Penrose Learning Trust

Policy name	**Pet Policy**
Member of Staff Responsible	Head of School
Issue Status/Date	Approved by Academy Committee: Autumn 2026
Review Date	Autumn 2028

Introduction
Research shows children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a suitable, calm dog. In addition, many children simply take great enjoyment from interaction with animals. By having a 'School Dog', we hope the children at Frinton on Sea Primary benefit in a number of specific ways including: -

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

As a 'Therapy Dog', he/she will enable those children who are less confident at reading to have a friendly, audience; as a 'Well-Being Dog' he/she may listen to any little worries and will be a soft cushion to sit alongside. He/she might be taken for walks to calm those pupils who need a bit of space and may be a gentle companion to sooth away any tears. There will, of course, be lots of times when they will simply provide treat time and friendship for those pupils who are always 'Being the Best That They Can Be'.

See Appendix 1 for more details

We have taken advice from Pets as Therapy to gain an insight into the benefits and responsibilities of having a Dog in school.

Is there a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment?
This policy, together with the separate comprehensive risk assessment and advice taken from The Pets as Therapy shows how we have thought very carefully about school life with a dog in school. With very careful management and constant reassessment, there is a very low risk of harm.

Dogs are not allowed anywhere on the school site at any time unless specifically authorised by the Head of School. This includes drop off and collection times. This policy outlines measures put in place to allow the school dog to be present.

Context
- The Academy Trust Members have the right to refuse to allow the dog in school

- The Chair of the Academy Trust and the Academy Members Trust board agree that a school dog will benefit the children and staff of Frinton on Sea Primary School.
- 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 Head of School has been informed beforehand.
- Staff, parents and children have been informed by letter that a dog will be introduced to school.
- Veterinary and insurance costs will be paid by the owner.
- The vast majority of pupils are very keen to have a dog on site; most parents/carers are delighted.
- Where there are any concerns of fears expressed by individuals, a suitable care plan will be set up.
- The risk assessment is reviewed annually or immediately if there is urgent cause for concern.
- Visitors and pupils will be informed of the dog upon arrival.
- The office will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.
- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of her owner

Day-to-day Management

The dog will:

- be kept on a lead when moving around school or on a walk
- will go to the toilet in a specific place either on the school site or away from the site
- be under full supervision of an adult at all times
- have had all required immunisations and treatments prior to joining– and will continue to have the required treatments regularly
- not be allowed in school if unwell

Pupils will:

- be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog every time they meet/work with him/her.
- always remain calm around the dog
- Everyone must wait until the dog is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking him/her.
- Children should be careful to stroke the dog on their body, chest, back, top of the head and not by their face.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
- If the 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 they monitor the situation.
- Children should be gentle and kind – not make sudden movements or try to tease
- Children should always approach the dog standing up

- Children should respect the dog's resting time – not disturb her/him when sleeping or eating
- Children should eat their own food away from the dog – the dog will not be allowed in the dining hall or when children are having milk and fruit
- Children should learn about how dogs express their feelings through their body language.

  Growling or baring of teeth indicates that the dog is feeling angry or threatened. Flattened ears, tail lowered or between their legs, hiding behind the owner, whining or growling are signs that the dog is frightened or nervous. If the dog is displaying any of these warning signs, they should be immediately removed from the situation or environment. Pupils and adults will have lots of ongoing education and reminders about the dog's own needs and how they must be treated.

Health and Safety Principles
Children and adults will always wash their hands after handling the dog.

Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately, disposed of appropriately and sprayed with appropriate disinfectant by the supervising adult. Children must never attempt to do this and will never be asked.

Should a bite or scratch (even playful) occur:

- The wound will be assessed and treated by a first aid trained member of staff and any appropriate medical attention will be sought
- Parents/carers will be contacted immediately
- The dog will be removed from the situation
- A full investigation into the circumstances will be carried out by the Head of School and passed to the Academy Trust Members as necessary
- The suitability of the dog will be re-assessed by the Academy Trust Members

Appendix 1

Behaviour:

In some schools, dogs are making a difference in the behaviour of pupils. 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%. 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 pupils. 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. Additionally, parents reported that children seemed more interested in school as a result of having a dog at school.

Attendance:

Case study: Mandy was a student with poor attendance and truancy. Mandy was encouraged back into school using caring for River, a dog, as an incentive. By telling Mandy that "if she didn't come to school to care for him, he wouldn't get walks, water or love," Mandy came to school almost every day for the rest of the year, only missing two days.

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 student 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 non-judgmental, 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 intra 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. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help pupils build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. With a dog in school, pupils have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report 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.

As a reward:
Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the pupils. Those pupils 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, 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 pupils may 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 pupils 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 pupils they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the students they are spending time with. Pupils who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

APPENDIX A – CURRENT SUPPORT DOG

Chloe, a crossbreed lurcher, who currently comes into school. She has a mild, friendly and playful temperament. She is 9 years old and she has been carefully assessed as a suitable breed for this type of work. When not in school, she lives with Mrs Gooch, a retired teacher as a pet and is responsibly owned and very well cared for.

She receives regular veterinary check-ups and immunisations and will continue to receive her routine treatments and procedures.

Children should be careful to stroke Chloe on her body, chest, back, top of her head and not by her face.

Children should be gentle and kind – not make sudden movements or try to tease