

Therapy Dogs in Academies Arrangement

Owner	Infrastructure
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Date	September 2025
Review Date	September 2026
Location of Publication	Spotlight - Leigh Academies Trust
Document Number	SSoW-LAT048

Document Control

Date	Version No	Brief detail of change
20/03/2023	1.0	1st Draft
08/07/24	1.1	1st issue
02/10/2024	1.2	The Dog Mentor added to further reading
18/09/2025	2.0	Annual Review Changed layout out to align with LAT H&S Arrangements including Section 5 Roles and Responsibilities Added RPA statement regarding insurance

1. Background

Leigh Academies Trust is committed to fostering an optimal learning environment for all students. This commitment extends to ensuring a safe, supportive, and stimulating atmosphere that promotes academic achievement and personal growth.

It is widely recognised that the presence of therapy dogs can offer significant emotional, social, and even educational benefits to students. In particular, interactions with therapy dogs have been shown to positively impact students with special educational needs, those experiencing mental health challenges, or those who may benefit from increased comfort and reduced anxiety within the learning environment. These benefits can include improved mood, reduced stress, enhanced social interactions, and even increased engagement in learning.

In light of these potential advantages, this arrangement has been established to provide a clear framework for the responsible integration of therapy dogs within academies across the LAT. The primary objective of this policy is to ensure the utmost safety and well-being of all members of the academy community – students, staff, and the therapy dogs themselves – while maximising the positive impact that these animals can have. This policy outlines guidelines for the types of dogs permitted, necessary health and temperament assessments, supervision requirements, and protocols for maintaining hygiene and addressing potential allergies or phobias. By adhering to these guidelines, we can ensure that the presence of therapy dogs enriches the academy environment for everyone.

2. Purpose

The purpose of having this arrangement in place for dogs in academies is to ensure the well-being and safety of everyone within the school environment. This includes students, staff, visitors and the dogs themselves. This is crucial for mitigating risk as far as reasonably practicable and creating a positive, safe environment.

3. Scope

This document sets out the policy and process for managing dogs across all LAT academies.

4. Description

Service Dogs: Anyone with a service dog has specific legal rights to access buildings. These rights are based on disability and anti-discrimination laws, such as the Equality Act 2010.

Therapy Dogs: Therapy dogs do not have the same legal public access rights as service dogs. .

Permission: Therapy dogs are permitted in academies only with the permission of the Principal. **Non therapy dogs are not permitted in academies or on their grounds.**

Training and Certification: Therapy dogs that are permitted in academies must be certified as therapy dogs and must have completed a specialised training programme. The certification must be provided by a recognised organisation, and the training programme must be approved by the academy's Principal.

Health and Vaccinations: The therapy dogs must have up-to-date health records, including vaccinations, and must be free of any infectious diseases. All dogs must have up to date worming and flea treatment and be kept groomed, clean and fresh.

Handler: The therapy dog must have a designated handler who is responsible for its care and supervision at all times. The handler must be a trained professional who has experience in working with dogs in an academy setting.

Risk Assessment: A full and detailed risk assessment shall be undertaken and measures put in place to reduce risk regarding the purpose which the therapy dog is being used.

Purpose: Therapy dogs are only permitted in academies for specific purposes, such as providing emotional support to students with special needs or mental health issues. They are not permitted to be **used for any other purposes**.

Supervision: The therapy dog and its handler must be under the constant supervision of the academy's staff during their visit. The handler must ensure that the dog is on a leash or tethered at all times.

Identification: The therapy dog must wear identification tags, indicating its certification and vaccination status.

Consent: Staff, and parents must provide their consent before the therapy dog is permitted to interact with them.

Limitations: The therapy dog's visit to the academy must be limited to a specific time and purpose. It must not interfere with the academy's regular activities or pose any risk to the students or staff.

Dog Behaviours: Should a therapy dog's behaviour or general demeanour negatively change in its attitude towards pupils or staff for any reason, it is at the behest of the Principal, or Academies Director if necessary to immediately cancel the dog attending the academy.

Liability & Insurance:

Owners of therapy dogs must have their own pet insurance

(RPA Cover Helpdesk Top Ten FAQ's) RPA will provide an indemnity if a school is legally liable to pay compensation in the event of third party death/injury or third party property damage caused by an animal that is owned by or under the control of the academy.

The RPA will also provide an indemnity under the Third Party Liability section if a therapy dog is brought into school for educational or therapy/wellbeing reason, causes any third party property damage or injury to a third party (including pupils) to the extent that the school is legally liable to pay compensation or damages to the claimant.

The Employers Liability section will provide an indemnity to the school if the school is legally liable to pay compensation to damages to an employee injured by a therapy dog on school premises in the course of the employee's employment with the school.

The RPA would not provide an indemnity to the individual owner of the animal for their legal liability.

The RPA rules do not exclude damage to the school property caused by the therapy dog but cover for Material Damage claims are subject to the member retention (excess) of £500 per loss reducing to £250 each and every loss for Nursery and Primary schools.

To confirm the RPA would not compensate the school if an animal dies or is stolen, and will not provide cover for vet fees if the animal becomes ill or is injured therefore separate insurance would be required if needed.

5. Roles and responsibilities

Trust duty holder: **Leigh Academies Trust**

Academy duty holder: **Principal**

Principals will;

Appoint a member of academy staff to be responsible and name them on the appropriate curriculum compliance task and ensure insurances are uploaded and up to date.

Have authority to refuse a therapy dog, even if one is in place. (therapy dogs, unlike assistance dogs, don't have special access rights and must be invited onto academy grounds.)

Have the discretion to deny access due to potential risks, staff or student allergies, or a general concern, which must be assessed through this policy.

Owner of a therapy dog will;

Ensure the dog is always in good health, this includes keeping all vaccinations up-to-date, providing regular grooming, flea and worming treatments and scheduling routine vet checks.

Carry out a risk assessment to identify potential hazards such as allergies, phobias, bites and outline the control measures to mitigate them. This must include medical assistance and reporting procedures

Be committed to any ongoing training and socialisation to ensure the therapy dog remained well-behaved and comfortable in a school environment.

6. Compliance

This Arrangement (SSoW-LAT048) outlined above is designed to ensure the safe and responsible use of therapy dogs in LAT academies . It is important to note that this Arrangement may be subject to change, based on new research or circumstances that may arise.

The H&S Compliance team will periodically check to ensure that processes are observed and report any contraventions to the Deputy Director (Compliance) for escalation.

These checks will be in accordance with the baseline audit arrangements.

Further reading;

[The Dog Mentor](#)

[The Dogs Trust](#)

[K Leaders - Dogs in school: guidance and risk assessments](#) login required

[The Kennel Club Bark and Read](#)