

## **Dogs on School Sites - Health and Safety Guidance for School Leaders**

The NASUWT is aware that a growing number of schools are utilising dogs, other than assistance/guide dogs, on site for a variety of purposes. This guidance purely looks at the health and safety implications of having dogs on site in schools, and is not intended to comment on the perceived educational or other value of having non-assistance dogs on site.

Introducing a dog into the school environment is a significant step, which is potentially fraught with difficulties. It should only be done on the basis of educational benefit.

The presence of non-assistance dogs on site raises a number of health and safety issues that school leaders must consider/have in place **before** the dog is used. This includes a risk assessment that includes control measures for the following. Please note, this is not an exhaustive list:

- 1) That the dog is suitable for the age range of pupils present. This will include:
  - that the dog is appropriately trained;
  - that the dog is used to being in crowded environments; and
  - that the dog is used to being around children of a particular age.
- 2) How the dog should be utilised. This should include:
  - who is responsible for the dog (i.e. who the owner is);
  - what the purpose of the dog is;
  - what activities the dog can and cannot be used for; and
  - the age groups that the dog can be used with.
- 3) The welfare of staff and pupils, including any phobias and/or allergies, is considered. Procedures must be in place so that any individuals with cynophobia and/or an allergy to dogs do not have contact with the dog. In the case of allergies, it is likely that direct contact with the dog is not required, and areas that the dog has been in could trigger an allergic reaction. Contact with dogs can, in some people, trigger an asthma attack, which could be severe and/or life threatening (in these cases, it is highly inadvisable for a dog to be present on the premises). Individual risk assessments may also be required.
- 4) Revised cleaning arrangements for areas that the dog will be present in.

- 5) Revised food safety arrangements, especially as dogs can transmit gastrointestinal diseases.
- 6) Control measures to be put in place to ensure the safety of the individuals in the school, and the dog itself, as well as any specific activities the dog will be undertaking and procedures for sanitary accidents. Appropriate insurance cover is in place.
- 7) That the welfare needs of the dog are met. This should include where the dog rests, where its food and water are located, how the dog can access water, how it is exercised during the day and so on. There should also be procedures for if the dog becomes unwell during the day.
- 8) Clear procedures and responsibilities for cleaning up after the dog. Dog faeces represent a severe risk to human health and must be cleaned up and handled accordingly. This is especially true for any 'accidents' – it should be remembered that parasitic infections, as well as gastrointestinal illnesses such as norovirus and salmonella, can be transmitted from dogs to humans, amongst other diseases.

The risk assessment should be the subject of consultation with union representatives and/or the whole staff and shared with all staff.

In addition to the risk assessment, the following should also be in place:

- 1) Appropriate insurance cover.
- 2) Clear agreement and understanding of whom the dog's legal owner is (a named person, not the school), who is responsible for arranging and the cost of veterinary care, food, insurance, and any sundry items.
- 3) Consultation with parents of pupils.
- 4) A clear procedure is in place should there be an incident with a dog. This should include emergency procedures, reporting procedures (including to parents, should the incident involve a pupil). It should also include procedures should the dog be injured and/or require veterinary attention.

The NASUWT strongly advises that any school leader member considering having a dog on the premises take advice from their Governing Body/Local Authority/Academy Trust/Proprietor as appropriate.

The Dogs Trust has comprehensive guidance on the use of dogs in schools, which is available at: <https://www.learnwithdogstrust.org.uk/school-dogs/school%20dogs%20guide.pdf>.