LEAFSTUDIO
ACADEMIES OF SPORT & PERFORMING ARTS
Part of United Learning

United Learning
The best in everyone™

Wellbeing Dog in School Policy 2026/27

Version	V0.02
Approval Date	23 January 2026
Approved	Nadine Lapskas, Executive Principal
Lead Reviewer	Nadine Lapskas, Executive Principal
Review Date	January 2027

Contents

1. Introduction 3
2. Overview 4
3. Roles and Responsibilities 4
4. Risk 4
5. Wellbeing Dogs: Information and Procedures 4
6. Reasons to have a dog in school 6
7. Examples of how our School Dogs will support wellbeing 6
8. FAQs 6
9. Appendix A: Risk Assessment 8

1. Introduction

1.1. Statement of Intent

1.1.1. This document details the organisational policy for the provision of wellbeing dogs at LEAF Studio School.

1.1.2. This policy seeks to outline the role of wellbeing dogs in schools and the benefits they provide in enhancing student and staff wellbeing, emotional regulation and a supporting a positive learning environment.

1.2. Audience

This policy is intended for use by all support, teaching staff and management of LEAF Studio.

1.3. Revision History

Issue	Date	Author	Changes
V0.02	22/01/2026	Tim Clark	Updated to reflect that the school has two wellbeing dogs.

2. Overview

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The governing body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in school.

The Executive Principal is responsible for implementing this policy.

Teachers, staff, pupils, parents and visitors are required to abide by this policy.

The curriculum will support learning about dogs and how best to behave around our dogs. This will include highlighting that not all dogs are well trained and that caution must be used around unknown dogs outside school.

4. Risk

Yes, there is. However, it is just another risk that needs to be managed. A thorough risk assessment has been carried out, and this is included in this document (see Appendix 1).

Dogs in general are not allowed anywhere on the school site at any time unless specifically authorised by the Executive Principal or Head of School. This includes drop off and collection times. This policy outlines measures put in place to allow the school dog to be present.

5. Wellbeing Dogs: Information and Procedures

- LEAF Studio has two wellbeing dogs, Buffy and Cooper.
- Buffy will be paid for and owned by Mr Clark with Cooper being paid for and owned by Mr Yeats.
- Both dogs will receive appropriate training to become wellbeing dogs.
- The governors have the right to refuse entry to either of the dogs.
- Only the school dogs are allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the Executive Principal or Head of School has been informed beforehand and has approved this visit.
- Buffy is a Labrador and Cooper is a Golden Retriever, both intelligent breeds that will respond well to training and are known to be good with children.
- The Chair of Governors and the Local Governing Body agree that a school dog will benefit the children and staff of LEAF Studio.
- Staff, parents and children have been informed by letter that dogs will be in school. The risk assessment will be reviewed annually.

- Children, staff and visitors known to have allergic reactions to dogs may choose not to have physical contact with the dogs. All visitors will be informed on arrival that there are dogs in school.
- If either dog is ill, they will not be allowed into school.
- The dog will always be under the full control and supervision of an adult.
- Children must never be left alone with the dogs and there must always be appropriate adult supervision.
- Children should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dogs.
- Children should remain calm around the dogs. They should not make sudden movements and must never stare into a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog. Children should not put their face near either dog and should always approach it standing up.
- Children should never go near or disturb the dogs if they are sleeping or eating.
- Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the dogs.
- If a dog is surrounded by many children, the dog could become nervous or agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that s/he monitors the situation.
- Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or bearing of teeth indicate that the dog is feeling angry or threatened. Flattened ears, tail lowered or between their legs, hiding behind their owner, whining or growling are signs that the dog is frightened or nervous. If either dog is displaying any of these warning signs, then they should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
- Children should not eat close to the dogs.
- Children should be careful to stroke the dogs on their body, chest, back and not by their face or top of head.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling the dogs.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned up immediately by an adult and disposed of appropriately.
- Parents will be informed that they may choose not to permit their children to have access to the dogs.
- Appropriately trained staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dogs.
- The SLT will know the whereabouts of the dogs and which staff are supervising at all times.
- The dogs will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of the SLT.
- If someone reports having an issue with the either dog, this information must be passed to the Executive Principal or Head of School as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by the Executive Principal.
- Public liability insurance has been purchased to cover the dogs in school.

6. Reasons to have a dog in school

In summary, academic research has shown that dogs working and helping in the school environment:

- Benefit children's social and emotional development
- Have a calming effect on pupils, particularly those with behavioural or learning difficulties
- Improve behaviour and concentration, reduced stress and improved self-esteem
- Encourage expression and participation in more withdrawn children
- Foster a sense of responsibility
- Motivate pupils to think and to learn, as children have a high level of natural interest in, enthusiasm for and enjoyment of animals
- Encourage respect and thereby improving pupils' relationships with each other, parents and teachers
- Teach children to nurture and to have respect for life
- Help children build confidence in reading
- Reduce children's anxieties if they have a fear of dogs
- Improve attendance

7. Examples of how our School Dogs will support wellbeing

Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the students. Those students who have performed incredibly well during the week or those who have made progress in a certain subject, or those who have achieved tasks set for them, will be rewarded with spending time during lunch or break to interact with the dogs. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities students will be allowed to undertake. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem.

Wellbeing dogs can work with students on a one-to-one basis and will especially help those students who have been bullied, abused, going through upsetting/difficult times or are even scared/phobic of dogs. The dogs will bring much joy and help to all the students they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the students they are spending time with. Students who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

8. FAQs

Q- Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?

The legal owners of the dogs are Mr Clark and Mr Yeats; they will bear all of the costs associated with owning the dogs.

Q- Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

Yes. The dogs have been specifically chosen for their temperament and both come from reputable breeders.

Q- Will the dog be a distraction?

Buffy will be based in the Pastoral office on the days that she is in school, to support any students who are struggling, whilst Cooper will be based in the main building with Mr Yeats. When moving around school, the dogs will always be escorted by the trained members of staff.

Q- Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

Yes, we have carefully considered having dogs in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that have successfully introduced well-being dogs.

Q- Who is responsible for training?

Mr Clark and Mr Yeats will be the legal owners of the dog and, as a result, will be responsible for arranging their training through the school as needed.

Q- How will the dogs be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?

In the interest of health and hygiene our school dogs will be toileted when taken out for short walks in the grounds, away from the school. The trained staff members will clear this away appropriately as needed, leaving no trace on the ground and cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed. Our policy of no other dogs on site is still applicable as we are unable to put effective control measures in place that guarantee temperament and safety when children come into unsupervised contact with unknown dogs.

Q- How will the dog's welfare be considered?

The dog will be walked before and after school and will also be given free time outside. Parents will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to be able to walk with a member of staff and the dog during that time. This may also be used as a behaviour reward. The dogs will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have unlimited access to water. We will work carefully to ensure the dogs' welfare is always considered.

Q- How will this be managed where children have allergies?

Children will not need to touch the dog, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions.

Q- My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?

Any access to the dogs will be carefully managed and supervised, and children do not need to have close contact with them unless permission for this has been given. We hope to work closely with parents of children who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.

9. Appendix A: Risk Assessment

Title: LEAF Studio School Wellbeing Dogs – Buffy and Cooper	**Date of Assessment:** 22.10.2026
Name of Assessor: Tim Clark – Head of School & DSL	**Annual Review Date:** 22.10.2027
Reason for Risk Assessment: This risk assessment is in place to ensure that the presence of wellbeing dogs in school is managed safely and effectively, in conjunction with the Wellbeing Dogs in School Policy, to maximise the wellbeing benefits while minimising potential risks.	

Possible Hazards	Who is at risk?	What is being done to alleviate the risk?	Further action required
Bites and scratches	• Pupils • Staff • Visitors	• Dogs must have a good temperament and be used to being around students. • Dogs must be well trained not to bite, scratch or jump. • Ensure the dogs do not have any obvious parasites or diseases. • Dogs should not be left unsupervised with students. • Students should be taught how to approach and interact with the dogs. • Dogs to be located in a specific area; movement around the school will be restricted to lesson time.	
Phobias	• Students • Staff	• Contact with the dogs is optional. • Parents are notified that we have wellbeing dogs in school. • Any students known to have phobias will be respected fully in their decision to not interact with the wellbeing dogs.	

		• Support will be given to any students or staff who wish to overcome their aversion, by way of gentle and monitored interactions with the wellbeing dogs.	
Allergies	• Students • Staff • Visitors	• Dogs to be kept clean and well groomed. • Offices to be kept well ventilated. • Regular cleaning of areas used by dogs. • Hand cleansing facilities to be available to all. • Medical records to be held for any pupils identified as having an allergy and not to have contact with the dogs.	
Dog Welfare	• Dogs	• Dogs should be in good health to undertake the role they are required to do. • Owners must ensure that dogs always have access to fresh drinking water. • Dogs should have access to a quiet, safe and comfortable place to rest. • Dogs must be given the opportunity to toilet when required, in an appropriate place and adults to clean up the disinfect where necessary. • If a dog shows signs of fatigue, distress, anxiety or discomfort, they must be taken out the of the situation until the stress has been identified and addressed. • Dogs must always be kept on leads when outside of office areas, apart from free play under direct supervision.	

		• Dogs must be reassessed regularly to confirm they are in good health, both physically and emotionally and have the correct temperament to continue working. • The owner is responsible for ensure the health and wellbeing of their dog at all times.	