



Animal Assisted Therapy Dog Policy

This policy is intended to be read by teachers, teaching assistants, parents, governors, inspectors, support staff and staff from other schools with which we may have links.

Date Approved: Spring 2026

Date of Review: Spring 2029

Introduction

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills, through contact with a suitable, calm dog. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with animals. By having a 'Reading Dog' we want to encourage those children who are vulnerable, or those less confident at reading to have a friendly audience and look forward to reading as a treat. Research has proved that students who read to dogs show an increase in reading levels, word recognition, a higher desire to read and write, and an increase in intra and interpersonal skills among the students with whom they mix.

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching students social skills and responsibility.

The breed of Labrador is suitable for this type of environment due to high levels of intelligence and trainability as well as a very affectionate nature. Jenson is well cared for and responsibly owned by Danielle Riley.

Is there a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment?

This policy and risk assessment shows that we have thought carefully about school life with a dog and how, through careful management, there is a very low risk of harm.

Context

Jenson will be owned by Mrs Danielle Riley

Veterinary costs will be covered by the owner

Jenson is a Black Labrador, chosen for his affectionate temperament, intelligence and ability to be trained.

While Labradors are not a hypoallergenic dog some tests show that Labs may have fewer allergens than some of the other breeds. As Jenson sheds his hair, we will be managing this in a number of ways:

Frequent baths (at home)

Regular brushing (at home)

Time away from school when he is heavily shedding (at least twice a year)

Visitor and new pupils will be informed of the dog on arrival

Day-to-Day Management

Jenson will:

Be kept on a lead when moving between to and from The Link

Be under the full control and supervision of an adult at all times

Have had all injections prior to joining St Luke's Church Primary School

Pupils will:

NOT have sole responsibility for, or be left alone with Jenson

Meet Jenson in 1:1 situations which are timetabled by the SENCO

Be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around Jenson every time they meet him

Always remain calm

Be gentle

Do not put your face near Jenson's

Always approach Jenson standing up

Do not feed the dog

Learn about how dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring of teeth indicates that the dog feels threatened or angry. Flattened ears, tail lowered or between their legs, hiding behind their owner, whining or growling are signs that the dog is frightened or nervous. If Jenson is displaying any of these signs, he should immediately be removed from that particular situation or environment.

Health and Safety Principles

Children will always wash/sanitise their hands after handling the dog.

Any dog foul will be cleared up immediately and disposed of appropriately by the adult in charge of Jenson at the time. Children must never be allowed to do this.

In the exceptional circumstance a bite should occur (even playfully):

Parents will be contacted immediately

The wound will be cleaned and covered with a sterile, non-sticky dressing

The child/adult will be released for medical attention

All staff will be informed

A full investigation will take place

The suitability of having a dog will be reassessed by the Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body.