



St Anthony's

Catholic Primary School

We are God's Work of Art

WELLBEING DOG SCHOOL POLICY

September 2025

School Wellbeing Dog			
Review frequency:	Annually	Review date:	September 2026
Staff responsible:	JB SA JT LC EB	Date produced:	September 2025

Context

The animal will:

- Be owned by Miss Clarke and her family.
- ‘Live’ in suitable housing within The Zone.
- Costs associated with the care of the dog will be paid for by Miss Clarke.
- Be provided with veterinary care, when they need it.

Current Provision

- School Wellbeing dog – Male Labrador

SCHOOL WELLBEING DOG			
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Background

The Governing Body, Senior Leadership Team and Learning Mentor have considered the possibility of having a school wellbeing dog in school.

Our findings are that schools that have a School Dog, find that they assist in:

- Teaching responsibility and respect;
- Teaching empathy, non-violence and in some cases how to love and have patience;
- Motivating children who are not that attentive;
- Increasing social skills and self-esteem;
- Increasing confidence around dogs and in general;
- Improvement in attendance rates;
- Helping to calm behaviour down – both in classrooms and in a1:1 situation;
- Increasing literacy skills – children begin to enjoy reading and want to read aloud.

It is recognised that animals are not generally allowed in either the school building or grounds, unless a full risk assessment has been undertaken, that considers the behaviour and characteristics of the animal(s). This is the reason why dogs belonging to parents and carers are not allowed on the school site. A full risk assessment has, however, been undertaken for the school wellbeing dog and is attached to this document. This will be reviewed annually.

It is accepted that interacting with a dog may not be appropriate for all children, but that for the majority it has the potential to provide many positive benefits. Any parent or carer who does not wish their child to interact with the dog will be asked to inform school of their wishes. School will then ensure that this is considered and that these children do not have any contact with the dog at any time. A list of these children will be kept in the school office and in The Zone.

Context

The dog will:

- Be owned by Miss Clarke and her family.
- Be introduced to school gradually and observed regularly.
- ‘Live’ in The Zone, where it will have its bed, water, etc.
- Always be kept on a lead when moving around school.
- Have a dedicated area to relieve itself in an area that children do not access.
- Costs associated with the dog, including veterinary costs will be covered by Miss Clarke.
- Visitors and pupils will be informed of times when the dog will be present.
- Any parent or carer who does not wish their child to interact with the dog will be asked to inform school or Mrs Alty / Mrs Thornton of their wishes.

It will be a requirement that the dog:

- Be registered by Pets as Therapy within the first 12 months.
- Is regularly groomed and checked for signs of infection or other illness.
- Is diagnosed and treated by a vet if it is ill.
- Receives annual vaccinations – evidence within school.
- Is wormed monthly (as recommended by the Vet).
- Is treated with flea preventative treatment 3 monthly in the winter and every 8 weeks in the summer.
- Has its claws trimmed when necessary to reduce the risk of scratches.
- Is exercised before being allowed to work with children.

Management Day to Day

It will be a requirement of the handler/owner to ensure that:

- The dog is physically fit before visiting the school environment.
- The dog is kept on a lead when moving through the school or school ground during school hours.
- The dog may be taken off the lead whilst in The Zone whilst fully supervised by a member of staff.
- That a member of staff remains with the dog at all times when it is not in 'The Zone'.
- The staff member handling the dog has received appropriate behaviour training from the School Business Manager.
- The dog is discouraged from jumping, scratching and licking;
- The dog is of an acceptable hygienic standard, i.e. not muddy, wet etc.
- Natural relief for the dog is taken in the designated area only, where pupils do not access. Waste will be disposed of by the handler, in bags deposited in an external bin.

Pupils will:

- Never have sole responsibility for, or be left alone with the dog;
 - Directly 'work' or interact with the dog in a group of more than 4 children;
 - Be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog through information passed on via class teachers, Miss Clarke or Talking dog posters/ dog rules. Appropriate behaviours are:
 - Always remain calm around the dog
 - Don't make sudden movements and be gentle
 - Always approach the dog standing up
 - Do not approach the dog when it is sleeping or eating
 - Don't put your face near the dog
 - Don't stare into the dog's eyes as this can be interpreted as a threat
 - Do not eat close to the dog and never feed the dog.
- Learn about how dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring of teeth indicate that the dog is feeling threatened or angry. Flattened ears, tail lowered or between their legs, hiding behind their owner, whining or growling being signs that the dog is frightened or nervous. If the dog ever displays these warning signs it will immediately be removed from that situation or environment:
 - Be informed of the following health and safety principles:
 - Always wash their hands and/or use anti-bac gel after handling the dog
 - Any dog 'mess' will be cleaned up immediately by Miss Clarke or appropriate member of staff. This must never be done by children.

Should a bite (even playful) ever occur:

1. Parents or carers will be contacted immediately.
2. The wound will be cleaned and covered with a sterile, non-sticky dressing.
3. The child/adult will be released for medical attention.
4. All staff will be informed.
5. The dog will be removed from direct contact with any child pending the outcome of a full investigation and reassessment.
6. A full investigation into the circumstances will be led by the School Business Manager.
7. The suitability of the dog will be re-assessed by the Head Teacher and the Governing Body.