



Bristol Brunel
Academy

Care Dog on Site Policy

Creation Date	4th January 2021
Implementation Date	22nd March 2021
Review Frequency	Annually
Last Reviewed	May 2025
Approval	Full Academy Council
DfE Status	Non-Statutory

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1. History of most recent Policy Changes

Date	Page	Change	Origin of Change Origin of Change (e.g. TU request, Change in Legislation)	Actioned By
4th January 2021	Whole Document	Creation of a new policy	Plans to use a care dog on site	Lou Coles, SENDCO Vic Boynton, Vice Principal
22nd March 2021	Whole Document	Ratification of policy	Plans to use a care dog on site	Academy Council
21st March 2022	Whole Document			Lou Coles, SENDCO Jen Cusack Vice Principal
19th February 2024	Whole Document	Review of Policy		Lou Coles, SENDCO Kelly Jefferies Vice Principal
28th April 2025	Whole Document	Review of Policy		Marius Dan SENCO Kelly Jefferies Vice Principal

2. Equalities Impact Screening

Date of screening: April 2025						
Name of person completing screening: Kelly Jefferies						
	Does this policy have the potential to impact on people in any of the identified groups?		What is the expected impact of this policy on any of the identified groups			Notes
	Yes	No	Positive	Neutral	Negative	
Age		x		x		
Disability	x		x			See below
Gender Reassignment		x		x		
Race or Ethnicity		x		x		
Religion or Belief	x			x		See below
Marriage		x		x		
Pregnancy/ Maternity		x		x		
Sex		x		x		
Sexual Orientation		x		x		
Carers / in-care		x		x		

3. Introduction

Bristol Brunel Academy uses a care dog on site as a planned therapy for specific students with additional needs, which takes place weekly but is dependent on dog availability.

'Care' dogs are often confused with 'therapy' dogs. Care dogs provide animal assisted activity providing care and comfort. A therapy dog requires significant training and provides specific therapy.

There have been many research studies on the benefits of animal assisted activities with children and young people with additional needs. These benefits have been broadly described as; changing power dynamics for the better, increase in comfort levels and positive interactions (Pichot and Coulter, 2006).

Katcher (2000) discovered that 'friendly' dogs were able to calm autistic children. The children he studied would play and talk to the animals and humans when the dog was present during therapy sessions, however when the dog was removed, they would revert to no social contact and stimming such as hand flapping. Autistic children usually have half the amount of oxytocin in their blood compared to other children. Oxytocin is a hormone commonly known to be released in new mothers to strengthen their connection with their new baby. It is a happy hormone which creates social bonds and makes people feel calmer by lowering the heart rate and stress hormones and shutting down the body's fight or flight system. Friendly interactions between dogs and humans result not only in the lowering of blood pressure but causes the levels of Oxytocin to double in both humans and dogs alike. Additionally, in line with a trauma informed schools approach, the benefits of having a dog as suggested by Adame (2009), are that a dog can reduce attachment related stress and can be a catalyst for establishing new social relationships.

4. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to explain the rationale for using a care dog and provide guidance on the remit and safe interactions with the care dog on site.

5. Objectives

There is a body of evidence demonstrating positive effects of children interacting with dogs. The Care Dog at BBA will support students in the following ways:

Dogs teach children about socialisation – Like most of us, dogs are social animals who enjoy and need attention and affection. By learning how to interact with a dog, children can learn how to better socialise with other children. If they can learn the social cues of a dog, then interacting with humans who can talk will be far easier.

Dogs teach children responsibility – Having to remember to feed, provide water and show support for a dog can give children a sense of importance and satisfaction that they can't get from school or other chores. The relationship that develops can be life changing for a child and a great support system as they themselves continue to grow and develop.

Dogs teach children patience – dogs do not always do as they are told first time!

Dogs teach children compassion – just like humans, dogs feel emotion and pain. They are prone to injuries and the infirmities of age during their relatively short lives.

Dogs are fun – Last, but certainly not least, dogs are fun. They greet you with a wagging tail every day and can cheer you up even on your worst day.

It has been proven that working and playing with a dog, improves children's social skills and self-esteem. Many studies have been undertaken that give credit to the benefits to having dogs in schools. Animals in schools can encourage children to respect all life, teach responsibility, motivate children, help calm children and improve engagement and achievement. In addition to this, if children are nervous of dogs, they can be supported in approaching, handling and gaining confidence in managing their fears through the presence of a specially trained care dog in school.

6. Roles and responsibilities

- Academy Council is responsible for monitoring the policy annually.
- The Academy Councillor linked to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) will hold the Academy to account to ensure the policy is implemented.
- The Principal has overall responsibility for the oversight and implementation of the policy.
- The Operations Manager works with the AAP – Learning Support and SENDCO to ensure that health and safety requirements are met and liaises with SKANSKA about the use of the building. The Operations Manager also liaises with the CLF Central Team (Health & Safety, Contracts and Policy Leads) about any changes to the policy or recommendations.
- The AAP – Learning Support and SENDCO reviews and implements the policy. They also ensure that the required safeguarding procedures are followed for the dog handler.
- Bristol Brunel Academy take full responsibility for bringing the care dog on to the BBA site.

7. Data protection implications

The procedures linked to this policy requires some collection and storage of data including permissions for access to care dog therapy and care dog handler details. The Data Protection Policy for Staff and Record Retention Policy will be adhered to during implementation of the policy.

8. Guidelines for interacting with the care dog

The Academy will be using Canine Concern <https://canineconcern.co.uk/> to provide a care dog and volunteer, for which the dog and the handler has been selected in line with their policy and procedures.

The dog will only be on site during pre-arranged times, arranged and agreed with the Canine Concern.

The dog handler will be accompanied by a member of academy staff at all times, even when the handler has a DBS¹ certificate.

Under no circumstances will students have close interaction with the care dog unless the school has permission from parents/carers in advance of the visit. However, students may pass by the dog during transit and may choose to interact with the dog briefly in passing. Such contact is minimized as the care dog and handler will move around the academy avoiding busy times such as lesson change overs, and will be accompanied at all times by a member of BBA staff.

Once permission has been given no student shall be forced into interaction with the care dog if this makes them feel unhappy in any way.

At all times interaction with the care dog must be controlled and safe for adults, children and the care dog itself. If the following guidelines are not followed the interaction with the school dog will be stopped.

At all times of interaction there must be a dog handler who takes the leading role when interacting with the care dog. There is a member of BBA staff in the room at all times. If students, or visitors, do not abide by the guidance given by the dog handler, the interaction will be stopped.

The following guidelines must be followed when interacting with the care dog. These guidelines apply to all adults and students.

- Never enter the care dogs' room without a dog handler.
- Always knock on the care dog's room door and wait for authorisation to enter. Never let yourself in as the dog may not be ready.
- There must always be a dog handler present during all interactions.
- Always approach the care dog calmly (voice and movement).
- Always approach the care dog slowly.
- Never run up to the care dog.
- To start interaction, the back of the hand will be offered for the care dog to sniff.
- Keep noise levels low during interactions with the care dog.
- All interaction must remain calm, with the dog handler staying in control at all times.

¹ DBS – Disclosure and Barring Service

- Only the dog handler can move any of the care dog's resources, including food and treats.
- Students can only handle equipment if the dog handler gives permission.
- Whilst the care dog is new and in training, no one will give the care dog any food or treats, other than the dog handler.
- There must be no interaction with the dog whilst it is eating.
- After all interactions with the care dog, hands must be washed with soap/water or hand gel.
- When interacting with the care dog, all students must remain on their feet or seated calmly in a chair.
- The care dog must always remain on its lead, when outside of its room.
- Parent/carer permission must be given before any interactions can occur.
- No one (including staff, students or visitors) is required to have an interaction with the care dog if they do not want to.
- If the care dog requires the use of outside space, or a planned interaction takes place outside, the dog handler and member of staff will minimise contact between the dog and people who are not involved in the intervention.

9. Risk Assessment

A risk assessment for the on-site visit for the dog has been completed and shared with Bristol City Council and Skanska.

10. Responsibility

Bristol Brunel Academy take full responsibility for bringing the care dog onto site. A waiver agreement is in place with Skanska.

11. Links with other policies and documents

- a. Inclusion/SEND Policy
- b. School Therapy Dog Waiver – Skanska
- c. BBA Care Dog Risk Assessment
- d. CLF Health & Safety Policy and Arrangements
- e. CLF Data Protection Policy for Staff
- f. CLF Record Retention Policy
- g. CLF Safeguarding Policy
- h. Waiver agreement to SKANSKA

12. Monitoring and review

The policy and risk assessment will be reviewed annually by the Academy and Academy Council.