Therapy Dogs in the Workplace Policy 2026

The Link Academy Trust is a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity, regulated by the Department of Education (DfE). All Members of the Board of Trustees are Directors of the company as well as Trustees of the exempt charity; the term 'Trustee' used in this Policy also means Director. This Policy applies to all academies within the Link Academy Trust

Policy Statement
The Link Academy Trust is committed to the safety of its pupils, employees and visitors. This policy has been implemented to ensure that the welfare of these stakeholders, as well as the dog, are prioritised at all times.

The Link Academy Trust does not allow dogs on the school site unless they are an assistance dog or specifically authorised by the Executive/Academy Head (E/AH) and Estates Manager.

This policy outlines the measures put in place to allow the school to authorise a therapy/ reading dog on the school site.

Elements
When identifying a therapy/reading dog to work in school, the following information must apply:

- The dog must have a named owner who is an employee at the school
- The owner must take full responsibility for the care of the dog and keep the dog up to date with their vaccinations, worm and flea treatments and any other treatment they may require to maintain good health
- Consideration must be made to the breed and nature of the dog
- The breeder must be reputable and provide evidence of full health checks of both parents of the dog
- The dog should be low-shedding breeds considered lower allergy-risk where practicable
- The dog must undergo training at a reputable training company
- The dog must have a base in school where they will remain when not working. All dogs should be kept on a lead in the owner's workspace and this must be a safe and secure place away from pupil areas, e.g. classrooms (unless supervised and pre-planned with prior approval from the E/AH), and also food preparation and serving areas, e.g. kitchens and school hall. The owner is responsible for informing others of their dog's presence. If your dog is unwell, they are not permitted on site
- The dog must be at least 12 months of age to work directly with pupils on therapeutic and reading intervention
- The dog will only have student therapy and/or reading sessions once certified as a therapy dog by Pets As Therapy (https://petsastherapy.org/) or a similar creditable organisation.

Before the dog is allowed on the premises, you must have discussed the reasons why with your E/AH and seek approval by providing the following information via email to the

CEO/DCEO:

- Confirmation your pet will not cause allergies or other medical problems to people
- Confirmation that your pet is adequately toilet and obedience trained
- Provide details of your dog: name, breed, age, recent photograph
- Confirmation that your pet is clean, appropriately vaccinated and free of parasites
- Sign the liability statement (see Appendix 2)

Owner Responsibility

- Dogs must be supervised at all times in the workplace
- Owners are solely accountable and responsible for their dog's behaviour
- Owners must not be prevented/distracted from performing their role/duties whilst their dog is in the workplace
- Dogs must be walked only in permitted outdoor areas away from the school building and only during the owners allocated break times
- Owners should not allow staff/pupils to feed their dog
- Owners should clean up after their dog with dog mess cleaned up and placed in an outdoor bin **off the Trust premises**
- Owners must make sure their dog does not wander into restricted areas (as below)
- Make sure their dog does not endanger themselves or others
- Make sure their dog does not damage company or employee property
- Make sure their dog does not distract the team (e.g. barking constantly, climbing on desks, dog play)

If any of these occur, it falls to the E/AHs' discretion to determine the seriousness of the pet's actions.

We operate a three-strike warning policy for the following incidents: excessive barking, toileting within the premises, and entering restricted areas listed below. Owners will also be responsible for any expenses and cleaning resulting from their pet's behaviour.

Should the dog get three strikes, or bite someone in the office, the dog will be required to leave immediately and will no longer be accepted in the office. The E/AH or Estates Manager can also take the decision to remove the dog after **any significant welfare or safety concern**, not only after three strikes.

Communication, Introduction and Integration of the Dog

The school must ensure that prior to the placement of a dog that all stakeholders have been informed. The following steps are in place:

- All staff will be communicated with via the weekly staff bulletin and the offer of a drop in session. All staff will be given the option to opt for involvement with a therapy dog if they have any concerns regarding health and safety, allergies or fears of animals.
- Letters will be sent to all parents/carers informing them of the school's decision to have a therapy dog on site. All parents/carers will be given the option to opt out of their child having involvement with the therapy dog.
- All pupils will be informed through their class. An assembly will be delivered to every year group to introduce a dog and inform pupils of key messages regarding health and safety. All pupils will also have the option to opt in involvement with a therapy dog.
- The dog will attend school open evenings and events to introduce them to new parents/carers and pupils.

- All visitors will be informed that there is a therapy dog on site via a notice in the school reception and notice on the school website.
- The school will follow the **Equality Act 2010**, ensuring reasonable adjustments for allergies and phobias. Allergy sufferers must not be placed in unavoidable proximity to dogs

The dog will then be introduced to the school site on a gradual basis over time in order to protect the welfare of the dog and all stakeholders. The dog will not work directly with pupils until they are fully trained, integrated and used to all aspects of school life i.e. school bells, fire alarms, transitions between classes and familiarity with staff.

Curriculum
The curriculum will support learning about dogs and how best to behave around a dog. A dog will support pupils with:

- Reading – pupils will read to the dog
- Responsibility – pupils will take part in daily responsibilities of looking after a dog such as walking, brushing, feeding and watering.
- Welfare – pupils will be offered time with the dog for therapy
- Rewards – the dog will be involved with rewarding pupils for those who would like to be involved

A dog will follow a structured timetable, ensuring that its work has meaning and sessions will be pre-planned and linked to the school's curriculum.

Inclusivity
This policy does not apply to service/assistance animals. They are allowed to move freely with their owners. If any problem arises because of service animals, we will make appropriate accommodations to resolve it. This falls to the discretion of the Trust Estates Manager but we won't, under any circumstances, create problems for our employees with disabilities.

Restrictions
Please respect the below-restricted areas where dogs are not allowed:

- Kitchen
- School Hall
- Classrooms unless supervised and pre-planned with prior approval from the E/AH
- Staff/team meetings
- Meeting rooms during meetings with external parties (unless pre-agreed)

Complaint process
The Link Academy Trust has completed a thorough risk assessment to allow for the presence of dogs on the school site. This will be reviewed and updated annually unless required sooner.

We want all employees to feel safe in their workplace. If an employee has concerns or problems resulting from a dog in the workplace, they should follow this process:

- Talk to the dog's owner in case they can resolve the problem immediately
- Reach out to the E/AH explaining their issues
- Consult the Trust Estates Manager, if they don't get a satisfactory response
- File an official complaint

If they have a medical or personal issue (e.g. allergy, phobia), they should speak immediately with the E/AH. NB: This scenario should be addressed under the Elements section of this policy prior to any approval of a dog coming into the workplace.

E/AH's should take their employees' concerns seriously and investigate as soon as they receive complaints. If they're unable to resolve the problem, they should contact the Trust HR Officer.

Should the dog hurt anyone:

- Parents/carers will be informed immediately (if pupil)
- First aid procedures will be fully implemented
- Pupil or staff members will be released for medical attention if required
- A full investigation of circumstances will be conducted. A dog will not be permitted onto the school premises until the investigation is completed
- The suitability of a dog will be re-assessed following investigation

Should the dog get hurt by someone:

- The owner will be informed immediately
- The owner will visit the registered vet if deemed necessary
- A full investigation of circumstances will be undertaken
- The access of the person responsible for injuring the dog will be re-assessed following investigation

A dog in school will be covered by the school's public liability insurance for injury to the dog through negligence of a member of staff or the fabric of the building. Additional insurance is required by the owner to cover third party public liability in the event that the dog injures a member of staff, pupil or visitor.

Contingency Plans

If the dog escapes from the school building and is loose on the school grounds:

- The owner will be informed immediately
- The owner and other identified members of staff will be asked to secure exits to prevent the dog from leaving the grounds
- Pupils will be informed not to approach or chase the dog
- The owner will secure the dog with a lead using training commands The suitability of a dog will be re-assessed following investigation

If the dog escapes from the school site:

- The owner will be informed immediately
- The owner and other identified members of staff will be asked to search the surrounding area
- Pupils will be informed not to approach or chase the dog
- If found, the owner will secure the dog with a lead using training commands
- If not found, the missing dog will be reported to the correct outside agencies

In case of an emergency evacuation/fire drill:

- The appropriate adult will walk the dog on a lead to the assembly point

- The dog will be passed to the owner
- The dog will remain with the owner until the building is deemed safe and all pupils have re-entered classrooms
- If the owner is not on site when there is an evacuation, then another member of staff will be delegated responsible for the ownership of the dog during this time

In the case of severe weather:

- The dog will only be walked during cooler period of the day in hot weather to prevent overheating and burns to paws
- A fan will be provided to keep the dog cool during hot weather if required
- The dog will only be walked if the ground is deemed appropriate during snow/ice periods (clear of both) to prevent frostbite
- The dog will be kept in a room which is warm during cold weather period

Health and Safety

To ensure the safety and welfare of our pupils, staff, visitors and a therapy dog, a full risk assessment is in place (Appendix 1). The following outlined steps will be taken to protect all on Link Academy Trust sites.

Pupils, Staff and Visitors

- The dog will be supervised at all times when moving around the school building and will be kept on a lead when on a walk
- The dog will be under the full control and supervision of an adult at all times when on the school site
- Pupils will never be left alone with the dog
- Pupils and staff will be informed on how to act around the dog prior to its integration. New staff and pupils will receive this advice prior to joining the school
- The number of pupils having access at one time will be monitored and limited to a reasonable amount
- Adults will immediately remove the dog from the situation if it shows any signs of distress (growling, bearing teeth, tail lowered between legs)
- Anyone who has access to the dog must wash his or her hands before and after interaction
- The dog will be discouraged from jumping, scratching and licking
- Pupils will only access the dog when they are scheduled to meet or work with the dog
- The dog will not be linked with any pupil whose parents/carers withdraw consent or where there is a high risk of the pupil injuring the dog or putting himself or herself in danger with the dog
- Sensible precautions will be put in place to minimise the risk of the spread of infectious disease
- The dog will not enter the school site unless free from parasites

The Dog

- Pupils will be informed not to disturb the dog whilst sleeping or eating. The dog will have a designated place where it can rest and eat
- The dog will work for three hours' maximum per day and be given sufficient time between sessions to rest, eat and toilet. Only the dog's handler will have access to the

dog during this time. Work periods will be guided by welfare advice from a qualified trainer or vet
- The dog will be given time to adjust to the school environment (i.e. fire alarm, bells etc.) prior to being introduced to pupils
- The dog will never be left in the building unsupervised or overnight
- The dog will only be handled by confident staff who are familiar to the dog and able to control them
- The dog will have access to fresh drinking water at all times
- The dog will be given the opportunity to toilet whenever required
- The dog's owner will ensure that the dog is not put into any potential situations that would compromise the dog's health and wellbeing
- The dog's claws will be trimmed to reduce risk of accidental scratching
- The dog is microchipped and registered to the owner
- The owner should ensure pet insurance is in place to ensure that the dog is covered for any injury

This Policy is reviewed and approved by Deputy CEO on a 2 yearly cycle.

Approved by DCEO: 6th February 2024
Approved by DCEO:

Risk Assessment completed by Claire Slee
Date completed: January 2024
Review date: January 2026

Impact			Probability	
Descriptor	**Indicator**		**Descriptor**	**Indicator**
5 (major)	Major impact if realised		5 (very likely)	Risk will emerge
4 (significant)	Significant impact if realised		4 (likely)	Risk should emerge
3 (moderate)	Moderate impact if realised		3 (unlikely)	Risk could emerge
2 (minor)	Minor impact if realised		2 (very unlikely)	Risk unlikely to emerge
1 (no significance)	No consequence if realised		1 (impossible)	Risk will not emerge

Score	Risk Description	Action required
25	Extreme risk	Immediate escalation to Executive/Academy Head
20 - 15	High risk	Actively manage risks and review regularly
12 - 6	Medium risk	Take appropriate action to minimise risks
5 and below	Low risk	Regular review and removal from RA if appropriate

Risk	Impact of risk 1-5	Probability of risk 1-5	Risk rating (IxP)	Control Measures
Pupil, staff or visitor is knocked to the ground by the dog	3	2	6	• The dog will always be in the care of an appropriate adult handler and will never be allowed to freely roam the school site. • The dog will be supervised when escorted around site and in the learning environment. • The dog will undertake specific training to not jump or mouth anyone. • Pupils have been and will continued to be taught the impact of their actions. Education of this nature is continually given to students and staff during assemblies and form time. • Pupils and staff will be taught what to do to stop the dog from chasing them e.g. fold arms and stand still. • The dog will undergo formal training with an experienced trainer. The owner and handlers will continue to reinforce positive training strategies in a controlled area. • The dog will also undergo conditioning to the school environment prior to its work with pupils. • Pupils and staff will be taught not to tease the dog or get it to jump up. • Owner will undertake training with the dog prior to its introduction to school to ensure that it is well trained and handled well
Pupil, staff or visitor is scratched by the dog	3	3	6	• The dog will always be in the care of an appropriate adult and will never be allowed to freely roam the school site. • The dog will be supervised when escorted around site and in the learning environment. • The dog will undertake specific training to not jump or mouth anyone • Pupils have been and will continued to be taught the impact of their actions. Education of this nature is continually given to students and staff during assemblies and form time.

				• Pupils and staff will be taught what to do to stop the dog from chasing them e.g. fold arms and stand still. • The dog will undergo formal training with an experienced trainer. The owner and handlers will continue to reinforce positive training strategies in a controlled area. • The dog will also undergo conditioning to the school environment prior to its work with pupils. • Pupils and staff will be taught not to tease the dog or get it to jump up. • The dog's owner will undertake Kennel Club training with the dog prior to its introduction to school to ensure that it is well trained and handled well.
Pupil, staff or visitor is bitten by the dog	4	3	12	• The dog will always be in the care of an appropriate adult and will never be allowed to freely roam the school site. • The dog will be supervised around site and in the learning environment. • The dog will undertake specific training to not jump or mouth anyone. • Pupils have been and will continued to be taught the impact of their actions. Education of this nature is continually given to students and staff during assemblies and form time. • Pupils and staff will be taught what to do to stop the dog from chasing them e.g. fold arms and stand still. • The dog will undergo formal training with an experienced trainer. The owner and handlers will continue to reinforce positive training strategies in a controlled area. • The dog will also undergo conditioning to the school environment prior to its work with pupils. • Pupils and staff will be taught not to tease the dog or get it to jump up. • Owner will undertake training with the dog prior to its introduction to school to ensure that it is well trained and handled well.
Dog gets injured on site by person	3	2	6	• The dog will have full pet insurance (provided by its owner) to cover veterinary bills due to injury. • The dog will always be in the care of an appropriate adult and will not be allowed to roam the school site unsupervised. • The dog will never be left unsupervised with a pupil(s).
Dog gets injured/sick due to ingesting objects on the school site	2	3	6	• The dog will always be in the care of an appropriate adult and will never be allowed to freely roam the school site. • The dog will not be allowed in areas of the school where food is prepared including: breakfast club, kitchen, lunch hall and technology. • Staff, pupils and visitors will be made aware not to feed the dog, unless it is with the agreed food within the dog's diet.
Dog escapes the school site	2	4	8	• The dog will always be in the care of an appropriate adult and will never be allowed to freely roam the school site. • The dog will have pet insurance to cover injury obtained off site. • The dog will be microchipped and registered to its owner.

				• A contingency plan is in place for if the dog escapes the school site.
Pupil, staff or visitor has an allergic reaction to the dog	3	2	6	• The selected breed should be low-shedding and considered lower allergy-risk where practicable so the probability of an allergic reaction is low. • Parents/carers and staff will be asked to inform the school of any known allergies prior to introduction of the dog to the school. • A list of all pupils and staff who should not interact with the dog will be kept on the school system and be held by the handlers and owner. • Pupils and staff have been taught to wash their hands after active participation with the dog. • The school site is cleaned daily. • Visitors will be informed of the dog when entering site via notice in the school reception and will be asked to inform reception of any allergies. This information will then be passed to the owner to ensure the dog does not have contact with the visitor.
Pupil, staff or visitor contracts germs from the dog	3	2	6	• Should the dog defecate on the school site, this will be cleaned up by the dog handler immediately and dispose of it in a safe manner. • All defecation will be disposed of in an outdoor bin off the Link Academy Trust premises. • All immunisations/vaccinations will be kept up to date as per the vet guidelines. • Flea and worm treatment will be carried out in six weekly intervals. • If the dog is unwell, he will not be permitted on site until he has been seen by a bet and deemed fit and healthy. • The good health of the dog is the responsibility of its owner at all times.
School unable to afford ongoing cost of dogs day to day upkeep or medical bills	1	1	1	• The dog is the responsibility of its owner who is financially responsible for the health and care needs of the dog. • The dog remains the responsibility of its owner outside of school hours. • The school has public liability insurance, which will cover the school for injury to the dog because of the fabric of the building or negligence from a member of staff. • The owner has third party public liability insurance which covers any legal fees and compensation resulting from injury caused by the dog to staff, pupils or visitors when on the Link Academy Trust site.
School not adequately covered financially	1	1	1	• The school has public liability insurance, which will cover the school for injury to the dog because of the fabric of the building or negligence from a member of staff. • The owner has third party public liability insurance, which covers any legal fees and compensation resulting from injury caused by the dog to staff, pupils or visitors when on the school site

Appendix 2 – Liability Statement

In consideration of being permitted to bring a dog to the workplace, the dog owner does hereby unconditionally agree to take any and all liability, claims, demands, actions and causes of actions arising out of or related to any loss, damage or injury that may be sustained by any person, other dog or property in connection with or related to his/her dog in the workplace insofar as legally permitted.

The employee dog owner further hereby agrees to take full responsibility of the actions of their dog and protect and indemnify the Link Academy Trust from any loss, damage, liability and expense, including legal fees, that may be incurred as a result of injuries to persons or other dogs or damage to property, directly or indirectly associated with the employee bringing his/her dog to the workplace.

By signing this agreement the employee dog owner expressly acknowledges and represents that he/she has carefully read the foregoing terms and conditions and the Link Academy Trust Dogs in the Workplace Policy and understands the contents thereof.

Signature of Dog Owner: _____

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3 – Named Dog Information, Responsibilities and Integration Plan

This appendix relates to the introduction of a named dog. The completed document should be maintained for reference at the Academy the dog will attend.

General Information

The dog's owner is identified as: XXX

The dog breed/information: The dog is a male/female XXX born on XX/XX/20XX, named XXX. S/he has been bred by a reputable breeder. Both parents (female XXX and male XXX) are KC registered and are cleared for all health tests.

The breed: XXX's are low-shedding breeds considered lower allergy-risk, which means that they are unlikely to cause an allergic reaction. They are intelligent and social dogs with a friendly temperament making them appropriate for use as therapy dogs.

The dogs training: The dog has undergone full training with a reputable company 'XXX' registered with the Kennel club. This company is owned and led by the dog's breeder. In addition, the dog has/will undertake the full programme of Kennel Club training (alongside its owner) to achieve Bronze Award status prior to its integration. The dog will not work directly with pupils until he is fully trained.

The dog will be situated: Reception circulation area and will access classrooms and social areas of the school for therapy. The dog lives at the address of XXX outside of school hours.

The dog's care: XXX is responsible for the care of the dog at all times, including veterinary care. It is the responsibility of XXX to ensure that the dog is in good health. If the dog is not in good health, then under no circumstances will he access the school site until he has been cleared as well by his vet. XXX is responsible for ensuring that all vaccinations, worm and flea treatments are fully up to date prior to the dog entering the school site.

Responsibilities template

School Name:	
The Owner:	
The Handlers:	**Agreed staff on the academy site**
In case that the owner is not on the school site at the time of an emergency evacuation, the dog will be cared for by:	
The dog's base will be:	
The academy will be responsible for: • Ensuring that the 'Therapy Dogs in Workplace' policy is adhered to by staff, pupils and visitors to the school site. • Ensuring that the dog has an appropriate rest area, feeding area and toilet area away from busy areas. • Ensuring that adequate insurance is in place for the dog to be in the school. • Ensuring that only appropriate adults supervise the dog whilst on the school site.	
The owner will be responsible for: • Ensuring that the dog is regularly groomed and checked for signs of infection or other illness. • If the dog is unwell, that he will be diagnosed and treated by a registered vet • Ensuring that the dog will receive relevant vaccinations and that a record of dates of vaccinations are held on the Academy site. • Ensuring that the dog receives adequate worm and flea treatments. • Ensuring that the dog's claws are trimmed to reduce risk of accidental scratching. • Ensuring that the dog is cared for outside of the school to a high standard. • Ensuring that the dog's rest and food area within the school is kept clean and in line with health and safety standards. • Ensuring that adequate insurance is in place for the dog's health and care needs when on and off the school site. • Ensuring that the dog is fully trained prior to working with pupils and other staff.	
The handlers (other identified staff) will be responsible for: • Ensuring that they can handle the dog safely prior to working with pupils. • Ensuring that the dog is care for whilst being handled by others. • To be available in case of emergency i.e. dog escaping.	

Integration Plan example template

The dates and periods below are subject to change depending upon the training and needs of the dog.

Planned date	Activity	Review
01/09/2024	The dog will move into the home of its owner. He will continue his training with his breeder during this time.	
07/09/2024	The dog will receive its second (final) vaccinations and be allowed outdoors.	
10/2024	The dog will make short visits to the school site to become familiar with the environment.	
Following the above	Once the dog is familiar and feels safe and secure in the environment, he will begin to visit the school site during the day for short periods (1 hour initially, then 2 hours, 3 hours etc.) building up to full days. The dog will not interact with pupils during this time.	
After 12/2024 (public liability insurance starts when the dog is 6 months old)	The dog will start interactions with small groups of pupils for short bursts of time (30-minute sessions maximum). These will be gradually increased over time in order to socialise the dog within the school environment.	
Following above and by May 2024	The dog will be timetabled to work with pupils for full sessions (therapy and reading) and extracurricular activities and this policy will be fully implemented.	

Appendix 4 – Examples of FAQs

Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

Yes. The dog is from a home where both parents were seen and has been specifically chosen for its temperament.

Will the dog be a distraction?

The dog will be kept in the reception area. The reception area is separate from the classrooms and playground area to ensure it only meets pupils who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision. The dog will also have a space to spend time in classrooms and other areas within the school grounds where pupils can interact safely.

Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in the school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog.

How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?

In the interest of health and hygiene, our school dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks in the grounds. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed.

How will the dog's welfare be considered?

The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. Parents/carers will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to be able to walk with a member of staff and the dog during that time. The dog will be kept in the reception area, will only have planned, and supervised contact with pupils and visitors.

The dog will be carefully trained over a period and will have unlimited access to food and water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered.

How will this be managed where staff, pupils or visitors have allergies?

The breed of dog has been considered to reduce risk of allergy. The XXX breed are low-shedding breeds considered lower allergy-risk.

People do not need to touch a dog, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for pupils and adults that are allergic to dogs.

Individual needs will always be met and we are happy to work with all to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies.

The dog will be given high quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens and the school site will be cleaned daily.
A list of all known staff and pupils with allergies will be held on our school system.