complete an accident report form on the same day or as soon as is reasonably practical after an incident resulting in an injury
- Following a dog bite incident, an investigation into the circumstances shall take place and the suitability of having a dog in school shall be reassessed by the Headteacher

5. Grooming

There is no need to extensively groom the dog before each visit as depending on the frequency of visits this can have a significant impact on the dog's health and welfare. For example, dogs have sensitive skin and cleaning them too often can remove natural oils that will dry out their coat and can cause skin irritation.

Grooming routines will be dependent on the specific dog's needs and related to the type of dog – the following are guidelines only.

We maintain the following grooming routine:

- Regular baths with appropriate shampoo every 1 to 3 months (depending on the dog's needs)
- Regular claw trimming

- Brushing of the coat to keep it tidy, remove knots and any dead hair/skin cells

6. Zoonotic disease prevention

Zoonosis is any disease that can be transmitted from animals to humans.

In order to minimise the risk of zoonoses, the school uses the following measures and procedures:

- All pupils and staff must wash their hands before and after interacting/touching the dog
- Avoid touching the face (especially mouth area) after touching the dog and before washing hands
- Prevent the dog from licking faces/hands and wash hands/faces immediately if this should happen
- Provide separate food and water dishes for the dog. Wash these daily and store away from dishes used by pupils, staff and visitors
- Wear gloves when picking up dog faeces. All waste material should be disposed of promptly and safely
- All dog faeces should be picked up immediately, double bagged and disposed of appropriately and promptly. Gloves should always be worn. Pupils should never be responsible for picking up and disposing of dog faeces
- If a member of staff has any concerns about the germs that dogs can carry and the potential impact of this on their health, they should raise this with the Headteacher
- Arrange for the dog to see a vet promptly if showing any sign of illness
- The dog should receive a broad-spectrum deworming product on a regular basis (as advised by a vet)
- The dog should receive flea and tick control products on a routine basis and preferably ones that also control skin mites (as advised by a vet)

7.Pupil conduct

In order to maintain both the pupils' and dog's welfare, it's important that all pupils who may come into contact with the dog understand how to interact with the dog safely and maintain positive dog welfare.

Pupils must:

- Follow all instruction given to them while interacting with the dog
- Only stroke the dog on its body, chest, shoulders, and the top of the head, not on the face or tail (including putting hands in the dog's mouth)
- Wait until the dog is stationary – standing, sitting or lying down – before touching it
- Remain calm around the dog
- Place school bags out of reach of the dog
- Wash their hands before and after interacting with the dog

Pupils must not:

- Interact with the dog until invited to do so by the handler / dog's owner/ supervising member of staff
- Kiss the dog
- Feed the dog, or taunt the dog with food

- Approach or disturb the dog whilst it is resting, sleeping or eating
- Force the dog to interact with them
- Attempt to play rough with the dog (this can over stimulate them)
- Eat during interactions with the dog

Pupils who struggle to follow the rules will be removed from the session. They will be given an opportunity to learn why they were removed and what they can do to interact more positively with the dog.

If pupils are deliberately violent or threatening towards the dog this will be dealt with under the school's relational policy and may result in fixed-term suspension.

8. Links to other policies

- Health and safety policy
- First aid policy
- Relational policy

9. Monitoring and review

This policy will initially be reviewed after 6 months and then be reviewed annually by Headteacher and Governing Body or when a significant change occurs (e.g. a new dog is brought into school).

Appendix 1

Template letter to parents/carers

ST ALBAN'S CE (AIDED) PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Dear Parent/carer,

Following discussion with the Governing Body, I am writing to let you know that the school will be taking on a school dog. Her name is Maple and she is a Cocker Spaniel. She was born on the 30 March 2026, so is 4 months old. Cocker Spaniels are easy to train and are exceptionally good at being with children of all ages. Maple will be in school for a few days between now and the summer holidays so that she can familiarise herself with the environment, and the noises!

The Dogs Trust defines a school dog as a dog that is *'resident within the school each day, for the majority if not the whole of the school day'.* However, the school does not own the dog. The dog belongs to me and lives with me and my family.

From September, pupils will be invited to take part in sessions with the dog. Animals can "bring comfort and happiness to people with a range of disabilities and emotional needs" according to Pets4Homes.

The dog has undergone the appropriate medical checks and training to work as a therapy dog in a school. When we return to school in September, all staff and pupils will undergo training to know how to interact safely with Maple, A copy of the agreed Dogs in Schools Policy is attached to this email along with the 'Meet Maple' poster that will be displayed around the school. If you would like to view the Risk Assessment, please ask the office and we will send you a copy.

It is important that we receive consent from parents/carers for your child to take part in sessions with Maple, or to interact with her. Please fill in the Forms, by clicking on the link, as soon as possible.

We are all very much looking forward to Maple being a part of our school.

With very best wishes,

Mrs Sarah Goldsworthy

Headteacher