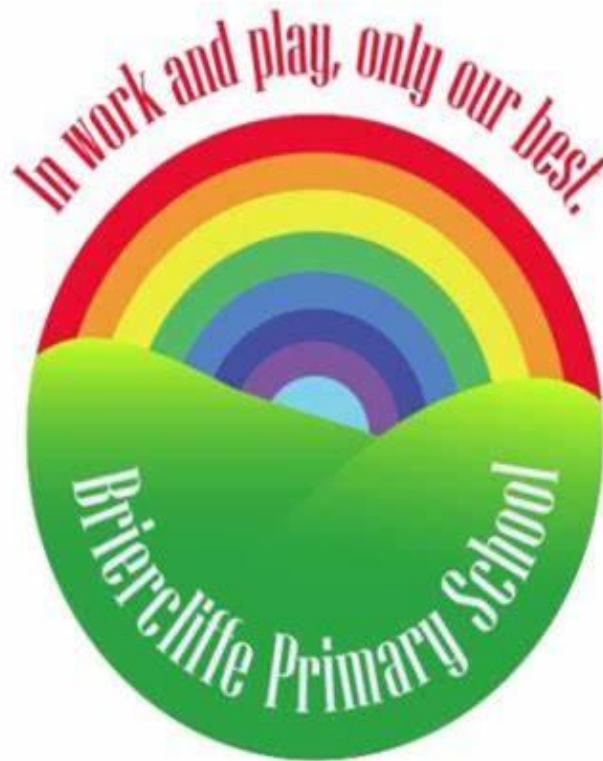


Briercliffe Primary School



School Dog Policy and Risk Assessment

September 2026

Adopted: May 2026

Review Date: September 2027

1. Introduction

At Briercliffe Primary School, we are committed to supporting pupils' wellbeing, engagement in learning, and positive school experiences. As part of this commitment, the school has considered the potential benefits of having a carefully managed school therapy dog present on the premises.

Research and experience from other educational settings suggest that the presence of a calm, well trained therapy dog may:

- Support emotional wellbeing and reduce anxiety.
- Encourage empathy, kindness, and responsibility.
- Improve engagement and motivation.
- Support reading confidence and communication skills.
- Provide structured reward opportunities.
- Assist some pupils with social interaction and emotional regulation.

The school recognises, however, that the presence of a therapy dog in school may not be suitable or comfortable for all members of the community. Some pupils or adults may have allergies, phobias, cultural considerations, or personal preferences regarding therapy dogs.

The safety and wellbeing of pupils, staff and visitors remain the school's highest priority. The introduction of a school therapy dog is therefore supported by:

- A formal risk assessment.
- Governing body approval.
- Clear supervision procedures.
- Regular communication with parents.
- Ongoing monitoring and review.

The school therapy dog will not replace existing safeguarding practices and will operate fully within them.

2. Ownership and Responsibility

The school therapy dog is owned personally by the Headteacher.

However:

- The therapy dog remains the personal responsibility of the Headteacher
- The Governing Body has approved the arrangement.
- Staff are supportive of the school having a therapy dog.
- The arrangement operates under this formal policy.

3. Safeguarding and Health & Safety

- The presence of the school therapy dog operates fully within the school's safeguarding and health and safety procedures.
- All staff are expected to follow this policy.

- In the event of an emergency evacuation the adult supporting Douglas at that time will accompany him to the Fire Evacuation point.

4. Training, Behaviour and Suitability

To ensure suitability:

- The therapy dog will complete professional training appropriate for working around children. This will be completed before the dog enters school.
- Ongoing professional training both in and out of school will take place.
- Ongoing behavioural monitoring will take place.
- The therapy dog must demonstrate calm and predictable behaviour.
- Regular veterinary checks will be maintained.
- Vaccinations, flea treatments and health records will be kept up to date.
- At the start of each academic year there will be a reminder lessons around the school dog.

5. Supervision and Movement Around School

To ensure safety:

- The therapy dog will always be supervised by a designated responsible adult.
- Children will never be left alone with the therapy dog.
- The therapy dog will remain on a lead when moving around the school.
- The therapy dog will not roam freely around corridors or shared areas.
- There will be 3 dog crates in school, one in the HT office, Sunshine Room and the main office. This will allow the therapy dog to always be in a safe and secure environment, whilst not impacting on the day to day work of our school. All adults working in these areas are fully supportive of this decision and are willing to take an active role in supporting the therapy dog and will receive appropriate training.

Off-lead activity:

- Will only take place in a secure, enclosed space.
- Will not be accessible to pupils without supervision.
- Will only occur when it is safe and appropriate to do so.

The school therapy dog is not intended to be present in all areas of the school at all times, and its presence will be carefully managed throughout the school day.

6. Pupils Who Do Not Wish to Be Near the Therapy dog

The school recognises that some pupils may:

- Be apprehensive of the therapy dog.
- Have allergies.
- Have cultural or personal reasons for avoiding therapy dogs.

Any parent who does not want their child to interact with the therapy dog is invited to write to Miss Ramsbottom and inform her of their wishes.

To support these pupils:

- Staff will be informed of pupils who should avoid contact.
- Alternative arrangements will be made where reasonably possible.
- Advance notice may be given when the therapy dog will be present in certain areas.

The comfort and emotional safety of pupils will be prioritised.

7. Allergy and Hygiene Management

To minimise health risks:

- Parents must inform the school of allergies.
- A list of affected pupils will be maintained.
- Handwashing will be required after contact.
- The therapy dog will not enter food preparation areas or dining halls during mealtimes.
- Any fouling will be cleaned immediately by an adult.
- Cleaning procedures will be followed where required.

Individual health plans will be considered where necessary.

8. Pupil Interaction

Interaction with the therapy dog will always be:

- Voluntary
- Structured
- Supervised
- Age appropriate

Children will receive guidance about appropriate behaviour around therapy dogs, including:

- Remaining calm
- Not approaching without permission
- Not disturbing the therapy dog while eating or resting
- Not crowding or surrounding the therapy dog

No child will be required to care for, groom, or walk the therapy dog without structured supervision and risk assessment.

9. Insurance and Liability

The therapy dog owner will maintain:

- Veterinary insurance
- Public liability insurance appropriate to the therapy dog

The school will ensure that appropriate insurance arrangements are in place and documented. Proof of insurance will be available upon request.

10. Incident Management

If an incident occurs:

- First aid procedures will be followed.
- The incident will be recorded.
- Parents will be informed.
- The risk assessment will be reviewed.

11. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed:

- Annually
- Following any incident
- If concerns are raised
- At the request of the Governing Body

Adjustments will be made where necessary to maintain safety and community confidence.

Policy written: March 2026

Adopted: May 2026

Effective from: September 2026

Review Date: September 2027 (or sooner if required)

Responsible Lead: Headteacher

Approved by: Governing Body

Risk Assessment

The risk assessment below is a working document and will be checked annually by key staff and the governing body.

Hazard	Risk	Risk 1 - 5	Controls in place	Review date
Dog getting over excited when interacting with children.	Child knocked to the ground.	1	The dog will always be in the care of a responsible adult and will never be allowed to roam freely around the school premises.	
	Child scratched by dog.	3	Children will not be left unsupervised with the dog.	
	Child bitten by dog.	3	<p>The dog will always be on a lead or carried when she is not in the school office while the children are in school.</p> <p>Pupils have been and will continue to be taught about the consequences of their actions.</p> <p>Education of this nature is continually given to children, and often to the whole school through assemblies and PSHE sessions.</p> <p>Pupils will be taught what to do to prevent the dog from becoming over excited.</p> <p>The dog will undergo formal training with their owner from the age of 8 weeks with an experienced dog trainer. This may also involve other key staff in school.</p> <p>Risk of scratching and biting will reduce, and the risk assessment will be reviewed as she progresses through her weekly training.</p> <p>All staff will have been introduced to the dog and expectations of having a school dog.</p> <p>The dog will attend the vets regularly to ensure she is in good health and that her claws are kept short.</p>	
The dog causing allergies.	Children or staff have allergic reactions	1	Parents have been asked to inform the school of any known allergies before the introduction of the dog to the school.	

			<p>A list of any children/staff who should not interact with the dog will be kept in school and in all 3 offices where there is a dog crate.</p> <p>The children will have the opportunity to interact with the dog as they wish and those with allergies will be able to opt out of interaction.</p> <p>Children will be taught to wash their hands after active participation with the dog.</p>	
Children getting germs from the dog.	Children or staff will contract diseases that can be carried by dogs.	1	<p>Should the dog defecate on the school site a member of staff will clear this up immediately and dispose of it in a safe way. Specific bins will be provided and emptied on a daily basis.</p> <p>He will be trained to toilet in an area of the grounds that children have limited access to. The area will be disinfected as required.</p> <p>All immunisations are kept up to date in accordance with the European Pet Passport Scheme and a record will be kept of this.</p> <p>Flea treatment is carried out at monthly intervals.</p> <p>The dog will not be allowed in the school dining hall at mealtimes; and never in the food preparation area.</p>	
Financial cost of the dog's upkeep.	School unable to afford the ongoing cost of the therapy dog's day to day upkeep or medical bills.	1	<p>The dog is ultimately the responsibility of Miss Ramsbottom, Headteacher, both in a well-being and financial aspect.</p> <p>The Therapy dog will be insured for Public Liability Insurance.</p> <p>All vets' costs are covered by Miss Ramsbottom, Headteacher.</p> <p>'One Paw Before The Other' are providing puppy training and support in school – funded by Miss Ramsbottom.</p>	

KEY: 1- Low risk

2

3 -Medium risk of injury

4

5-High risk of injury