



The Willows School

Therapy Dog Policy

Date Published	June 2023
Version	1
Approved Date	June 2023
Review Cycle	2 years
Review Date	June 2025

An academy within:



“Learning together, to be the best we can be”

1. 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 Dixie we can encourage those children who are vulnerable, or those less confident to have a friendly audience and look forward to working with Dixie. The breed of Labrador is carefully selected as suitable for this type of environment. Dixie is well cared for after retiring as a guide dog and responsibly owned by Catherine Martin, Science Lead.



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

This policy 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.

3. Context

- Dixie is owned by Catherine Martin
- Veterinary costs will be covered by the owner

- Dixie is a Labrador, a retired Guide Dog, chosen for her very mild temperament.
- The risk assessment (attached) will be reviewed annually
- Visitors and new pupils will be informed of the dog on arrival.

4. Management day-to-day.

Dixie will:

- Not be allowed in school if she is unwell
- Be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk
- Be under the full control and supervision of an agreed, trained adult at all times
- Be fully trained to a bed or mat
- Have had all injections prior to joining The Willows

Pupils will:

- NOT have sole responsibility for, or be left alone with Dixie
- NOT be under sole control of Dixie whilst on the lead
- Be reminded of the following things:
 - What is appropriate behaviour around Dixie every time they meet her
 - Always remain calm
 - Be gentle
 - Not to put their face near Dixie's
 - Not to disturb a dog that is eating or sleeping
 - Always approach Dixie standing up
 - 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 Dixie is displaying any of these signs, she should immediately be removed from that particular situation or environment.

5. Health & Safety Principles

Children will always wash their hands or use hand sanitiser after handling the dog.

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

Should a bite 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 Head Teacher.

This policy is reviewed annually by the Head, in consultation with the Chair of Governors.

Signature of the Chair of Governors

Signature of the Head Teacher

Signature of Dog Owner

6. Risk Assessment

Hazard & risk	Who could be harmed	What precautions are in place?	What else can we do?
Animal Health, diseases and parasites	Pupils/Staff/Visitors	Dog to have necessary vaccinations before coming into school Dog to have regular veterinary checks Dog to be bathed weekly Dog to live with family and owner when not in school Dog will not be allowed to come into contact with wild rodents due to possibility of disease transmission	
Dog excrement & urine - illness and falls/slips	Pupils/Staff/Visitors	Dog will be wormed. Dog will be vaccinated and kept free of fleas, ticks. Any excrement or urine will be cleaned up immediately and thoroughly disposed of responsibly and hygienically by the owner or adult with responsibility at the time of the incident Hand washing facilities close to where the dog will be.	Dog will be exercised out of school twice a day.

		A bag containing poo bags/plastic bags, kitchen roll and rubber gloves will be carried by the member of the staff walking the dog.	
Hygiene/Infection	Pupils/Staff/Visitors	Adequate provision for hand washing Do not allow children to touch any part of their face with their hands before hands are washed Younger pupils should be seen washing their hands All wounds on exposed skin are suitably covered Soiled bedding/puppy pads disposed of in sealed plastic bags with normal refuse Food stuff stored carefully to prevent contamination and infestation Dog to be bathed weekly	Hand sanitiser will be kept in the spaces the dog will spend most of his time.
Allergic reaction to dog	Pupils/Staff/Visitors	A post will be placed on the website letting parents know there will be a dog on site so if they have a child who is allergic to let the school know. If this occurs we will ensure that the child does not come into close contact with the dog. Dog kept clean and groomed. Dog bed kept in the horticulture area where flow of children is minimal and controlled. Rooms kept well ventilated. Dog bed and blankets to be kept clean and to a high standard. First Aid kit kept in the cabin.	Teachers to be made aware of when the dog may be in the playground areas to ensure that children with allergies do not encounter the dog by chance.
Bites, cuts and scratches	Pupils/Staff/Visitors	Labradors are bred to be sociable dogs and are often used as therapy dogs as they are known to be good with children. Staff/children known to have allergies/phobias have restricted access to suit their needs. There will be no unsupervised contact with pupils. Dog closely supervised and kept under control in the Nature Crew intervention cabin. Pupils and staff will be made aware of the procedures of meeting and handling the dog. First Aid kit in the cabin. Supervising adult to ensure dog not over petted to avoid any incidents. If dog appears anxious or over-stimulated, to be removed to peaceful surroundings	
Noise, barking	Pupils who can't cope with noise e.g. autistic children	Labradors are bred to be sociable dogs and are often used as therapy dogs as they are known to be good with children. Dixie is a retired guide dog who is trained to work in situations with others and to remain calm.	
Fire drill & evacuation of dog	Dog – locked in building	Areas that the dog may be in are accessible by several members of staff.	Dog will be under supervision of a member of staff at all times.
A third party could sue the school for injury caused by the dog		The school will ensure that the animal is covered under their insurance policy and take out comprehensive additional insurance including party liability insurance.	

7. Reasons to have a dog in school

Dixie will be used for a variety of interventions including wellbeing and self-esteem sessions.

The main focus of the interventions is the development of confidence, self-worth and self-esteem. Each session is child centred and promotes holistic development, freedom of choice and self-expression. Children grow in confidence while working with a school dog, developing new skills, sharing their achievements with others and simply learning to be proud and happy with who they are and what they are capable of.

Dogs give unconditional acceptance, as they are non-judgmental, loyal and emotionally stable. They boost confidence, make amazing listeners and provide the children with a sense of comfort and love.

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 they mix with.

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for developing:

Communication and Language skills

- giving and following instructions
- sequencing
- description
- reading
- speaking and listening.

Physical skills

- self and body awareness
- controlled physical risk taking and development of balance, resilience and stamina.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development (focus on holistic development) including:

- confidence, self-esteem and self-worth
- independence and the ability to make choices
- communication and social skills, building friendships, team work
- emotional intelligence and empathy
- self-motivation and regulation
- resilience
- wellbeing.



Problem Solving and Reasoning

Knowledge and Understanding of the Natural World

-practical skills and knowledge of basic animal care.