



School Dog Policy And Frequently Asked Questions 2025 - 2027

St John's C of E Middle School



This policy was reviewed and updated by Natasha Birmingham and is approved annually by the Local Governing Body.

Reviewed: September 2025

Next Review Date: September 2027

In collaboration with

Our School dogs



Meet Reggie, the three-year-old working cocker spaniel who brings boundless energy and love to our school community. Whether he's outdoors, chasing birds off the school field or gleefully retrieving tennis balls thrown by children, or indoors, where he transforms into a calm and affectionate companion, Reggie is adored by all. With a soft spot for cuddles and fuss, he effortlessly lifts spirits and provides emotional support to staff and students alike. Only adults handle his lead as he is very strong. Having been a familiar

presence since he was just 12 weeks old. Reggie isn't just a pet; he's an integral part of our school family, spreading joy and comfort wherever he goes.



Introducing Roxie, our 12-month-old miniature dachshund who has become an invaluable member of our school community. Given the naturally anxious disposition of her breed, it took us some time to determine if the school setting would suit her, the pupils have become extremely fond of her and we have decided she is a great addition to the St John's Community. She excels in helping students who may be struggling to regulate their emotions, aiding them in returning to their learning environment swiftly. Roxie

has a preference for quieter areas of the school, leading us to decide that her primary base will be in the Launch Pad, our SEND base, where she is most comfortable and familiar with both pupils and staff. While her dachshund nature occasionally leads to barking, it's always a means of communication, never indicating any aggression. Our pupils have wonderfully adapted to Roxie's unique approach; unlike Reggie's bounding cuddles, they approach Roxie calmly, extending a hand for her to sniff before stroking. This interaction fosters empathy and understanding among our students, teaching them that not all dogs have the same temperament. Roxie's petite size makes her perfect for pupils who wish to walk her on a lead, further enhancing their bond with her.

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

Yes 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. A thorough risk assessment has been carried out (see appendix). Dogs are not allowed anywhere on the school site at any time unless specifically authorised by the Head Teacher. This includes drop off and collection times. This policy outlines measures put in place to allow school dogs to be present. When completing risk assessments, we consider if the benefit outweighs the risk, and we consider the school dogs to be very low risk. We also believe the benefits by far outweigh the risk.

About The School Dog:

The dogs are owned by Ms Birmingham.

- The Governors have the right to refuse entry to the dog.
- Only the school dogs are allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless the Head Teacher has been informed beforehand.
- There are two school dogs, a working cocker spaniel and a miniature Dachshund.
- The Chair of Governors and the governing board agree that school dogs will benefit the children and staff of St John's Middle School.
- Staff, parents and children will be informed by letter that dogs will be in school.
- The school has produced a risk assessment and this will be reviewed annually.
- Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dogs.
- If a dog is unwell he/she will not be allowed into school.
- The dogs will 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.
- Children should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog
- Children should remain calm around the dogs.
- Children should never go near or disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating.
- Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the dogs.
- Children will always ask before stroking the dogs and will let the dog approach them.
- If a dog is surrounded by a large number of children, the dog could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that s/he monitors the situation.
- Children should not eat close to the dogs.
- Children should wash their hands after handling a dogs.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.

- Parents should contact school if they wish for their child not to have any contact with the dogs.
- The dogs will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Ms Birmingham or Miss Butt.
- Actions - someone reports having an issue with the dogs, this information must be passed to the Head Teacher or Assistant Headteacher as soon as possible.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Trust has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in School and the Local Governing Body ensure that this policy is adopted in accordance with their own school's needs. Teachers, staff, pupils, parents and visitors are required to abide by this policy.

Appendix 1. Reasons for having dogs in school

Appendix 2. School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Appendix 3. School dog risk assessment

Appendix 1.

Reasons for having dogs in school:

In summary, academic research has shown that dogs working and helping in the school environment can achieve the following:

1. Improve academic achievement
 2. Increase literacy skills
 3. Calming behaviours
 4. Increase social skills and self-esteem
 5. Increase confidence
 6. Teach responsibility and respect to all life
 7. Help prevent truancy
 8. Motivate children who are often less attentive
- The following information has been taken from a range of sources to provide further detail about the benefits of having a dog in school:

Behaviour:

In some schools, dogs are making a difference in the behaviour of pupils. 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%. Behaviour problems occur in school and these can interfere with learning.

Some schools are using dogs to improve behaviour problems by promoting positive behaviour in students. In a controlled study, students were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without.

Students' behaviour improved toward teachers, and students also showed more confidence and responsibility. Additionally, parents reported that children seemed more interested in school as a result of having a dog at school.

Social Development:

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching students social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help older students build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Older students use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower students.

With a dog in school, students have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving students in the daily care of classroom dogs is a positive experience, 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:

Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the students. Pupils who would benefit, will be rewarded with spending time during lunch or break to interact with these dogs. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities students will be allowed to undertake.

It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem. Support Dogs can work with students on a one-one basis and will especially help those students who have been bullied, abused, going through upsetting/difficult times or even scared/phobic of dogs.

The dog will bring much joy and help to all the students they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the students they are spending time with. Students who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

Appendix 2.

School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q Who is the legal owner of the dogs and who pays for its costs?

The legal owner of the dogs is Ms Birmingham; she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog.

Q Will the dog be a distraction?

The dogs will be kept in his crate in Ms Birmingham's office. The space will be separate from the classrooms / playground area to ensure they only come into contact with children who are happy to have contact. Roxie will mostly be based in the Launch Pad area of the school.

Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

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

Q Who is responsible for training?

Ms. Birmingham will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for its training.

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

In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted outside. Wherever possible, this will be outside of school grounds. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed.

Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?

The dogs will be walked regularly and given free time outside. This will also be used as a behaviour reward, in line with our positive relationships policy. The dogs will be kept in Ms Birmingham's office. The dogs will have unlimited access to food and water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered.

Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?

Children will not need to touch the dogs, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for children and adults that are allergic to dogs. Individual needs will always be met and we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in

place for individual allergies. The dogs are given a high quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

Q My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?

Access to the dogs is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with it unless permission for this has been given. We hope to work closely with parents of children who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.

St John's Middle School Academy –School Dog Risk Assessment

| Legend | |
|--------|----------------------|
| I | Impact (consequence) |
| L | Likelihood |
| I x L | Risk Rating |

To establish your risk rating, it is necessary to multiply the perceived consequence (or impact) of the risk (score 1 - 5) with the perceived likelihood (or probability) of that risk occurring (score 1- 5). Please see tables below for guidance on risk rating scores.

| Impact (consequence) | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Description | Indicators |
| 5 (Major) | The risk has a major impact if realised |
| 4 (Significant) | The risk has a significant impact if realised |
| 3 (Moderate) | The risk has a moderate impact if realised |
| 2 (Minor) | The risk has a minor impact if realised |
| 1 (No consequence) | The risk has no consequence impact if realised |

| Likelihood (Probability) | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Description | Indicators |
| 5 (Very likely) | The risk will emerge |
| 4 (Likely) | The risk should emerge |
| 3 (Unlikely) | The risk could emerge |
| 2 (Very unlikely) | The risk is unlikely to emerge |
| 1 (Impossible) | The risk will not emerge |

| Score | Risk description | Action required |
|-------|------------------|---|
| 25 | Extreme Risk | Immediate escalation to Headteacher for risk control activities |

St John's Middle School Academy –School Dog Risk Assessment

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|-------------|-------------|--|
| 20-15 | High Risk | Risk to be actively managed with appropriate risk control activities |
| 12-6 | Medium Risk | Take appropriate action to manage risk |
| 5 and below | Low Risk | Risk to be removed from register with monitoring activity to assess changes in risk rating |

Learning Outcomes:

- 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 wellbeing of children and lower anxiety.
- The school dogs will aim to make the environment happier, more enjoyable and less forbidding.

Permissions:

It is accepted that interacting with animals is not appropriate for all children but that for some it may have positive benefits. Any parent who does not wish their child to interact with the dogs is invited to inform the SLT at the induction stage.

Review:

The risk assessment is reviewed annually.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Ms. Natasha Birmingham – Assistant Head teacher – Owner of dog

Mrs Sarah Butt – Pastoral Support – dog handler and interventions

Dog Status and Context:

- The dogs live with Ms Birmingham and her family and was introduced to the school environment and students gradually. The dogs vaccination programme records will be kept as part of the school's dog risk assessment.
- Whilst moving around the school, the dogs will be kept on a short lead and will always be with a member of staff.

St John's Middle School Academy –School Dog Risk Assessment

| Risk description | Risk Control(s) | I | L | Risk Rating (after risk controls are in place) | Lead for Risk Control Activities |
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| Policy and procedures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The headteacher ensures that all staff, pupils and their parents, are aware of the use of school dogs at St John's Middle. The School Business/Finance Manager ensures that the school's insurance covers using the dogs for the specific planned use for therapy and SEMH provision for pupils. The headteacher ensures that the dog is cared for in accordance with the Animal Welfare Act 2006. The headteacher ensures that there is a suitable and enough risk assessment in place | 2 | 2 | L | Headteacher Designated Dog Handler Trust H&S Officer |
| Dogs welfare provisions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dogs have access to fresh, clean water at all times. The dogs have access to a cool and quiet place where it can be left undisturbed. Pupils leave the dogs alone when instructed by their teachers. The dog's welfare is considered as a priority when planning the activities that it will participate in. If an activity risks the dog's welfare, the activity is amended. Noise is kept to a minimum during the activities that the dogs are participating in The assistant headteacher and dog handler ensure that the dog has adequate and frequent toilet breaks and any waste is appropriately disposed of. The dogs are not over-stimulated, as this can lead to potentially dangerous behaviour. The dogs are not made to participate in potentially distressing activities. The school complies with the Animal Welfare Act 2006. The dogs are familiar with the members of staff and pupils who are participating in the activity with the dogs. | 3 | 2 | M | Headteacher Assistant Headteacher Designated Dog Handler |

St John's Middle School Academy –School Dog Risk Assessment

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flash photography is not used when the dogs are present. The dogs are given opportunities to exercise and move around independently in a secure area. The headteacher and Assistant headteacher ensures that the dogs are fit to participate in specific activities and is not brought into the school if it is unwell. If the dogs become unwell while at school, the dog's owner takes it home. Before any activity is carried out, the headteacher and assistant headteacher ensures everyone participating in the activity understands how to treat and behave around the dogs, e.g. not using flash photography, not shouting or clapping and not running around. Activities do not cause harm, discomfort or stress to the dog. | | | | |
| Site security | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least two adults are appointed to be responsible for the dogs. The site team ensures that the site is secure and that precautions are in place to limit the chance of the dog getting loose. The site team ensures that the premises is secure, e.g. fences are not broken. | 2 | 2 | L | Headteacher Designated Dog Handler Caretaker |
| Evacuation procedures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where necessary, the school's evacuation procedures include provisions for the dogs. The person handling the dogs during specified activities is responsible for the dog's safety during a lockdown or evacuation. | 2 | 1 | L | Headteacher Designated Dog Handler |
| Disobedience, over excitement or dangerous behaviour | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The handler is equipped to react to and control any dangerous behaviour. If the person handling the dogs for a specific activity is a pupil, they are given training to handle the dogs, and the pupil and dogs are given an opportunity to bond. Pupils are not expected to handle the dog unless: | 3 | 2 | M | Headteacher Assistant Headteacher |

St John's Middle School Academy –School Dog Risk Assessment

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They feel safe and confident in doing so. - They have received training to handle the dogs. • The dog's obedience is ensured as far as reasonably possible; however, staff, pupils, visitors and parents understand that animals can be unpredictable. • The Assistant headteacher and dogs handler ensures that a plan is in place for if the dogs are unable to carry out an activity, e.g. if the dogs are stressed, and participating in the activity would cause further distress or could lead to dangerous behaviour. • If the dogs are not behaving appropriately during an activity, e.g. it is barking excessively or running away, the dog is removed, and a contingency plan is implemented. • Children are not left with the dogs unsupervised. • Pupils are taught the impact of their actions in relation to life and in the case of the dogs. This is on a continuous basis and forms part of the PSHE curriculum. • Pupils will be taught to stand still with their arms crossed to prevent the dogs from chasing them or engaging in boisterous play. • The Assistant headteacher and dog handler ensure that the dogs do not interfere with the school environment or displays nuisance behaviours. If necessary, they may exclude the dogs from entering specific areas. • The Assistant headteacher and dogs handler headteacher discourage the dogs from jumping, scratching or licking and are confident that the dog will respond to instruction of this nature. • Should an injury to a child occur they will be assessed by a trained First Aider. They will administer appropriate medical treatment and advise the parents/carers as to whether tetanus inoculation is appropriate. • Should an injury occur the incident will be fully investigated by the Trust Health and Safety Officer. If appropriate, additional control measures will be put in place | | | | <p>Designated Dog Handler</p> <p>Trust Health and Safety Officer</p> |
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St John's Middle School Academy –School Dog Risk Assessment

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| Parent notification/permission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents are informed that the dogs will be present on the school's premises. Parents are informed of the activities that the dogs will be participating in, e.g. the dog will be used as for pet therapy. | 2 | 2 | L | Headteacher |
| Dogs health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dog's designated handler oversees feeding and caring for the dogs while on the school premises. The handler is responsible for permitting people to touch the dogs. The dogs are permitted to go in the office areas which are kept clean and secure for the wellbeing of the animal, pupils, staff and visitors. The dogs are given no opportunity to come into contact with wild rodents on or off the school premises. The dogs are fully inoculated. The dogs go to the vet for a regular check-up, to identify whether the dog has any transmittable diseases and for worming or flea treatment. The dog's claws are regularly trimmed to reduce the risk of scratches. On hot days, the handler ensures there are appropriate provisions in place to keep the dogs cool and ensure the dogs avoid too much activity during the hottest part of the day. The dogs owner have financial responsibility regarding feeding the dogs and any day to day costs. | 2 | 2 | L | Headteacher Assistant Headteacher Designated Dog Handler |
| Hygiene | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dogs are suitably toilet trained. The dogs are of an acceptable hygienic standard, ie. not wet or muddy All faeces are immediately picked up by the handler. The handler immediately washes their hands with sufficient soap and water after picking up faeces. Any soiled dog bedding is immediately disposed of. The handler takes the dog's bedding home regularly to wash it. | 2 | 2 | L | Headteacher Designated Dog Handler |

St John's Middle School Academy –School Dog Risk Assessment

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any pupils, staff and visitors who touch the dogs are advised to wash their hands afterwards, and sufficient hand washing facilities are provided throughout the school. Anyone with an exposed wound who touches the dogs has the wound suitably covered. If the dogs are ill with an infection or a disease, it does not return to the school until it has recovered. Hand sanitiser is provided for anyone who touches the dogs. | | | | |
| Injuries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dogs are well trained and used to coming into close contact with people. Pupils, staff and visitors around the dogs are closely supervised by the handler. Pupils, staff and visitors are advised not to put their face close to the dogs. The dogs are prohibited from roaming freely around the school without the supervision of the handler. Pupils, staff and visitors are only permitted to stroke the dogs during allocated timeslots. The dogs are provided with a place it can go to get away from people. | 3 | 2 | M | Designated Dog Handler |
| Dogs housing and equipment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The owner ensures that the dogs have housing that meets its physical and psychological needs. The children are taught that this place belongs to the dogs and is their 'safe' place so do not attempt to invade it. The owner ensures that the dog's housing is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure, e.g. escape proof. Clean and free from parasites and vermin. Free from hazards, e.g. sharp edges. Well-ventilated. Sheltered from extreme weather. Set at a suitable temperature, humidity and light level. Sheltered from noises that may upset it. | 2 | 2 | L | Headteacher Assistant Headteacher Designated Dog Handler |

St John's Middle School Academy –School Dog Risk Assessment

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capable of providing a darkened sleeping area. • The owner ensures that the dog's housing has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A comfortable resting area. - A suitable amount of clean bedding material. • The headteacher and assistant headteacher ensures that the dog is able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lie fully stretched out. - Turn around without touching either the walls or the ceiling. - Stand in its natural posture. - Move in its natural manner. - Rest comfortably. • All dog's bedding/housing is checked for defects on a weekly basis by the Assistant headteacher. • All dog equipment is stored in the designated office areas when not in use. • The dog's food and water bowls are kept out of the path of people to avoid any trips. • Any spillages from the dog's bowls are wiped up immediately. | | | | |
| Allergies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils and staff known to have allergies to animals have restricted access to the dog. • All pupils, staff and visitors are advised not to touch their face after touching the dog. • All pupils, staff and visitors are advised to wash their hands thoroughly after touching the dog. | 2 | 2 | L | Headteacher Assistant Headteacher |
| Phobias | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils and staff known to have a phobia of dogs are given restricted access to the dog. • In the above case the dogs are prohibited from roaming freely around the school without the supervision of the handler. • If necessary, during busy times, such as breaks, the dog is kept in a safe and secure area away from any commotion. | 2 | 2 | L | Designated Dog Handler |

St John's Middle School Academy –School Dog Risk Assessment

| Coronavirus (COVID-19) | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|---|---|---|
| Awareness of policies and procedures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The owner considers whether it is safe to resume therapy visits or sessions and postpones them where necessary, e.g. if the dogs or their handler is unwell. | 2 | 2 | L | Headteacher Assistant Headteacher All Staff |

| RISK MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT (to be completed by assessor) | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|------------|
| School Dog Risk Assessment | Reference No: | 100 |
| St John's Middle School | Lead Assessor's Name & signature | Phil Berry |
| Alison Elwell - Head of School | AUTHORISING HEAD'S SIGNATURE | |

St John's Middle School Academy –School Dog Risk Assessment

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|---------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Overall Risk Rating = Low | Risk Assessment Date Review Date | 22/09/2025 09/2027 |
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