School Dog Policy

Rumboldswhyke Church of England Primary School

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Lead member of staff  | Head of School |
| Date of Publication  | March 2025 |
| Review Date  | Summer 2025 |

# 1. Aims and scope

This policy sets out the procedures and conduct required for interacting with Dexter in school.

This policy is non-statutory.

It aims to ensure the safety and welfare of pupils and staff. It also aims to ensure that Dexter is healthy and happy, and treated with respect.

# 2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 Head of School (Lisa Harris) and Dexter’s owner

Lisa Harris should:

* Ensure the welfare needs of Dexter are met
* Ensure Dexter is fit and healthy prior to each visit.
* Ensure the purpose of Dexter being in school is clear by having rules for staff and children to adhere to
* Ensure a space is allocated in school if Dexter needs a child-free, quiet area to rest
* Make alternative arrangements for the care of the dog when Dexter is unable to go into school
* Ensure Dexter is supervised at all times (or secure in the office so no children can access him without supervision)
* Attend relevant training sessions with the dog as appropriate
* Maintain a good understanding of dog communication and be able to quickly identify when Dexter is showing signs of worry, stress or aggression
* Remove Dexter immediately from any situation where he is displaying signs of worry, stress or aggression
* Keep Dexter on a lead at all times when moving around the school site
* Ensure comprehensive insurance cover is in place that covers working dogs
* Carry out a risk assessment for Dexter being in school
* Obtain parental consent before allowing any contact between pupils and the dog, and consult parents/carers on any allergies or phobias the pupils may have
* Ensure all staff and pupils have completed adequate training related to appropriate behaviour and conduct with the dog prior to any interactions
* Ensure staff and pupils are reminded of appropriate procedures and conduct prior to each session
* Put clear hygiene procedures and responsibilities in place for cleaning up after Dexter
* Ensure the measures set out in this policy are followed
* Ensure that Dexter is included in fire evacuation procedures, or any other evacuation or invacuation procedures.
* Monitor and review this policy

2.2 Staff

Staff should ensure:

* Pupils are aware of and follow the pupil code of conduct set out in section 8 of this policy
* Pupils are adequately supervised at all times during sessions with Dexter
* Pupils with relevant allergies/phobias are kept separate from Dexter
* They have checked that consent has been obtained from pupils’ parents/carers before pupils are allowed to attend any sessions with Dexter
* They are aware of Dexter’s whereabouts and who is responsible for supervising him at all times
* They check the records of all pupils, staff and visitors known to have an allergy to dogs and take steps to make sure they do not go near Dexter.
* They are aware of and follow the dog bite procedure set out in section 4.4 of this policy

2.3 Pupils

Pupils should:

* Follow the code of conduct set out in section 8 of this policy

# 3. Pre-visit procedures

* Full parental consent must be received before allowing any contact between a pupil and Dexter. Pupils whose parents/carers did not give consent are not allowed to attend sessions with Dexter.
* Pupils and staff must attend a session to learn how to safely interact with the dog and read body language, prior to Dexter starting at the school
* There must be appropriate insurance in place (owner and school) to cover any incidents/accidents that may occur
* Dexter must be pronounced fit and healthy (both in relation to physical and mental health) by a vet before taking part in any activities within the school, including being fully up to date with any vaccinations

# 4. During visits

4.1 Ensuring Dexter’s welfare

* Dexter’s welfare must be considered and carefully monitored throughout his stay at the school
* Dexter must be allowed some time to acclimatise to the school environment. This will allow him to get used to the busy atmosphere, smells and noise levels
* Dexter must have appropriate access to food and water
* Dexter must be able to express natural behaviours e.g. chew toys offered during breaks, time off lead, able to sniff
* There must be a suitable area away from pupils that Dexter can use to rest when not taking part in activities (Head of School’s office)
* When resting, Dexter must be left alone and pupils must not touch or interact with him
* Dexter must be walked regularly throughout the day and given free time outside of the sessions in a designated area to play and rest off lead
* Dexter must not be forced to interact with pupils or staff, and must be allowed to move away
* If Dexter shows signs that they are unhappy or uncomfortable (e.g. flattened ears, showing teeth, tail between legs, growling), he will be removed from the situation immediately and the pupils asked to give the dog space
* Dexter must not need to attend school daily
* The frequency of visits will be determined with Dexter’s welfare as the primary consideration
* Sessions between dogs and pupils are kept to a maximum of 30 minutes each and limited to a total of 2 hours spread across the day

4.2 Supervision

* The number of children interacting with Dexter at any one time should be kept to no more than 8. Initially, this will be limited to 1 as Dexter is introduced to the school.
* For each session where Dexter is present, there should be at least 1 other adult (as well as Lisa Harris) present to ensure appropriate behaviour from the children
* Dexter must be kept on a lead during sessions and when moving around the school site
* Pupils must never be left alone with Dexter. There must be appropriate adult supervision at all times
* Provisions must be made for Dexter to have a safe space when Lisa Harris isn’t able to do so (e.g. toilet break)

4.3 Allergies

Pupils, staff and visitors known to have an allergy to dogs should be kept away from Dexter. A list of those with allergies is kept and updated regularly.

All visitors to the site will be told about Dexter and signs will be displayed in the school entrance.

4.4 Dog bite procedure

In the event of a dog bite, staff should follow our standard first aid procedure, in accordance with the first aid policy:

* Parents/carers should be informed of the dog bite and the surrounding circumstances without delay
* The closest member of staff present will assess the seriousness of the injury and seek the assistance of a qualified first aider, if appropriate, who will provide the required first aid treatment
* The first aider should refer to [NHS guidance](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/animal-and-human-bites/) on animal bites when assessing and treating the injury
* The first aider, if called, will assess the injury and decide if further assistance is needed from a colleague or the emergency services. They will remain on the scene until help arrives
* The first aider will also decide whether the injured person should be moved or placed in a recovery position
* If the first aider judges that a pupil is too unwell to remain in school, parents/carers will be contacted and asked to collect their child. Upon their arrival, the first aider will recommend next steps to the parents/carers
* If emergency services are called, the Lisa Harris will contact parents/carers immediately
* The first aider will complete an accident report form on the same day or as soon as is reasonably practical after an incident resulting in an injury
* Following a dog bite incident, an investigation into the circumstances shall take place and the suitability of having a dog in school shall be reassessed by the head of school.

# 5. Grooming

There is no need to extensively groom the dog before each visit as depending on the frequency of visits this can have a significant impact on the dog’s health and welfare. For example, dogs have sensitive skin and cleaning them too often can remove natural oils that will dry out their coat and can cause skin irritation.

We maintain the following grooming routine:

* Regular baths with appropriate shampoo every 1 to 3 months (depending on the Dexter’s needs)
* Regular claw trimming
* Brushing of the coat to keep it tidy, remove any dead hair/skin cells

# 6. Zoonotic disease prevention

Zoonosis is any disease that can be transmitted from animals to humans.

In order to minimise the risk of zoonoses, the school uses the following measures and procedures:

* All pupils and staff must wash their hands before and after interacting/touching Dexter.
* Avoid touching the face (especially mouth area) after touching Dexter and before washing hands
* Prevent Dexter from licking faces/hands and wash hands/faces immediately if this should happen
* Provide separate food and water dishes for Dexter. Wash these daily and store away from dishes used by pupils, staff and visitors
* All waste material should be disposed of promptly and safely
* All dog faeces should be picked up immediately, and disposed of appropriately and promptly. Pupils should never be responsible for picking up and disposing of dog faeces
* If a member of staff has any concerns about the germs that dogs can carry and the potential impact of this on their health, they should raise this with the headteacher

# 7. Pupil conduct

In order to maintain both the pupils’ and dog’s welfare, it’s important that all pupils who may come into contact with Dexter understand how to interact with the dog safely and maintain positive dog welfare.

Pupils must:

* Not interact with Dexter until invited to do so by Mrs Harris
* Follow all instruction given to them while interacting with Dexter
* Only stroke Dexter on his body, chest, shoulders, and the top of the head, not on the face or tail (including putting hands in the dog's mouth)
* Wait until Dexter is stationary – standing, sitting or lying down – before touching him
* Remain calm around Dexter
* Place school bags out of reach of Dexter
* Wash their hands before and after interacting with Dexter

Pupils must not:

* Kiss Dexter
* Feed Dexter, or taunt him with food
* Approach or disturb Dexter whilst he is resting, sleeping or eating
* Force Dexter to interact with them
* Attempt to play rough with Dexter (this can over stimulate him)
* Eat during interactions with Dexter

Pupils who struggle to follow the rules will be removed from the session. They will be given an opportunity to learn why they were removed and what they can do to interact more positively with Dexter.

If pupils are deliberately violent or threatening towards Dexter this will be dealt with under the school’s behaviour policy and may result in fixed-term exclusion.

# 8. Links to other policies

* Health and safety policy
* First aid policy
* Behaviour policy
* Dexter Risk Assessment

# 9. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Head of school annually or when a significant change occurs

Dexter – Our School Dog

* Dexter is a Labrador Retriver born on the 19th December 2024. Dexter has been chosen and trained to be sociable and good natured. He is a KC registered pedigree labrador retriever. <https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/search/dog-profile/?dogId=df8accd6-3bcf-ef11-8eea-6045bd126785> His mother is a Therapy dog in children’s care homes and his father is a well-trained working farm dog.
* Dexter lives with Mrs Harris and her family.
* Dexter has been socialised from 8 weeks at Sussex County Dog Training <https://www.sussexcountydogtraining.com/>
* Dexter attends training classes at The Academy of Modern Canine Behaviour and Training <https://www.amcbt.com/training-classes>
* Research has shown many benefits to therapy and reading dogs in school settings. Rumboldswhyke Church of England Primary School has introduced the use of a dog to enhance the emotional well-being provision at school. This policy is designed to set out to pupils, parents, staff and visitors the reasons for having a school dog and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of pupils, staff, visitors and the school dog. 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 pupils, parents, staff and visitors. (Risk Assessment).


# The benefits of a school dog

School dogs have been proven to help develop Pupils' reading skills, improve behaviour, attendance and academic confidence, as well as increasing student understanding of responsibility and in the development of empathy and nurturing skills. At Rumboldswhyke, we hope that a school dog will be a beneficial addition to our therapeutic offer in addition to the interventions we already offer and promoting engagement for those children who have found it difficult to access talking therapies in the past.

*"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

## SEND 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

Evidence shows that just by being near a dog when stressed can reduce anxiety. In a survey, 92% of pupils said they felt more relaxed during teaching and learning time when there was a dog in the classroom. When children are more relaxed and less stressed, they're going to learn more.

## Behaviour benefits

Researchers report that Pupils 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 Pupils declined by 55%, and general aggression went down 62%. In a controlled study, Pupils were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Pupils' behaviour improved toward teachers, and Pupils also showed more confidence and responsibility.

## Education

Reading programmes with dogs are doing wonders for some pupils. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even adults are likely to be less scared to read to a dog. "It might be less stressful for a child to read aloud to a dog than to a teacher or a peer. After all, a dog won't judge or correct you. Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud. With the presence of a calm and well-trained dog, pupils find social support and peer interaction. Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have pupils read to them or join a group of children in the library whilst they are having a book reading session. Dogs give unconditional acceptance, as they are nonjudgmental, which is especially crucial to struggling, emerging readers. The dogs also provide confidence to children as they do not make fun of them when they read, but above all they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. Research has proved that pupils who read to dogs show an increase in reading levels, word recognition, a higher desire to read and write, and an increase in intrapersonal and interpersonal skills among the pupils they mix with.

## Social Development

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching pupils social skills and responsibility. Schools are using dogs to help older pupils build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Pupils can use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower Pupils. With a dog in school, pupils have the opportunity to learn how to care for the dog. This includes walking and grooming. Research reports that involving pupils in the daily care of a classroom dog is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The pupils also learn about responsibility, caring, and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school.

The latest guidance from the government regarding pets and animals in school are below.

*Chapter 8: pets and animal contact - GOV.UK - Updated March 2021 https://www.qov.uk/qovernment/publications/health-protection-in-schools-and-other-childcarefacilities(chapter-8-pets-and-animal-contact 3/5*

*Pets and other animals in school can enhance the learning environment. However, contact with animals can pose a risk of infection including gastro-intestinal infection, fungal infections and parasites. Some people, such as pregnant women and those with a weakened immune system, are at greater risk of developing a severe infection. However, sensible measures can be taken to reduce the risk of infection to the children and to staff. Only mature and toilet trained pets should be considered and the Head of School should ensure that a knowledgeable person is responsible for the animal.*

*Animals should always be supervised when in contact with the children and those handling animals advised to wash their hands immediately afterwards. Animals should have recommended treatments and immunisations, be regularly groomed (including claws trimmed) and checked for signs of infection. Bedding should be laundered regularly. Feeding areas should be kept clean and their food stored away from human food. Food not consumed in 20 minutes should be taken away or covered to prevent attracting pests.*