



KITE COLLEGE

Kent Inclusive Technical Education

THERAPY DOG POLICY AND RISK ASSESSMENT

Version 1	June 2026	Signature
Authorised Principal:		
Learning & Inclusion Committee		
Next Review Due:	June 2027	

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1. Purpose

This policy sets out the arrangements for the safe, ethical, and effective use of a therapy dog within the college environment. The therapy dog is introduced to support staff and learner wellbeing, emotional regulation, engagement, and positive behaviour.

2. Aims

- Provide a clear framework for the introduction and management of a therapy dog
- Ensure the safety and welfare of learners, staff, visitors, and the dog
- Ensure compliance with safeguarding, health and safety, and insurance requirements
- Promote consistent expectations for interaction with the therapy dog.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All staff
- All learners
- Visitors and volunteers
- The therapy dog and its handler.

4. Definitions

Therapy Dog

A trained dog used to support wellbeing, emotional regulation, and therapeutic interventions.

Handler

The trained adult responsible for the therapy dog at all times.

5. Rationale

The presence of a therapy dog in an educational setting can support:

- Reduced anxiety and improved emotional regulation
- Increased motivation and engagement
- Development of empathy and social skills
- Positive behaviour reinforcement.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Senior Leadership Team

- Approves the use of a therapy dog
- Ensures risk assessments and insurance are in place
- Reviews the policy annually.

6.2 Dog Handler

- Maintains full control of the dog at all times
- Ensures the dog is kept on the lead at all times when moving around the college
- Ensures the dog is healthy, vaccinated, groomed, and not brought to school if unwell
- Ensures the dog has access to water, rest, and a safe space
- Records any incidents or concerns.

6.3 Staff

- Follow the policy and support safe interactions
- Report concerns immediately
- Supervise learners during planned interactions.

6.4 Learners

- Follow behaviour expectations
- Interact with the dog only when invited
- Wash hands after contact.

7. Health and Safety Requirements

- A full risk assessment must be completed and reviewed annually
- The dog must be kept on a lead when moving around the site
- The dog must not enter food-preparation areas
- Learners with allergies, phobias, or immunosuppression must be identified and accommodated
- The dog must not be left unsupervised with learners.

8. Welfare of the Dog

- The dog must have regular rest breaks
- The dog must not be over-handled
- The dog must have a designated quiet area
- The dog must not be exposed to stressful environments.

9. Communication

- Parents/carers will be informed that a therapy dog is on site
- Visitors will be notified where appropriate using posters around the site and in reception
- Information will be included in induction materials.

10. Incident Management

- All incidents must be recorded
- The dog may be temporarily removed if concerns arise
- SLT will review any incident and take appropriate action.

11. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if required.

Risk Assessment

	Assessors name: Sarah Miller	Unique Risk Assessment No: 2
Description of Activity:	Therapy Dog	
Location:	KITE College	
People at Risk:	Staff, Learners and Visitors	
Review date:	April 2026	

H&S Risk Assessment for Therapy Dog	Who is at risk?	Significant Hazards	Control Measures in place to control the risk	Risk Rating (H, M, L)	Date Completed/ Escalated
Hygiene	Learners	Learners coming into contact with dog faeces	Dog walked and toileted in a demarcated area of the college grounds. Faeces removed in poop bags.	L	30/4/26
Hygiene	Learners/ Staff	Contact with dog sick	If the dog is sick, she will not come into college until better. Dog Team to clean up sick wearing gloves, using paper and disinfectant	L	30/4/26
Hygiene	Learners	Stroking/contact with dog and touching mouth or food	Learners appropriately educated on how to manage canine hygiene. Reminded to wash hands by staff supervising the dog. Anti-bacterial gel available in classrooms, offices and staffroom. Establish routines and procedures for learners.	L	30/4/26
Hygiene	Learners/ Staff	Fleas, ticks, worms etc.	Dog regularly wormed and treated for flea prevention.	L	30/4/26

Risk Rating Scale

	Slightly harmful	Harmful	Extremely harmful
Highly unlikely	Trivial risk (Low)	Tolerable risk (Low)	Moderate risk (Medium)
Unlikely	Tolerable risk (Low)	Moderate risk (Medium)	Substantial risk (High)
Likely	Moderate risk (Medium)	Substantial risk (High)	Substantial risk (High)

H&S Risk Assessment for Therapy Dog	Who is at risk?	Significant Hazards	Control Measures in place to control the risk	Risk Rating (H, M, L)	Date Completed/ Escalated
Scratches	Learners Staff	Dog over excited in play or jumping up	Dog kept on lead at all times, outside of the office area. Learners will be taught how and when it is safe to interact with the dog. The dog is supervised by staff at all times. Dog trained not to jump up. Dog interaction: rules/ training taught to all learners and reinforced by other staff.	L	30/4/26

H&S Risk Assessment for Therapy Dog	Who is at risk?	Significant Hazards	Control Measures in place to control the risk	Risk Rating (H, M, L)	Date Completed/ Escalated
Asthmatic/ allergic reaction	Learners Staff Visitors	Allergic reaction after contact with dog	- Parents are given the choice to opt out of close contact with the dog. Medical records used to list learners identified as having an allergy and not to have contact with dogs. Learners wash hands after contact with the dog. - Staff have completed consent forms to highlight any allergies. Dog bedding is regularly washed to reduce dust. Visitors advised the dog is in the office and removed if requested.	L	30/4/26

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H&S Risk Assessment for Therapy Dog	Who is at risk?	Significant Hazards	Control Measures in place to control the risk	Risk Rating (H, M, L)	Date Completed/ Escalated
Dog unwell	Learners	Dog in bad mood	If unwell, dog will not be in college.	L	30/4/26

H&S Risk Assessment for Therapy Dog	Who is at risk?	Significant Hazards	Control Measures in place to control the risk	Risk Rating (H, M, L)	Date Completed/ Escalated
Dog phobia	Learners/ visitors	Distress caused through close proximity to dog	Advise visitors and remove the dog, if necessary. Notice signs in college entrance advising of dog presence and noted on the college website. Staff to supervise the dog at all times and be sensitive to all learners' reactions. Parental consent form to be gained for close contact and training. Parents are offered a programme of support for learners to help overcome aversion.	L	30/4/26

H&S Risk Assessment for Therapy Dog	Who is at risk?	Significant Hazards	Control Measures in place to control the risk	Risk Rating (H, M, L)	Date Completed/ Escalated
Dog bite	Learners/ Staff/ Visitor s	Dog bites someone	Staff regularly monitor the dog's temperament, behaviour and mood. Staff to supervise dog at all times and keep on lead when out around the college. Dog interaction: rules/ training taught to all learners and staff. Dog trained to have no mouth/teeth contact and to respond to commands "wait". If any mouth contact is made, learners withdraw any contact with the dog. Dog undertaken Best Behaviour for Dogs training and completed Junior Assessment.	L	30/4/26

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H&S Risk Assessment for Therapy Dog	Who is at risk?	Significant Hazards	Control Measures in place to control the risk	Risk Rating (H, M, L)	Date Completed/ Escalated
Dog becoming anxious or tired	Dog	Dog gets irritable or distressed	Safe space in the Principal's office for "quiet time". Dog not to be disturbed when in this space. When the dog is sleeping it will not be woken unless an emergency which will be prompted by the Dog Handling Team.	L	30/4/26

H&S Risk Assessment for Therapy Dog	Who is at risk?	Significant Hazards	Control Measures in place to control the risk	Risk Rating (H, M, L)	Date Completed/ Escalated
Dog pulling on lead	Learners/ staff	Someone being pulled over.	Dog will wear a lead when working.	L	30/4/26

H&S Risk Assessment for Therapy Dog	Who is at risk?	Significant Hazards	Control Measures in place to control the risk	Risk Rating (H, M, L)	Date Completed/ Escalated
Dog following basic instructions: Sit, fetch, come etc.	Learners/ Staff/ Dog	Dog following wrong command.	Dog has learned basic commands: "Sit", "Wait", "Down". These are supported by hand signals.	L	30/4/26

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H&S Risk Assessment for Therapy Dog	Who is at risk?	Significant Hazards	Control Measures in place to control the risk	Risk Rating (H, M, L)	Date Completed/ Escalated
Dog mouthing	Learners/ Staff/ Dog	Dog mouthing when taking a treat.	Staff and learners have been educated on “mouthing” as appropriate language.	L	30/4/26

H&S Risk Assessment for Therapy Dog	Who is at risk?	Significant Hazards	Control Measures in place to control the risk	Risk Rating (H, M, L)	Date Completed/ Escalated
Dog’s reactions to learners’ behaviour. Banging doors, pulling hair	Dog/ Learners/ Staff	Dog becoming scared and anxious.	Educating learners how to behave when a dog is on college site. If this happens the dog will be removed to its “safe” area and only reintroduced to the education zone when trust has been re - established.	M	30/4/26

H&S Risk Assessment for Therapy Dog	Who is at risk?	Significant Hazards	Control Measures in place to control the risk	Risk Rating (H, M, L)	Date Completed/ Escalated
Fire Alarm	Dog	Dog being left in the building.	Dog has practiced the fire alarm procedure to become recognised with the alarm sound. Handling Team will be responsible for removing the dog from the building in each area. Dog will be signed in as a member of staff so Fire Marshalls know when she is on site.	L	30/4/26

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