



Directorate of Children's Services

Our Lady and St Kenelm RC School

Dog Mentor Policy

'Bringing out the best in everyone, for the benefit of all in the Spirit of Christ.'

Introduction:

The value of animal 'therapy' is considered as an aid to stimulation and communication. Studies have shown that the presence of companion animals can improve the well-being of children and lower the rate of anxiety, simply by making the environment happier, more enjoyable and less foreboding.

The Leadership Team at Our Lady and St Kenelm RC School considered the benefits of obtaining a dog for school therapy and a decision was made in March 2022 to go ahead with the project.

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog.

The rationales behind this decision were as follows:

- For the school to have a Dog Mentor that was able to live as naturally as conditions would allow.
- For the Dog Mentor to be properly cared for outside of the school day, outside of the school.
- To have a Dog Mentor that the children could interact with and be of benefit to the children's social and emotional development.

It is accepted by the school Leadership Team that interacting with animals is not appropriate for all children due to fear or cultural reasons, but for some it has the potential to provide many positive benefits. Any parent who does not want their child to interact with the Dog Mentor is invited to write to the Head Teacher and inform them of their wishes.

In order to check for and control diseases associated with dogs, the dog will receive regular veterinary checks and vaccinations as required to ensure the dog is kept in good health, including rabies and any new animal diseases (Zoonoses) that may be identified in future research activities. The owner of the Dog Mentor will also ensure the dog's coat is always kept clean and healthy.

There will always be a risk associated with any animals brought into the school, however there are a variety of accidents which can occur within the school environment which may far exceed the number of injuries or incidents (but possibly not the severity of injury) that can be caused by a dog. It is a risk that will be managed and the School Leadership Team accepts this risk. A thorough Risk Assessment is available on the school website.

The Governing Body has ensured that this written policy is suitable and sufficient for a Dog Mentor in the school.

The Headteacher is responsible for implementing and monitoring this policy.

Teachers/staff and children are required to abide by this policy.

The Health and Safety Officer is responsible for providing information, advice and guidance as and when required.

1. Our Lady and St Kenelm School Dog Mentor - Elma

- 1.1 The Dog Mentor dog, Elma, is owned by Samantha Fairfax. She is a Boston Terrier/French Bulldog cross and has been chosen for her good temperament and non-moulting coat.
- 1.2 Samantha Fairfax will be responsible for regular visits to the vets, injections, inoculations and general upkeep of the dog including cleaning up the waste from the dog during exercise walks in the school grounds.
- 1.3 The Chair of Governors, and the Head Teacher have both agreed to the school having a Dog Mentor.
- 1.4 Any areas of concern relating to the dog's behaviour or concerns of animal abuse will result in the Dog Mentor not attending the school and the concern being reported to the appropriate authorities for investigation.

2. Notifying Relevant Stakeholders

- 2.1 Staff were informed, through staff meetings and briefings, that the school Governors and Leadership Team agreed to a Dog Mentor.
- 2.2 Parents were informed by letter that a dog will be in school and the school has produced a detailed risk assessment.

3. Health & Safety

- 3.1 In the event of an emergency evacuation the owner or handlers of the Dog Mentor will, using it's lead, accompany her to the Fire Evacuation point, ensuring she is kept calm and controlled.
- 3.2 Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must remain at a manageable distance. Parents can inform the school of any allergies verbally and in writing on admission.
- 3.3 If the dog is unwell at any time before, or during the school day, the dog will leave the school premises and not return until it has recovered.
- 3.4 The therapy dog will normally be kept on a lead and harness when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of her owner or handlers.

- 3.5 There may be occasions when the dog is working off lead, but this will only happen in an enclosed space and under the control of the owner or handler. Before removing the lead, all persons' present will be consulted.
- 3.6 Children will never be left alone with the dog and there must always be appropriate adult supervision available when the Dog Mentor is working with children.
- 3.7 Children should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog.
 - 3.7.1 Children should remain calm around the dog.
 - 3.7.2 They should not make sudden movements and must never stare into a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog.
 - 3.7.3 Children should not put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up.
 - 3.7.4 Children should never go near or disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating.
 - 3.7.5 Children must not be allowed to play with the dog.
 - 3.7.6 Children should not feed or eat close to the dog.
 - 3.7.7 Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog. As a school, we will provide anti-bacterial gel.
- 3.8 If the Dog Mentor is surrounded by many children, the dog could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that they monitor the situation.
- 3.9 Dogs express their feelings through their body language.
 - 3.9.1 Growling or baring of teeth indicate that the dog is feeling angry or threatened.
 - 3.9.2 Flattened ears, tail lowered or between their legs, hiding behind their owner, whining or growling are signs that the dog is frightened or nervous.
 - 3.9.3 If the dog is displaying any of these warning signs they should be immediately removed from that situation or environment.
- 3.10 Any dog fouling will be cleaned away immediately and disposed of appropriately by an adult.
- 3.11 Any incidents involving the dog must be reported immediately and recorded, and where required first aid provided.

Whilst this policy refers to the singular dog for therapy reasons, there may be occasions where more than one dog is on the school premises. With this in mind the school recognise that there have been many cases reported in news programmes where children and adults have been harmed by a group of dogs and therefore all actions will

be taken to prevent dogs from roaming freely around the school or playground areas when children are at free play or moving classes.

Signs will be displayed around school advising parents and visitors to the school that a Dog Mentor is on site and working with children.

Signed chair of Governors

Signed Head teacher

Policy Approved at Full Governors: *30th March 2023*

Review Date: *Reviewed - 21.01.2026*

Next Review Date: *Jan 2028*