Springwell School



Therapy Dog Policy

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Next review: **June 2027**

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Introduction

Research has shown many benefits to therapy dogs in school settings. Springwell School has a therapy dog who works with our pupils to give educational and emotional benefits.

This policy is designed to set out to staff, parents, and visitors the reasons for having a therapy dog at Springwell School and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of pupils, staff, visitors and the therapy dog.

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 pupils, staff, and visitors (Appendix A - Risk Assessment).

The Benefits of a Therapy Dog

School dogs have been proven to help develop pupils' confidence, have the potential to calm, lower anxiety, also increasing pupil understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills.

Therapy Dogs Nationwide have stated that they have also shown to help with special needs and autistic children and adults by giving focus and providing a calming environment.

At Springwell School we have a therapy dog to support our staff in bringing all of these benefits to our pupils. Springwell School's therapy dog has been trained as a therapy dog and certified by Pets As Therapy.

Principles

- The therapy dog, Simba is legally owned by a member of staff, Sarah Parr, who does not have a teaching responsibility. They have full responsibility for the welfare of the therapy dog and all expenses relating to pet insurance, food and other expenses and ensuring that the dog is vaccinated, wormed and flea treated.
- Only the therapy dog, Simba, is allowed on school 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.
- Simba is a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, a breed with a history of having a gentle temperament, affectionate nature and adaptability to new environments and routine changes. As a breed they are also known to be calm around groups of children.
- A risk assessment will be produced by Sarah Parr and approved by the Head and reviewed annually.
- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Sarah Parr.
- Staff and parents will be informed that a therapy dog will be in school.

- Parents can indicate that their child is not allowed to be present during dog therapy sessions by completing the online consent form, sent out to parents.
- New staff will be made aware of the therapy dog during interviews and inductions.
- New parents will be made aware of the therapy dog during visits, parent workshop and via the school website.
- The presence of a therapy dog will be sign posted to visitors at reception and the school website. Reception staff will relay visitor issues to a member of SLT as soon as possible.
- The therapy dog will be accompanied by an adult at all times.
- Only staff trained to handle the therapy dog in pupil sessions will have permission to do so and only when authorised by Sarah Parr.
- Simba will be vaccinated, regularly wormed, and have preventative flea treatment. This is the responsibility of Sarah Parr.
- The school's RPA liability insurance provides indemnity if the school is found negligent for injury to pupils, staff, visitors, or damage to third-party property caused by the therapy dog, Simba.

Staff Responsibilities

- Sarah Parr will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.
- If the dog is ill he will not be allowed into school. Sarah Parr has responsibility for ensuring appropriate alternative care for Simba if he is not able to be in the school on a given day.
- Sarah Parr is responsible for ensuring Simba is trained and certified as a therapy dog by Pets As Therapy.
- Simba 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 trained and authorised adult.
- Staff, visitors, and pupils known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near Simba. The main office will keep a list of all students and staff with a reported allergy to dogs (dander) and ensure that Sarah Parr knows who these pupils and staff are.
- Staff leading therapy or visiting sessions with Simba have a responsibility to ensure all staff, pupils or visitors present are happy for Simba to enter the room.
- Pupils must never be left alone with Simba and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Pupils will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog before any interaction during a therapy session or visit and staff should prevent pupils from crowding around the dog.
- If Simba is surrounded by a large number of children, they could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that they monitor the situation. If Simba is displaying any warning signs such as growling or flattening of their ears, they should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment by the trained staff member handling them.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by the trained dog handling staff only.

- Pupils whose parents have withdrawn consent are not allowed to attend dog therapy sessions.
- Pupils should be encouraged to be careful to stroke Simba on the body, chest, back and not by their face or top of head.
- Pupils must not be allowed to approach Simba or disturb them whilst they are sleeping or eating.
- Pupils are not allowed to play roughly with the dog.
- Pupils should not be allowed to eat during sessions with Simba.
- Pupils must always wash their hands after handling / stroking Simba.
- Anyone who has a known allergy must not go near the dog.

Appendix A: School Therapy 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 Mrs Sarah Parr. She will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support liability insurance and staff training costs. only where appropriate.

Q Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

A Yes. The dog is from a home where both parents were seen and has been specifically. chosen for its temperament.

Q Will the dog be a distraction to pupils?

A The dog will only spend time in classrooms and the rest of the school at specific planned sessions and therefore the dog will not be a distraction to pupils during core teaching and learning. The dog may also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation, following consultation with staff beforehand.

Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

A Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources, taking into account our own previous experience from having a school therapy dog.

Q Who is responsible for training?

A Mrs Parr is the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for his

training. Appropriate professional training has been undertaken and the dog has been assessed and certified as a therapy dog by Pets As Therapy before beginning any work within Springwell School.

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

A In the interest of health and hygiene our therapy dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks outside the school buildings by staff members. The dog will not be allowed in the main playground at any time.

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

dog?

A Staff will ensure the therapy dog only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision of a trained member of staff. The therapy dog will not be allowed into the main playground area; therefore a pupil will not be forced to be in contact with the dog at any time against their wishes. 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 How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. Parents will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to be able to walk with a member of staff and the dog during that time. This will also be used as a behaviour reward. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered.

Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?

A Pupils will not need to touch the dog or be in the same room as the dog at any point which will relieve the possibility of 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. Individual needs will always be met, and we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies. The therapy dog was specifically chosen for being a breed known for its calm and sociable disposition and he will be given a high-quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

Health & Safety Risk Assessment for School Dog **Task/activity**		**Who is at risk**	**Hazard identification**	**Current controls**	**Severity** 1 nil 2 low 3 medium 4 major 5 high	**Probability** 1 improbable 2 remote 3 possible 4 probable 5 likely	**Current risk rating** Severity x probability 1-10 low 11-15 medium 16-25 high
1.a	Hygiene	Pupils	Children coming into contact with dog faeces	Dog walked & toileted in designated area of the school grounds. Faeces removed in bag and deposited into main bin	3	2	6
b		Pupils/staff	Contact with dog sick	Sick to be cleaned up wearing gloves, using paper and disinfectant	2	3	6
c		Pupils	Stroking/contact with dog and touching mouth or food	Children reminded to wash hands by staff supervising dog. Anti-bacterial gel available in classrooms, offices, and staffroom.	2	4	8
d		Pupils/staff	Fleas, ticks, worms etc	Dog to be well groomed and regularly wormed and defleaed.	3	2	6
2	Scratched	Pupils/staff	Dog over excited in play or jumping up	Children to pat dog when it is stood or sat still. Dog supervised by staff at all times. Dog trained to not jump up whilst working. Dog's nails clipped regularly	2	3	6

3	Asthmatic/allergic reaction	Pupils/staff /visitors	Allergic reaction after contact with dog ``	Annual medical questionnaire to parents to include identify allergy. Medical records used to list pupils identified as having an allergy and not to have contact with dog. Children to wash hands after contact with dog. Visitors advised dog is in office and removed if requested. All parents aware dog is in school through regular inclusion in newsletter and prospectus. Medical advice sought and ambulance called if necessary. School welfare officer has a medical sheet to identify reactions.	3	3	9
4	Dog unwell	pupils	Dog ‘cranky’/bad mood	If dog unwell, will not be in school.	2	3	6
5	Dog phobia	Pupils/visitors	Distress caused through close proximity to dog	Advise visitors and remove the dog if necessary. Signs in school entrance and usual resting place advising of dog presence. Prospectus to include information about the therapy	2	2	4

				dog and all prospective parents advised of its presence. Staff to supervise dog at all times and be sensitive to all children's reactions. Breed of dog selected for gentle, quiet temperament.			
6	Dog bite	Pupils/staff/visitor	Dog bites someone	Staff to regularly monitor dog's temperament, behaviour, and mood. Staff to supervise dog at all times and to be allowed off lead to allow for space. Dog trained to have no mouth/teeth contact and to respond to command "leave". Dog trained through attendance at obedience classes. Target is to have dog assessed as an accredited Pets as Therapy. If a dog bite was to occur the pupil, staff or visitor must go straight to the Welfare Officer for treatment.	3	3	9
7	Dog becoming anxious or tired	Dog	Dog gets irritable	Safe space in office for 'quiet time' planned into a day away from main school activities.	2	3	6