



Hadrian Learning Trust

School Dog Policy

July 2024

Next annual update: August 2025

Hadrian Learning Trust School Dog Policy

Introduction

Research has shown many benefits to therapy and reading dogs in school settings. Hadrian Learning Trust has two school dogs which work with pastoral staff to support improvement in student behaviour and wellbeing. This policy is designed to set out to students, parents and visitors the reasons for having dogs at Hadrian Learning Trust and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of students, staff, visitors and the school dogs. The two dogs are deployed separately across the middle and high schools so there is only ever one dog in each school at a time.

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.

The benefits of a school 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 develop empathy and nurturing skills. Within Hadrian Learning Trust we have school dogs to support our staff team in bringing all of these benefits to our students. Our school dogs will be trained to work with children and young people.

2.1 Literacy benefits

There is extensive research indicating the benefits of reading to dogs; these include helping children to develop literacy skills and build confidence.

Bark & Read – The Kennel Club (<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/barkandread>)

2.2 Therapy benefits

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

School Dogs - Therapy Dogs Nationwide (<https://tdn.org.uk/schools-2/>)

2.3 Attendance & punctuality benefits

There is also case study evidence to indicate that building a relationship with a school dog can lead to increased confidence and engagement for children thus improving school attendance.

Principles

3.1 The Executive Headteacher, Heads of School, Trustees agree to the school dogs working across the trust.

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

3.3 Our school dogs are cocker spaniels, chosen because they are an intelligent breed that will respond well to training and which is known to be good with children, shed little hair, and are very sociable and friendly.

3.4 Arlo and Pip's legal owner is Mrs Curry. Mrs Curry has full responsibility for the welfare of the school dog and all expenses relating to pet insurance, food and other expenses and ensuring that the dog is vaccinated, wormed and flea treated.

3.5 If Mrs Curry ceases to work within Hadrian Learning Trust then Arlo and Pip will also leave and we may seek another volunteer from within the staff body to bring their dog to work in school. Thorough checks would take place in this event.

3.6 A comprehensive risk assessment has been completed to allow the dogs to work in school.

3.6 The dogs will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Mrs Curry or other nominated staff.

3.7 The Trust's liability insurance covers the school for risk related to a working dog on site. The Business Manager has responsibility for ensuring this remains on the school's policy during Arlo and Pip's time working within Hadrian Learning Trust.

3.8 Staff, parents and students will be informed in writing that the dogs will be in school.

3.9 The presence of the school dogs will be signposted to visitors at reception and on the school website. Reception staff will relay visitor issues to the Business Manager as soon as possible.

3.10 Only designated student support staff will be responsible for supervision of the school dogs when working with students.

Code of Conduct

4.1 Staff Responsibilities

4.1.1 Nominated student support staff will know the whereabouts of the dogs and which staff are supervising at all times.

4.1.2 If the dogs are ill they will not be allowed into school.

4.1.3 The owner ('Mrs Curry') is responsible for the overall training and care of the school dogs.

4.1.4 The dogs must be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of a nominated member of staff.

4.1.5 The dogs will be kept in Mrs Curry's office when not interacting with students.

4.1.6 The dogs will only visit designated therapy or reading lessons as well as the garden and will not be allowed in other areas of the site.

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

4.1.7 The Lead First Aider keeps a list of all students and staff with a reported allergy to dogs and ensures that all staff working with the dogs know who these students and staff are.

4.1.8 Staff leading therapy or reading sessions with the dogs have a responsibility to ensure all staff, students or visitors present are happy for the dogs to enter the room.

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

4.1.9 Students will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dogs before any interaction during a therapy sessions or visit.

4.1.10 The dogs should not be surrounded at any time by large groups of students. It is the responsibility of the adult in charge of the dogs to supervise and monitor interactions.

4.1.11 Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by the supervising adult.

4.1.12 Staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dogs to better inform research into the benefits of a school therapy / reading dog.

4.2 Student Responsibilities

4.2.1 Students whose parents have withdrawn consent are not allowed to attend dog therapy sessions or interact with the school dogs.

4.2.2 Students should be careful to stroke the dogs on their body, chest, back and not by their face or top of head.

4.2.3 Students are not allowed to approach the dogs or disturb them whilst they are sleeping or eating.

4.2.4 Students are not allowed to play roughly with the dogs.

4.2.5 Students are not allowed to eat during sessions with the dogs.

4.2.6 Students must always wash their hands after handling / stroking the dogs.

4.2.8 Students understand that any deliberate violence or threatening behaviour towards the dogs will be sanctioned and possibly lead to a suspension.

Emergency Procedure

5.1 In the event that there was an incident involving either of the dogs it would be immediately placed in its crate and kept secure.

5.2 The dogs can be removed from site and taken home if required by its owner.