

# School Intervention Dog Policy

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**Reviewed by: Mrs R Fawcett, Operations Manager**

**Mr T Arnett, Pastoral Leader**

**Approved by Headteacher: November 2025**

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## 1.0 Introduction

President Kennedy School is committed to promoting emotional wellbeing, positive mental health, and a supportive learning environment. As part of this commitment, the school has introduced a school intervention dog to support students' emotional regulation, social interaction, and engagement with learning. Our staff also benefit from interactions with the dog which supports our commitment to staff well-being.

Research demonstrates that contact with dogs can:

- Reduce stress and anxiety
- Improve emotional awareness and empathy
- Support behaviour regulation
- Encourage attendance and engagement
- Enhance wellbeing and communication skills

The intervention dog forms part of our wider wellbeing strategy, supporting students in a safe, structured, and inclusive way.

This policy outlines the purpose, management, and safeguarding measures associated with having a dog in school.

## 2.0 Policy Aims and Scope

The aims of this policy are to:

- Ensure the safety, welfare, and wellbeing of students, staff, visitors, and the dog
- Set out clear procedures for managing the dog's presence on site
- Provide transparency and reassurance to parents, carers, and the wider community
- Define the role of the dog within school life

This policy is non-statutory.

## 3.0 Roles and responsibilities

### 3.1 Headteacher

The Headteacher should:

- Ensure the purpose of the dog being in school is clear
- Ensure that the dog being used for the intervention session is appropriate for the age range of the students present
- Ensure all dogs used for intervention sessions are certified and appropriately trained
- Ensure the welfare needs of the dog are met
- Inform staff, students and parents/carers that a dog will be in school
- Consult staff in advance about any allergies or phobias
- Obtain parental consent before allowing any contact between students and the dog, and consult parents/carers on any allergies or phobias the students may have

- Ensure all staff and students have completed adequate training related to appropriate behaviour and conduct with the dog prior to any interactions
- 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/Trust'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
- Ensure that only the school dog is allowed on the school premises. No other dogs are allowed on site unless they are recognised therapy or assistance dogs and the Headteacher has given specific authorisation beforehand
- Monitor and review this policy

### **3.2 Dog handler/owner**

The dog handler/owner 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 students 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

### **3.3 Staff**

Staff should ensure:

- Students are aware of and follow the student code of conduct set out in section 7 of this policy
- Students are adequately supervised at all times during sessions with the dog
- Students with relevant allergies/phobias are kept separate from the dog
- They have checked that consent has been obtained from student's parents/carers before students 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 students, 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 4.4 of this policy

### **3.4 Students**

Students should:

- Follow the code of conduct set out in section 7 of this policy

## **4.0 The dog**

The dog is called Rupert and he is a three-year-old black spaniel. The dog is owned by Mr Arnett, Pastoral Leader in Year 9, and lives in a safe home environment.

### **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 students that the dog can use to rest when not taking part in activities
- When resting, the dog must be left alone and students 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 students 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 students asked to give the dog space
- The dog does 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 students 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 students interacting with the dog at any one time should be kept to no more than 5
- The dog must be kept on a lead during sessions and when moving around the school site
- Students 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

Students, staff and visitors known to have an allergy to dogs should be kept away from the dog. Students will be asked for consent to interact with the school dog as well confirmation of any allergies as part of the annual student data collection process. 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 student 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, a member of the students College team will contact parents/carers immediately
- The first aider 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

## 5.0 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.

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

## 6.0 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 students 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 students, 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. Students 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
- The dog must 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)

## 7.0 Student conduct

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

### Students must:

- Not interact with the dog until invited to do so by the handler/dog's owner/supervising member of staff
- 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

### Students must not:

- 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

Students 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 students are deliberately violent or threatening towards the dog this will be dealt with under the school's behaviour policy and may result in fixed-term exclusion.

## **8.0 Links to other policies**

- Health and Safety Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Relationships Policy (Behaviour and Rewards)

## **9.0 Monitoring and review**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher or when a significant change occurs (e.g. a new dog is brought into school).

## Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. What type of dog will the school be using as an intervention support?**

A. The dog is a 3 year old black spaniel called Rupert.

**Q. Where does Rupert come from?**

A. Rupert has been sourced from a charity called Medical Detection Dogs, a charity which noted for the placing of dogs into domestic and school environments to provide specialist support to clients with specific medical needs. Mr Arnett has worked with this charity previously and is confident of their recommendation of this specific dog as being suitable for the role of a school support intervention dog. The dog has a sound temperament and is robust enough environmentally to cope with life at President Kennedy School.

**Q. Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?**

A. The legal owner of the dog is Mr Arnett, Pastoral Leader in the Year 9 college team. He will bear all of the costs associated with owning the dog, such as food, grooming, medical costs, kennelling, insurance, etc. The school budget will support associated costs such as equipment costs where appropriate.

**Q. Will the dog be a distraction?**

A. The dog will be kept with Mr Arnett in suitable crate to allow the dog rest periods and a calm environment. The room is an office, separate from the classrooms and playground areas to ensure the dog only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision.

**Q. Who is responsible for training?**

A. Mr Arnett will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for its training. It is also his intention to seek advice from other dog professionals to annually assess the dog's suitability for role.

**Q. Has a risk assessment been undertaken?**

A. Yes, this has been conducted having sought advice from many sources, including other schools in our Trust that successfully have a school dog. Mr Arnett also has extensive experience in the training and handling of dogs given his previous employment.

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

A. In the interest of health and hygiene, the school dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks in designated areas identified and agreed by the Operations Manager. These will be areas not in use by students or staff. Only staff members will toilet the dog, clearing away any waste and disposing of it appropriately, leaving no trace on the ground. Dog bags will be sealed and disposed in a designated bin. Hands must be washed immediately afterwards.

**Q. How will the dog's welfare be considered?**

A. The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. Parents/carers 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, and not to the detriment of core learning.

The dog will be kept in an agreed area with Mr Arnett who will oversee supervised contact with children and visitors. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have unlimited access to water. He is to be kept away from the corridors and public areas at break, lunch and lesson changeovers where there are high volume of students and staff moving through the site. The dog's welfare is always considered. If the dog is unwell, it will not be allowed on the school site.

**Q. How will this be managed where staff, students and visitors have allergies?**

A. Staff, students and visitors will not have to touch the dog if they choose not to, which will minimise the possibility of allergic reactions. The school operationally considers allergies and the impact and risk to students, staff and visitors. Individual needs will always be met, and the school will engage with parents/carers to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies. Dog dander which can be a common allergen that triggers reactions in sensitive individuals is being minimised by feeding Rupert with high quality food and having him regularly groomed approximately every five weeks. His bedding is washed routinely.

**Q. My child is frightened of dogs, how will you manage this?**

A. Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised, and students do not need to have close contact with it unless permission for this has been given. The school will work closely with parents/carers of students who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage.

The dog will have interactions with students under the direct supervision of the dog handler. Occasionally, the dog may be off-lead for these interactions. When this is the case, these interactions will take place within an office (usually the Year 9 office) with the door closed. This will minimise the risk of the dog running off. The dog has been fully trained to obey the commands of the dog handler and running off/away from them would be highly unlikely.

Religious beliefs this will be respected at all times and contact with the dog will not be allowed unless agreed by parents/carers.