



New Park Academy Therapy Dogs Policy

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Introduction

New Park Academy recognises the potential benefits of therapy dogs in supporting the emotional, social, and educational needs of our students. This policy outlines the guidelines and procedures for the introduction, maintenance, training, and supervision of therapy dogs on school premises.

Purpose:

Therapy dogs are introduced to assist students with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) related to conditions such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Social, Emotional, Mental Health (SEMH), and other related needs.

Selection of Dogs:

1. Dogs must undergo a thorough assessment by a qualified professional veterinarian or dog behaviour specialist to ensure they possess a suitable temperament and health for working in a SEMH school environment.
2. Only dogs that exhibit calm, gentle, and predictable behaviour, with an ability to interact positively with children, will be considered for the therapy dog program.
3. Dogs must be up to date with vaccinations, flea, tick, and worm treatments as per veterinary recommendations.
4. The dogs should be owned by staff members willing to commit to the responsibilities outlined in this policy.

Training and Certification:

1. Therapy dogs must undergo appropriate obedience training to ensure they respond to basic commands, remain calm in various environments, and demonstrate good behaviour around children.
2. The staff member who owns the therapy dog must provide evidence of the dog's training and certification from a recognised training organisation or professional trainer.
3. Regular ongoing training sessions for both the owner and the dog will be encouraged to maintain appropriate behaviours and skills.

4. All Therapy dogs must have 3rd party public liability insurance. Payment must be made in advance and certificate of insurance shared with the school.

Staff Training:

All staff members at New Park Academy will undergo a training session led by a Dog Behaviour Specialist. This session will focus on 'Safe Communication with Dogs,' emphasising signs of stress, discomfort, and body language cues exhibited by dogs to ensure safe interactions and prevent any potential risks to students.

Maintenance and Care:

1. The owner of the therapy dog is responsible for the dog's daily care, including feeding, grooming, exercise, and overall well-being.
2. Regular visits to the veterinarian for health check-ups, vaccinations, and preventative care are mandatory.
3. The owner will cover expenses for annual check-ups by a vet to ensure the dogs remain in good health and pose no risks to students.
4. Health records will be maintained annually for each therapy dog to monitor their well-being and ensure compliance with health guidelines.

Supervision and Monitoring:

1. Prior to working in the school, therapy dogs must be observed by a professional dog behaviourist or certified trainer to assess their suitability for interacting with children in a school setting.
2. The school will designate a staff member (usually the owner) to oversee the presence and activities of the therapy dog during school hours.
3. Close monitoring of the dog's behaviour and its impact on students will be conducted to ensure a positive and safe environment for everyone.
4. The designated staff member will ensure that any dog mess is removed immediately and placed in the designated dog waste bin. The dogs will be trained to toilet in an area of the school that pupil's do not have access to on a regular basis. If necessary, the area will then be disinfected with an appropriate animal disinfectant.

5. Dogs will not go into the school dining hall at mealtimes or will not be permitted into the food preparation area of the kitchen.

Interactions with Students:

1. Interactions between the therapy dog and students must always be supervised by a trained adult.
2. Students will be educated on appropriate behaviour around the therapy dogs, including respecting its space and following guidelines for safe interactions.
3. Any allergies or concerns regarding the presence of the therapy dog should be communicated by parents or guardians to the school administration.

Health Guidelines:

1. Dogs showing signs of illness will be promptly taken to a veterinarian for diagnosis and treatment. They will not be allowed on school premises until their health is restored.
2. For breaks and timeouts, dogs are to be kept in Mr Brierley's (High School) & Mrs Webster's (Primary) classrooms, the yard, or the quiet room (primary) to give the dog appropriate time to de-stress.

Named Carers:

Apart from the dogs' owners, designated staff members will act as named carers. These individuals will provide attention and care to the therapy dogs if the primary carers are unavailable. The named carers are:

1. Philippa Peploe (Wendy Trueman) - Topsy
2. Porscha Pitchford (Graeme Brierley) - Pepper
3. Holly Donoghue (Nicholas Aitken-Smith) - Elvis
4. Nicola Lawless (Nicola Webster) - Stanley

Conclusion:

New Park Academy is committed to ensuring the successful integration of therapy dogs into the school environment while prioritising the safety, welfare, and educational support of

our students with EHCPs. This comprehensive policy is designed to create a structured framework for the introduction, maintenance, and supervision of therapy dogs to enhance the school community's well-being and educational experience.

Risk Assessment for Therapy Dogs at New Park Academy

The severity and likelihood of each risk will be rated on a scale of 1-5.

1 = Low 2 = Mild 3 = Medium 4 = High 5 = Extreme

Potential Risks:

Allergies:

- **Risk:** Some students or staff may have allergies to dogs, causing allergic reactions.
- **Mitigation:** Parents/guardians will be informed of the presence of therapy dogs. A protocol for managing allergies (e.g., medication availability) will be established.

Severity to Staff: 2/5 - Severity to Pupils: 2/5 - Likelihood: 1/5

Behavioural Issues:

- **Risk:** Unforeseen behavioural issues or reactions from therapy dogs leading to stress or injury to students or staff.
- **Mitigation:** Regular observation by a designated supervisor (Graeme Brierley), along with continuous behavioural assessments by professionals, will be conducted. Clear guidelines on interaction and safe handling of dogs will be communicated to staff and students.

Severity to Staff: 2/5 - Severity to Pupils: 3/5 - Likelihood: 2/5

Hygiene and Zoonotic Diseases:

- **Risk:** Possibility of the spread of zoonotic diseases or hygiene issues due to the presence of dogs.
- **Mitigation:** Regular vet check-ups, vaccinations, and adherence to preventative treatments will be maintained. School cleanliness protocols will be reinforced, including cleaning areas where dogs frequent.



Severity to Staff: 2/5 - Severity to Pupils: 2/5 - Likelihood: 1/5

Disruption to Learning:

- **Risk:** Potential distraction or disruption to the learning environment caused by the presence of therapy dogs.
- **Mitigation:** Supervision during interactions between dogs and students will ensure minimal disruption to classroom activities. Dogs will be present in designated areas, and their schedules will be coordinated to minimize disruption.

Severity to Staff: 1/5 - Severity to Pupils: 2/5 - Likelihood: 1/5



Emergency Situations:

- **Risk:** Possible emergencies involving the therapy dogs (e.g., injury, illness) during school hours.
- **Mitigation:** Emergency protocols for contacting veterinary services and addressing dog-related incidents will be established and communicated to staff.

Severity to Staff: 1/5 - Severity to Pupils: 1/5 - Likelihood: 3/5

Risk Assessment Procedures:

1. Regular Review: The risk assessment will be reviewed and updated annually or as needed in response to incidents or changes in circumstances.
2. Training and Awareness: All staff will undergo training regarding risk awareness, emergency procedures, and safe interaction protocols with therapy dogs.
3. Incident Reporting: Procedures for reporting incidents or concerns related to therapy dogs will be established. Staff will be encouraged to report any issues immediately to the designated supervisor.
4. Communication with Stakeholders: Parents/guardians will be informed about the presence of therapy dogs at the school and any relevant information regarding potential risks and mitigating measures.

Conclusion:

This risk assessment aims to identify potential risks associated with the presence of therapy dogs at New Park Academy and outlines measures to mitigate these risks. By implementing thorough protocols, regular monitoring, and clear communication, the school aims to ensure the safe and beneficial integration of therapy dogs into the school environment.

