School Dog Policy

2026 - 2027

School: Our Lady & St Anne's Catholic Primary School

Head Teacher: Samantha Henzell

Our Light Shines Always

We want the best teaching, the best opportunities and the best support and encouragement for every child. We are a friendly, happy, Catholic school, where everyone is valued for their individuality and special gifts.

Academic year	Designated Lead	Head Teacher	Chair of Governors
2022 - 2023	Samantha Henzell	Samantha Henzell	Christine Baker
2023 - 2024	Samantha Henzell	Samantha Henzell	Christine Baker
2024 - 2025	Samantha Henzell	Samantha Henzell	Hugh Stolliday
2025 - 2026	Samantha Henzell	Samantha Henzell	Hugh Stolliday

Policy review dates:

Review Date	Changes made	By whom	Date Shared
April 2023	New Policy Written	Samantha Henzell	April 2023
September 2025	No changes made	Samantha Henzell	September 2025
September 2026	No changes made	Sarah Keenan	September 2026

Safeguarding Statement

At Our Lady & St Anne's Catholic Primary School we respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn, in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. We believe every pupil should be able to participate in all school activities in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. This is the responsibility of every adult employed by, or invited to deliver services at Our Lady & St Anne's Catholic Primary School. We recognise our responsibility to safeguard all who access school and promote the welfare of all our pupils by protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect and bullying.
School Aims

This policy is designed to set out to students, parents and visitors the reasons for having a school dog at our school (Section 1 – Why a school dog) and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of students, staff, visitors.

Although there is a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment, this can be mitigated against with a robust risk assessment tailored to our school to ensure the safety of all students, staff and visitors. Our Lady and St. Anne's Catholic Primary School have assessed the risk of having a school dog alongside Governors.

1. Why a School Dog?

Research has shown many benefits to therapy and reading dogs in school settings.

School dogs have been proven to help develop students' reading skills, improve behaviour, attendance and academic confidence. Children can also increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with pets. In addition to these benefits, children can take great enjoyment from interaction with dogs. Touching and being around a dog increases the levels of 'feel good' hormones which improve mood and affect happiness. As dogs are one of the most popular pets, it is more than likely that children will have some exposure to a dog while still at school.

We have a school dog to support our staff team in bringing all of these benefits to our students. Our school dog has being trained and certified by The Playhound.

Literacy: Research suggests that children can find reading aloud in class uncomfortable and struggle. Many studies have shown that reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop literacy skills and build confidence. The dog will listen to the children read without being judgemental or critical.

Behaviour: More schools are now using dogs to improve behaviour problems in school by promoting positive behaviour in students by using the dog as a reward system. It has been proven in several studies that students have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog

than schools without. Students' behaviour can improve toward teachers, and students also showed more of an interest in school as a result of the dog.

Attendance: Children can be encouraged back into school using caring for a dog as an incentive.

Social Development: Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching students social skills and responsibility, as well as promoting their own daily care. The students also learn about responsibility, caring and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school.

As a reward: Those students 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, may be rewarded with spending time with the dog.

Bullying: Bullying can be a problem in all schools with students anxious about school for fear of taunting and abuse. 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%.

2. Principles

2.1 Only the school dog is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the Headteacher has approved their presence prior to the visit.

2.2 The dog has been/ is undergoing training by The Playhound and has been desensitised to the school environment and approved as a working school dog.

2.3 The dog's legal owner is Mrs Henzell who has full responsibility for the welfare of the school dog and all expenses relating to pet insurance, food and other expenses and ensuring that the dog is fully vaccinated, healthy, wormed and flea treated.

2.4 A risk assessment has been carried out which has been approved by the Safeguarding Lead and Governors and this will be reviewed annually.

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

2.6 Parents can indicate that their child is not allowed to be present during dog sessions

2.7 The presence of a school dog will be sign posted to visitors at reception and the school website.

2.8 Only staff trained to handle the dog in student sessions will have permission to do so. No child will be left alone with the dog.

2.9 The governors have agreed to have a dog in school

2.10 Prior to the dog being in a classroom, there will have been an assembly on Dog Safety and children will be reminded regularly of what is appropriate behaviour around dogs.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Staff Responsibilities

The Governors have a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in school

The Headteacher is responsible for developing this guidance into a school practice and implementing it.

Teachers and staff are required to abide by this policy.

The Headteacher is responsible for the dog's whereabouts and who is in control the dog. When not interacting with students, the dog will be kept in the Headteacher's office. When moving between rooms, the dog will be kept on a lead and under control by a trained member of staff.

Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the School Dog. A list of all children and staff with reported allergies will be kept.

The adult in charge of the school dog must be trained and aware of dog body language. If the dog becomes uncomfortable or agitated, they have the right to remove the dog from the session immediately.

Dog foul will be cleaned and immediately and disposed of appropriately by the trained dog staff only.

3.2 Student Responsibilities

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

After the assembly, students should be aware of how to approach and stroke the dog. They are not allowed to approach or disturb the dog whilst sleeping or eating.

Students must ask to approach the dog and wait until the school dog is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking the dog.

Students are not allowed to eat during sessions with the dog.

Students must always wash their hands after handling / stroking the dog.

Students understand that any deliberate violence or threatening behaviour towards the dog will not be tolerated.