



# Assistance Animals Protocol

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# Assistance Animals in School Protocols

## **Aims:**

Silverdale School hope that having dogs in school as assistance animals will support the pupils in the following:

- Presenting with regulated and safe behaviours.
- Developing skills in empathy and compassion.
- Taking responsibility for looking after and caring for an animal.
- Accessing an additional strategy to help calm, avoid escalation and to de-escalate when in crisis when appropriate and safe.
- Experiencing having a pet when this is not possible in the home environment.

## **Protocols:**

- The dogs must be on a lead when accessing communal areas.
- The dogs will complete the appropriate training once they have reached the age to access training.
- Dogs will not be directly involved in incidents involving physical restraint but may be on standby to support with recovery.
- SLT will investigate any incidents where either staff, pupils or students or the dogs are hurt.
- The Headteacher and Governor have the final decision about dogs being in school.
- Dog owners must take responsibility for ensuring dogs are moved away from any staff or students who are uncomfortable around dogs.

## **Training to be completed:**

Source: [therapydogtraining.co.uk](http://therapydogtraining.co.uk)

Therapy Dog Workshop 1

How to deliver a safe and effective service- legal considerations, health and safety, insurance etc.

Therapy Dog Workshop 2

Looking out for your dog – the impact of the therapy environment on your dog's health/wellbeing. Considerations and minimum standards.

<b>Mabel:</b>		
<b>Breed:</b>	Working Cocker Spaniel	
<b>Base:</b>	Primary and Middle School May visit Oasis under direct care of the Link Workers	
<b>Areas to be accessed:</b>	All areas <i>(Animals not to access the Cookery class room or Dining Room)</i>	
<b>Activities:</b>	Emotional regulation support Break and lunch times Class based visits Corridor de-escalation Lunch time walks with pupils and students	
<b>Safe Space:</b>	Deputy Head Office, Primary corridor in Langdale building	
<b>Planned days in school:</b>	Wednesday morning, Thursday morning , Friday all day	
<b>Registered Vet:</b>	Moorview Vets	
<b>Vaccinated:</b>	<b>Wormed:</b>	<b>Training status:</b>
Yes	Yes	In training
<b>NB: Specific information relating to vet records for the dog will be provided by the owner on request.</b>		

<b>Jasper:</b>		
<b>Breed:</b>	Staffordshire Bull Terrier	
<b>Base:</b>	Upper School	
<b>Areas to be accessed:</b>	All areas <i>(Animals not to access the Cookery class room or Dining Room)</i>	
<b>Activities:</b>	Outdoor Education Supporting Middle School students Emotional regulation support	
<b>Safe Space:</b>	Middle School	
<b>Planned days in school:</b>	Monday, Wednesday, Thursday	
<b>Registered Vet:</b>	Westway Vets, Howdon	
<b>Vaccinated:</b>	<b>Wormed:</b>	<b>Training status:</b>
Yes	Yes	Training completed - certified
<b>NB: Specific information relating to vet records for the dog will be provided by the owner on request.</b>		

<b>Goose:</b>		
<b>Breed:</b>	Fox Red Labrador	
<b>Base:</b>	Upper School	
<b>Areas to be accessed:</b>	All areas <i>(Animals not to access the Cookery class room or Dining Room)</i>	
<b>Activities:</b>	Outdoor Education Emotional regulation support	
<b>Safe Space:</b>	Outdoor Ed Office	
<b>Planned days in school:</b>	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday	
<b>Registered Vet:</b>	Gilmore Vets	
<b>Vaccinated:</b>	<b>Wormed:</b>	<b>Training status:</b>
Yes	Yes	Pending
<b>NB: Specific information relating to vet records for the dog will be provided by the owner on request.</b>		

<b>Betsy:</b>		
<b>Breed:</b>	Cross Mastiff	
<b>Base:</b>	Learning Centre	
<b>Areas to be accessed:</b>	All areas of the Learning Centre <i>(Animals not to access the Cookery class room or Dining Room)</i>	
<b>Activities:</b>	Outdoor Education Emotional regulation support	
<b>Safe Space:</b>	Staff Room	
<b>Planned days in school:</b>	Monday, Tuesday	
<b>Registered Vet:</b>	Ayes Vets, North Shields	
<b>Vaccinated:</b>	<b>Wormed:</b>	<b>Training status:</b>
Yes	Yes	Pending
<b>NB: Specific information relating to vet records for the dog will be provided by the owner on request.</b>		

<b>Daisy :</b>		
<b>Breed:</b>	Labradoodle	
<b>Base:</b>	Oasis and Learning Centre	
<b>Areas to be accessed:</b>	<i>(Animals not to access the Cookery class room or Dining Room)</i> Off site and Learning Centre	
<b>Activities:</b>	Off site activities Emotional regulation support	
<b>Safe Space:</b>	DT Room	
<b>Planned days in school:</b>	Monday, Thursday, Friday	
<b>Registered Vet:</b>	Vets for Pets	
<b>Vaccinated:</b>	<b>Wormed:</b>	<b>Training status:</b>
Yes	Yes	Pending
<b>NB: Specific information relating to vet records for the dog will be provided by the owner on request.</b>		

## **Assistance Animals Feedback**

### ***Primary and Middle Thrive Practitioner:***

Mabel has been a much welcomed therapy for some of the pupils in the Primary and Middle school departments. The children definitely feel calmer, comforted and happy when they have the opportunity to spend time with her. The children also benefit from exercise and the outdoors when they take her for walk. She not only helps with building the children's confidence but they also have the advantage from being educated on caring for animals. However, having Mabel in school can disrupt certain lessons at time because the children ask to be with her, to address this a timetable has been put in place to rectify this.

In some of our Thrive sessions Mabel has had her photograph taken to be used in art therapy, which has produced some lovely drawings from the children.

### ***Middle School Pupil Views - Pros and Cons to having therapy dogs in schools:***

When speaking to the students of Malham Cove, most of them were in agreement that having therapy dogs in and around school lead to positive outcomes. One child pointed out that when they're sad, spending time with Mabel (Primary's therapy dog) made them feel better. Another child identified that when they're in crisis, sometimes just sitting with a dog makes them feel better.

One concern that has been raised was that not all children like dogs. However, it would be up to the teachers and support staff to identify this, to support the student's needs. You could also argue that if a pupil has a fear of dogs, seeing a dog that is gentle around school can help eliminate that fear.

Another positive of having therapy dogs in school is that it gives pupils a sense of responsibility. Some of the younger children help with feeding time and are respectful when the dogs need a break.

When in lessons, therapy dogs can become a distraction. Therefore, it is arranged with the teacher as to when it is an appropriate time for the therapy dog to visit class. This also gives the pupils an incentive to finish their work so that the dog can visit the class. For any pupils who are not keen on the dog, they have the choice to go the THRIVE, the sensory room, or the play room.

Silverdale have had therapy dogs in school since summer 2021, since then, most pupils have built a relationship with the dogs. Furthermore, to some of the pupils, the dogs are their only friend and therefore this really helps with the wellbeing of a pupil. Something that would be extremely difficult to replace.

### ***Oasis and Middle School Linkworker Views:***

The most common question I get asked in school is 'when are the dogs in school?' or 'why can't we have a dog in all the time?' I have personally seen multiple times where Mabel has helped to calm down children in distress.

Without giving names a young man was deeply distressed and crying, he had shut down and became withdrawn. He came into the room with Mabel, and she immediately went over to him and sat by his side. He threw his arms around her and sobbed. She lay over his knee and he began talking to her. It was fascinating to see how quickly he calmed down and they ended up playing a little fetch in the room. This was one example of many... most of the children in this department love dogs! For a while last year, we had Sully the Outdoor Education dog in the department. He accompanied the children on multiple adventures. Many of the children who were previously less keen to exercise suddenly loved beach walks etc. and loved playing

with the dog. This had a huge positive impact on their fitness and enjoyment of physical activity.

Having Sully in the department also helped with some of the children learning responsibility, such as feeding the dog and getting water for him. One of the girls took this responsibility very seriously and loved caring for the dog as well as enjoying the social times with him. Many of the Year 9 students have started asking about Animal Care as an option to study next year, should we be able to offer this qualification, having dogs around school would be absolutely fantastic!

We have a child who was terrified of dogs (I mean jump on the table terrified of dogs). Little by little over the past few months he has started to tolerate Mabel being around the department. This child is looked after and was offered a home with a family (which will be a great fit) who have a dog. Mabel has been spending time with him and has really helped desensitise his fear of dogs. His initial introductions with the family went well and he is now looking to start his transition moving in with this family. Mabel even gets a hello now as he passes her in the corridor!

Honestly, I could have given you a long list of examples and positive experiences with the school therapy dogs, in short, the children in the department think they are great and love having the calming influence and playtime fun of having a Silverdale furry friend around the building!

#### ***Kinder Scout Primary Teacher and Pupil Views:***

Mabel has made a good addition to Kinder Scout Primary class in the words of the children;

"I like to read to her."

"10/10 would recommend, just tell them that!"

"Mabel helps me when I am sad she makes me feel happy inside."

"She is so soft, I like to stroke her."

"She helps me by her cuteness and makes me feel happy inside."

"10/10 is probably true."

"Having Mabel makes me miss my dog less, when I am at school."

"Mabel is my dog."

During Mabel's time in Kinder Scout she has become a very welcome member of the team, she assists one particular child with his transition into school as he can struggle to enter into the building but on a 'Mabel Day' he knows that she will be in his classroom waiting for him (as per her timetable) . Students in my class also enjoy taking Mabel out at break times to play fetch and will show that they are safe and can make good choices to take Mabel for her lunchtime walk. The children in my class know that they must make our classroom safe for Mabel, this includes tidying, using an indoor voice and soft hands and feet (linking in with the children's personal behaviour targets). One child who was particularly nervous around Mabel to start with now gives her cuddles, reads to her and refers to her as his dog. Mabel also assists with some much needed movement breaks as my class are mostly un-medicated and are awaiting CAMHS assessments.

#### ***KS3/4 Views about Jasper:***

Year 8 pupil - Jasper is nice and I like having him out on Outdoor Ed with us

Year 8 pupil - Jasper is playful and makes me laugh, he is fun to have on Outdoor Ed

Year 8 pupil - It makes me happy; he is a very nice dog.

Year 8 pupil - Jasper is calming on the bus and helps when I feel unsettled.

Year 7 pupil - Jasper keeps me company on Outdoor Ed.

***Pupil comments from Primary and Middle 2023:***

'I like stroking Mabel, it makes me feel calm inside.'

'Mabel makes me feel happy and comfortable.'

'Mabel makes me feel calm inside and relaxed and happy. I like throwing her ball outside.'

'I love seeing Mabel, she makes me happy.'

'She makes me feel happy inside.'

'I love to play outside with her.'

'She makes up happy, keeps us calm and we love having her in school.'

'She's funny, I like to stroke her and give her cuddles.'