


Ysgol Maesydderwen



Powys guidance for the use of school dogs / therapy dogs

*Canllawiau Powys ar gyfer defnyddio cŵn ysgol / cŵn
therap*

Type: Recommended Policy

Reviewed	Signed	Recommended Review
13/7/2023	 PDL Grimes	Summer Term 2025

Overview:

Powys Local Authority recognises that school dogs are an ever popular and potential worthwhile addition to schools, however, their presence in schools must be managed, planned and risk assessed very carefully by the school.

All responsibility and liabilities for the school dog will remain with the school and governing body.

Potential benefits:

It is recognised that contact with a dog¹ may benefit learners in the following ways:

- ✓ educationally
- ✓ emotionally,
- ✓ increase their understanding of responsibility, and
- ✓ develop empathy and nurturing skills

For example, a school dog may support with:

- Reading programmes - Learners who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even adults are likely to be less scared to read to a dog. It might be less stressful for a learner to read aloud to a dog than to a teacher or a peer. Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud and reluctant writers to read aloud what they have written. With the presence of a calm and well-trained dog, learners find social support and peer interaction.
- As a reward: Well selected and trained dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the learners. Learners who have performed incredibly well during the week or those who have made progress in a certain subject, or those who have achieved tasks set for them, can be rewarded with spending time during lunch or break to interact with the dog. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities students will be allowed to undertake. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem.

Guidance for schools to follow:

It is important that all schools ensure that they have followed the following guidance and inform the Local Authority of the presence of a school dog at their school as there are natural risks that must be fully considered and mitigated against to ensure the safety of all learners, staff, visitors and the dog.

Before considering a school dog / therapy dog, all schools must²:

¹ [School Dog Policy – SchoolDogs](#)

² [Dogs in school: guidance and risk assessments | The Key Leaders \(thekeysupport.com\)](#)

- Research the benefits and risks of a school dog – how will a school / therapy dog benefit your school? What will be their main purpose for your individual school setting?
- Undertake a risk assessment³ (see exemplar in appendix A)
- Carefully consider the breed of dog and its training. The dog will need to pass an assessment to say it has a suitable temperament and is well behaved. For a therapy dog, use a dog that has been assessed by an organisation such as [Pets as Therapy \(PAT\)](#) or [Therapy Dogs Nationwide](#) to make sure they're suitable to be used as therapy animals
- Ensure appropriate insurance is in place
- Ensure that the dog is fully vaccinated, wormed and protected against fleas. This should be well documented and include a well-planned cycle of renewal by a trained Veterinary Surgery. A copy of the dog passport (including evidence of all vaccinations etc) and microchip details should be available for inspection at all times
- Ensure that the handler and dog has received appropriate level of training and that the training record is maintained
- Write a school policy. Even though you have a school dog / therapy dog you may still need a policy preventing other dogs from entering school site / grounds
- Discuss and ratify policy at a full governing body meeting
- Consult fully with all stakeholders – ensuring all learners and parents/carers are fully aware of the protocols and policy. Parents / carers must give their consent for their child to work with the dog
- Once all the above has been completed, please complete the Local Authority form – link in the box below.

Important:

Once all of the above has been followed by the school, please inform the Local Authority of the school intent using this Form:

<https://forms.office.com/e/WKeZmhvXdm>

Please note: The school / therapy dog will be the responsibility of the school and governing body. This form is to notify the Local Authority that the school has followed the guidance and that the school and governing body is content that the risks as far as possible have been mitigated.

³ [KeyDoc: dogs in school risk assessmentDOC, 142.5 KBDownload](#)



Appendix A⁴:

Dogs in schools risk assessment

Use this model risk assessment if you have a dog visiting your school site. Common risks have been included with examples of control measures. However, please make sure you adapt it to reflect the type of visit and your school's context.

Adapt the text highlighted in yellow to reflect the risks and control measures taken in your school:

HAZARD	WHO IS AFFECTED/AT RISK	RISK RATING (LOW, MEDIUM, HIGH)	ACTIONS/CONTROL MEASURES	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
Bites, scratches or illness caused by the dog	Staff, pupils and handlers		<ul style="list-style-type: none">All dogs that visit are vaccinated, wormed, and treated for fleasDogs are groomed before the visitAll staff and pupils are required to wash their hands after contact with dogsHandlers clear up dog urine and faeces promptly and dispose of this safely – pupils are told to stay awayDogs are not taken anywhere near food preparation areas	

⁴ [Dogs in school: guidance and risk assessments | The Key Leaders \(thekeysupport.com\)](#)

HAZARD	WHO IS AFFECTED/AT RISK	RISK RATING (LOW, MEDIUM, HIGH)	ACTIONS/CONTROL MEASURES	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
Allergies	Staff and pupils		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We seek parental permission for children to interact with dogs • Alternative activities are provided in a separate room for those with allergies 	
Phobias	Staff and pupils		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We tell parents and children about the visit in advance • Contact with dogs is optional • Alternative activities are provided in a separate room for those with a phobia 	

HAZARD	WHO IS AFFECTED/AT RISK	RISK RATING (LOW, MEDIUM, HIGH)	ACTIONS/CONTROL MEASURES	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
Activities and games involving the dog	Staff, pupils, dogs and handlers		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handler(s) remain with dogs at all times • Handler(s) speak to school staff in advance and make sure the area and activity is safe • We check with the handler(s) and set a limit for the number of children who can interact with a dog at once • Handler(s) clean up urine and faeces • School staff remove children who misbehave or upset dogs • We set a time limit on activities as recommended by handlers, so dogs do not get tired 	
Children misbehaving	Pupils, dogs and handlers		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are told in advance what to expect and how to behave • School staff are present at all time during the visit • School staff are ready to remove children who misbehave or upset dogs 	

HAZARD	WHO IS AFFECTED/AT RISK	RISK RATING (LOW, MEDIUM, HIGH)	ACTIONS/CONTROL MEASURES	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
Damage caused to school materials, equipment and the school site	Dogs		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dogs remain on a lead at all times • Dogs are kept in secured rooms, with closed doors • Handlers bring suitable toys if necessary • Areas/classrooms are cleared as much as possible before dogs visit 	