



SCHOOL DOG POLICY

1 Introduction

Research has shown many benefits to therapy and reading dogs in school settings. Bowden House would like to introduce the use of a therapy dog into the emotional well-being provision at school. This policy is designed to set out to students, parents and visitors the reasons for having a school dog at Bowden House (Section 2 – The benefits of a school dog) and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of students, staff, visitors and the school dog (Sections 3 and 4 – Principles and Code of Conduct). 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 students, staff and visitors (Appendix A - Risk Assessment).

2 The benefits of a school dog

School dogs have been proven to help develop students' reading skills, improve behaviour, attendance and academic confidence, as well as increasing student understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills. At Bowden House we hope that a dog will be a beneficial addition to the therapeutic offer, acting as an adjunct to the interventions already offer and promoting engagement for students who may have found it difficult to access talking therapies in the past.

Animal assisted therapy can:

- Teach empathy and [appropriate interpersonal skills](#);
- Help individuals [develop social skills](#);
- Be soothing and support the development of [rapport between the professional and client](#), and improve individual's skills to pick up social cues imperative to human relationships;
- Professionals can process that information and use it to [help clients see how their behaviour affects others](#);
- Therapy dogs have been shown to support emotional regulation through the positive impact on the autonomic nervous system
- A recent [report](#) highlighted children working with therapy dogs experienced increased motivation for learning, resulting in improved outcomes;
- Therapy dogs are being used to support children with [social and emotional](#) learning needs, which in turn can [assist](#) with [literacy development](#).

[Research](#) into the effects of therapy dogs in schools is showing a range of benefits including:

- [Increase in school attendance](#);
- [Gains in confidence](#);
- Decreases in learner anxiety behaviours resulting in improved learning outcomes, such as [increases in reading](#) and [writing levels](#);
- Positive changes towards learning and [improved motivation](#), and;

- Enhanced relationships with peers and teachers due to experiencing trust and unconditional positive regard from a therapy dog. This in turn helps students learn how to [express their feelings](#) and enter into more trusting relationships.

The plan is to register the dog as an Emotional Support Animal by Miss Hogg, once the dog has passed through adolescence and completed accredited behavioural trainings (Dogs Trust/Kennel Club/APT). Miss Hogg plans to obtain additional therapy dog registration through the organisation Pets as Therapy.

2.1 Confidence benefits

“If children are partnered with a dog to read to, for example, the dog provides comfort, encourages positive social behaviour, enhances self-esteem, motivates speech and inspires children to have fun and enjoy the non-judgemental experience”

Bark & Read – The Kennel Club (<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/barkandread>)

2.2 SEN benefits

“Therapy Dogs Nationwide dogs have also shown to help with special needs and autistic children and adults by giving focus and providing a calming environment.”

Therapy Dogs Nationwide (<http://www.tdn.org.uk/schools/>)

2.3 Mental Health Benefits

“There is emerging evidence to suggest that Animal Assisted Psychotherapy improves the efficacy of mental health treatments in self-selected adolescent populations via reductions in primary symptomatology, and via secondary factors that improve therapeutic processes and quality, such as engagement and retention”.

[Incorporating animal-assisted therapy in mental health treatments for adolescents: A systematic review of canine assisted psychotherapy](#) Melanie G. Jones, Simon M. Rice, Susan M. Cotton. 2019; 14(1), 2019.

2.4 Behaviour benefits

“Researchers report that students can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel. It was found that violent behaviour in participating students declined by 55%, and general aggression went down 62%. In a controlled study, students were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Students’ behaviour improved toward teachers, and students also showed more confidence and responsibility.”

Hazel Oak School Dog Policy (<https://hazel-oak.co.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2018/02/School-Dog-Policy.pdf>)

3 Principles

3.1 The Head Teacher, Aaron Sherwood and The Governors have agreed to the presence of a therapy dog at Bowden House School.

3.2 Only the school dog is allowed on the premises. No other dogs are permitted unless the head teacher has approved their visit.

3.3 The Therapy dog is an F1B Cavapoo. The Therapy dog is not Kennel Club registered as it is a cross-breed, selected for its temperament, reduced risk of congenital health issues, and hypoallergenic, non-shedding coat.

3.4 Miss Hogg is the legal owner of the dog and has full responsibility for its welfare. Miss Hogg will pay all expenses relating to pet insurance, vaccinations, flea and worm treatment, food and maintenance costs.

3.5 Miss Hogg has produced a risk assessment which has been approved by the Safeguarding Lead and this will be reviewed annually.

3.6 The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Miss Hogg or other trained staff members.

3.7 The dog is covered by the school's Public Liability Insurance policy and the Business Manager has responsibility for ensuring this remains on the school's policy during the presence of a therapy dog at Bowden House School. The dog is also fully insured by Miss Hogg.

3.8 Staff, parents and students will be informed in writing that a dog will be in school.

3.9 Parents will need to sign the Animal Assisted Therapy consent form in order for their children to be present during Animal Assisted Therapy.

3.10 The presence of a school dog will be made clear to visitors upon their arrival at the School reception .

3.12 Only staff trained to handle the dog will have permission to do so. Whilst training this will be limited to her owner and handler, Miss Hogg and selected members of staff with prior agreement.

4 Code of Conduct

4.1 Staff Responsibilities

4.1.1 Miss Hogg will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.

4.1.2 If the dog is ill she will not be allowed into school. Miss Hogg has responsibility for ensuring appropriate alternative care for the dog if she is not able to be in the school on a given day.

4.1.3 Miss Hogg is responsible for ensuring the training and accreditation of the dog.

4.1.2 The therapy dog must be kept on a lead when moving around the school.

4.1.5 The therapy dog will be kept in the Nurture room, the Head Teachers office or the school reception, when Miss Hogg is not available or is working with a student for whom animal assisted therapy is not indicated.

4.1.6 Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the therapy dog. The Student and Family Coordinator keeps a list of all students and staff with a reported allergy to dogs

4.1.7 Students must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.

4.1.9 Students will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog before any interaction during a therapy session or visit.

4.1.10 If the dog is surrounded by a large number of children, the dog could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that s/he monitors the situation. If the dog is displaying any warning signs such as growling or flattening of her ears, she should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment by the trained staff member handling her.

4.1.11 Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by the trained dog handling staff only.

4.1.12 Miss Hogg will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog to better inform research into the benefits of animal assisted therapy.

4.2 Student Responsibilities

4.2.1 Students whose parents have withdrawn consent are not allowed to attend dog therapy sessions.

4.2.2 Students should be careful to stroke the dog on her body, chest, back and not by her face or top of head.

4.2.3 Students are not allowed to approach or disturb the dog whilst she is sleeping or eating.

4.2.4 Students are not allowed to play roughly with the dog.

4.2.5 Students must wait until the school dog is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking her.

4.2.6 Students are not allowed to eat during animal assisted therapy sessions.

4.2.7 Students must always wash their hands before and after stroking and handling the dog.

4.2.8 Students understand that any deliberate violence or threatening behaviour towards the dog will result in a fixed term exclusion.

School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) – to publish to parents

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

A The legal owner of the dog will be Miss Hogg. She will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support liability insurance and 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. The Father is Kennel Club registered. The Mother is a cross breed and cannot be registered, but was chosen specifically for her temperament, intelligence, and hypoallergenic coat.

Q Will the dog be a distraction to students' learning?

A The dog will be kept in the therapy room. When this is not possible, the dog will be cared for in areas of school which are not accessible to students (The Head Teachers Office and the Administration office). The dog will also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation, and support staff well-being, 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, including other schools that successfully have a school dog.

Q Who is responsible for training?

A Miss Hogg will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for her training. Appropriate professional training will be obtained and the dog will work towards being trained as a therapy dog in dog training classes with advice from the Pets As Therapy charity, The Dogs Trust, and The Kennel Club.

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

A In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks around the grounds.

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

A The dog will be kept in the therapy room and the therapist (Miss Hogg) will ensure the school dog only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision.

A student will not be forced to be in contact with 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 using evidence based interventions such as graded exposure.

Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A The dogs welfare will be carefully monitored. The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside of sessions to rest and play.

The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have appropriate access to food and water.

Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?

A Children 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 school dog was specifically chosen for being a breed known for its hypoallergenic, non-shedding coat. She will be given a high quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

5 The School Dog



Appendix A – School Dog Risk Assessment

Appendix B – Evidence for Animal Assisted Psychotherapy

Appendix C - Copy of Animal Assisted Therapy Consent Form

Agreed by the school’s Governing Body on 06 October 2020

Signed Chair of Governors

Review date: October 2021