Therapy Dog Policy

2026 - 2027

Revoe Learning Academy

This policy will be reviewed on an annual cycle

Person responsible for the Policy:	Headteacher and Business Lead
Approved by/ date:	September 2026
Next review:	September 2027

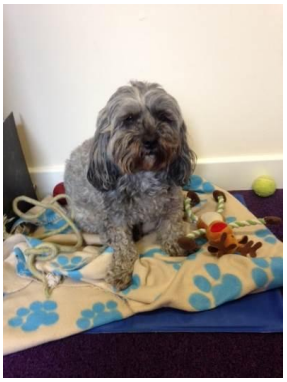
THE SEA VIEW TRUST

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School Therapy Dog
Introduction

Poppy – Our school therapy dog



1. All about me

My name is Poppy, I am a Shih Poo and I have the best job in the world!!
Working Revoe Learning Academy is amazing. I spend my day teaching the children to read, walk nicely and how to do tricks (this is my favourite part of the day). I also comfort children who are upset, I don't like to see children cry.
I get taken out for walks during the day too!!
I have my own bed in the office where I can relax and always have a bowl of fresh water.
My favourite food is chicken – I love chicken, I don't like vegetables or my worming tablet.
My best friend is Kat, he is a cat (I know, silly name). Kat doesn't play much as he is getting old but he is great company in the evening and we often chill and watch television together. I enjoy watching For the Love of Dogs, I really don't think Kat likes it very much, he usually closes his eye (he only has 1 eye – like a pirate). I also like watching football but only the ones who play in red.
Well, that's enough about me – please read on to find out why I am an important part of Revoe Learning Academy.

2. What are the benefits of having a school dog?

Research has shown that therapy dogs in school settings can facilitate well-being and learning outcomes and can bring joy as well as therapeutic benefits to the whole school community including:

- **Social benefits**. A therapy dog promotes greater self-esteem and can provide a positive mutual topic for discussion and encourages responsibility, wellbeing and a focused interaction with others.
- **Cognitive benefits**. It has been empirically proven that therapy dogs stimulate memory and problem-solving skills.
- **Emotional and mental health benefits**. A school dog can help improve self-esteem and lift moods. Dogs can also teach compassion and invoke a sense of respect for living things as well as relieving anxiety.
- **Physical**. Interacting with a dog in school provides tactile stimulation, gives motivation to walk and move and stimulates the senses, it can even help reduce blood pressure and assist with pain management.
- **Environment**. A dog in school can promote a sense of family environment and students can take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog with all the above benefits continuing long after the school day is over.

Pupils reading to dogs can help to improve reading ability, develop literacy skills and boost confidence through the calming, non-judgemental effect the dog's presence can have. Pupil's motivation and enjoyment of reading aloud can also improve even when the dog is not present.

3. How do we know Poppy is ready to work in school?

Poppy has undergone rigorous training before he/she could become a therapy dog for our school. Poppy has been assessed by a qualified trainer and Poppy's certificates are kept in her folder in the school office. While being escorted around the school by children, Poppy will remain on a lead at all times. A risk assessment and policy will be in place for Poppy which will be reviewed regularly.

4. My child is scared of dogs or has allergies

Some children may have a fear of dogs or indeed other animals. Poppy will only have contact with any of our students if parents/carers have given written permission for them to do so. Research shows that through proper care and guidance, children can learn to overcome their fear and as a parent/carer you can change your permissions at any time. Information regarding allergies can be provided on the consent form. Students will be encouraged to wash their hands after working with Poppy.
Parents must also provide consent for their child to access Poppy. This consent form is found in our admission form and completed at time of admission.

5. The School has a 'No Dog Policy' – except for Guide/Assistant Dogs

Schools must adhere to the Health and Safety at Work Act and as such have to assess the risks to our pupils and staff and apply the controls to mitigate those risks. Unfortunately, the school is unable to assess the risk of animals brought onto the site (other than those pre-arranged for educational purposes) and therefore unable to perform its duty of care to provide a safe environment. Therefore, dogs and or other animals are not permitted on the premises at any time. The presence of our therapy dog on site has been risk assessed and will be monitored closely in order to keep everyone safe.

6. Our Policy

Introduction

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog.
In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog. Appendix B sets out further reasons for why the school feels it will be beneficial to have a school dog.

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

Of course there is, though there are a variety of accidents which can happen within the school environment which far exceed the number of injuries or incidents caused by a dog. Therefore, it is just another risk that needs to be managed.

School Policy

The dog will be owned by Mrs A Wood. She will be responsible for Poppy's regular visits to the vets, injections.

The dog is a Shih Poo chosen for its very mild temperament and non-moulting coat.
The Chair of Governors, and the Head Teacher both agreed that the school can have a dog.

Staff have been informed, through staff briefing, that the school will have a dog. Parents have been informed by letter that a dog will be in school. A risk assessment as been produced and this will be reviewed annually. The risk assessment is attached as Appendix A

In the event of an emergency evacuation the adult supporting Poppy, will accompany her to the Fire Evacuation point.

Staff, visitors and students known to have allergic reactions to dogs must remain at a manageable distance. Parents are able to inform the school of any allergies on admission.
If the dog is unwell she will not be allowed into school.

The dog will normally be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of an adult.
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 an adult. Before removing the lead, all present will be consulted
Students must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times when the dog is present with students.
Students should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog. Students should remain calm around the dog. They should not make sudden movements and must never stare into a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog. Students should not to put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up. Students should never go near or disturb the dog that is sleeping or eating. Students must not be allowed to play too roughly with the dog.

If the dog is surrounded by a large number of students, the dog could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that s/he monitors the situation.

Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring of teeth indicate that the dog is feeling angry or threatened. 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 the dog is displaying any of these warning signs he should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.

Children should not feed or eat close to the dogs.

Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog. As a school we will provide anti-bacterial gel.

Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by an adult.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in School.
The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy.
Teachers and 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.

8. Appendix A
Risk Assessment

Introduction:

The value of pet 'therapy' is widely accepted as a powerful 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 forbidding. The team at Revoe Learning Academy had been considering obtaining a dog as a school therapy pet for some time and the decision was made in December 2016 to go ahead with the project.

The rationale behind this decision was as follows:

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

It is accepted that interacting with animals is not appropriate for all children but for some it has the potential to provide many positive benefits. Any parent who does not want their child to interact with Poppy is invited to write to Mr Harrison and inform him of their wishes. There are no diseases associated with Poppy as her vet will be responsible for vaccinations, including rabies and completing regular health checks and necessary treatment. A copy of Poppy's health records will be updated and kept in school. Poppy is also be insured.

The risk assessment below is a working document and will be checked annually by key staff and the governing body.

Hazard	**Risk**	**Risk 1 - 5**	**Controls in place**	**Review date**
Dog getting over excited when interacting with children.	Child knocked to the ground. Child scratched by dog. Child bitten by dog.	1 3 3	The dog will always be in the care of a responsible adult. Children will not be left unsupervised with the dog. Pupils have been and will continue to be taught about the consequences of their actions. Education of this nature is continually given to children, and often to the whole school through assemblies and PSHE sessions. Pupils will be taught what to do to prevent the dog from chasing them. Poppy has achieved bronze, silver and gold therapy training certificates with an experienced dog trainer. Selected	

			children were part of this process. Risk of scratching and biting will reduce, and the risk assessment will be reviewed as she progresses through her weekly training. All staff will have been introduced to the dog and expectations of having a school dog. The dog will attend the vets regularly to ensure she is in good health and that her claws are kept short.	
The dog causing allergies.	Children or staff have allergic reactions	1	Parents have been asked to inform the school of any known allergies before the introduction of the dog to the school. A list of any children/staff who should not interact with the dog will kept in school. The children will have the opportunity to interact with the dog as they wish and those with allergies will be able to opt out of interaction. Children will be taught to wash their hands after active participation with the dog	
Children getting germs from the dog.	Children or staff will contract diseases that can be carried by dogs.	1	Should the dog defecate on the school site a member of staff will clear this up immediately and dispose of it in a safe way. She is toilet trained in an area of the grounds that children have limited access to. The area will be disinfected as required. All immunisations are kept up to date in accordance with the European Pet Passport Scheme and a record will be kept of this. Flea treatment is carried out at 3 monthly intervals. The dog will not be allowed in the school dining hall at mealtimes; and never in the food preparation area.	
Financial cost of the dog's upkeep.	School unable to afford the ongoing cost of the Poppy's day to day	1	The dog is ultimately the responsibility of Mrs A Wood both in a well-being and financial aspect. Poppy will be insured by the school, for	

	upkeep or medical bills.		Public Liability Insurance. All vets costs are covered by Revoe Learning Academy KRRs Training provided training and support in school.	

KEY: 1- Low risk
2
3 -Medium risk of injury
4
5-High risk of injury