



School Dog Mentor Policy

Status	Current Policy
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Agreed by the Governors	March 2026
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Review Cycle	Annual
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Next Review	March 2027
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Lead Staff	Lucy Taylor
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Chair of Governing Body	Alex Krutnik
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Headteacher Signed	Jane Hatwell
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Vision and Values

Our school vision is to provide an *outstanding, nurturing, learning environment*, where all our pupils can achieve their full potential and progress to lead happy and fulfilling lives.

Our mission is to provide each and every pupil with the best possible education, delivered in an environment that is supportive, caring and safe.

“Getting it right for every pupil”

At Stone Bay we focus on *Evolving Excellence* in all that we do, working towards making our school the best it can be for pupils, staff and families. We are creating lasting *Trust* with all our stakeholders, *Empowering* each other to learn and grow. By adhering to policies and clear processes we ensure *Fairness* and transparency in our decision making and actions, whilst ensuring we are *Collaborating* with others and always looking for ways to help each other to deliver excellence for our pupils.

Rights Respecting Schools

The Unicef UK Rights Respecting School Award (RRSA) is based on principles of equality, dignity, respect, non-discrimination and participation. The RRSA seeks to put the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at the heart of a school’s ethos and culture to improve well-being and develop every child’s talents and abilities to their full potential. A Rights Respecting School is a community where children’s rights are learned, taught, practised, respected, protected and promoted.

Stone Bay has been awarded the Silver Award by UNICEF. This is awarded to UK to schools that show good progress towards embedding children’s rights in the school’s policy, practice and ethos, as outlined in the RRSA Strands and Outcomes

Staff Wellbeing

The Leadership Team and the Governing Board of Stone Bay School are committed to promoting positive mental, physical and emotional wellbeing and to providing suitable support for all staff. Taking action to prevent ill health and promote good health makes good educational and business sense, as sickness absence carries high costs both in monetary terms and in terms of the impact upon performance, teaching and learning, morale and productivity, which may disrupt or compromise pupil progress.

All members of staff are entitled to be treated fairly and professionally at all times. The Governing Board of Stone Bay School takes very seriously its duty of care as an employer to all members of staff and a number of policies and procedures have been made in relation to this duty.

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Part A: Policy

1. Policy Statement

This policy sets out the framework for the safe, effective and ethical implementation of The Dog Mentor Programme within school. The policy ensures that the wellbeing of pupils, staff, visitors and the dog is prioritised at all times.

This policy must be approved by the Governing Body prior to the introduction of The Dog Mentor Programme and will be reviewed annually.

This policy is informed by guidance from The Dog Mentor Programme and adapted to reflect the context and needs of Stone Bay School.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all pupils, staff, governors, visitors and contractors while on the school site.

Dogs are not permitted on the school site at any time unless explicitly authorised by the Headteacher. This includes drop-off and collection times. This policy outlines the specific arrangements that allow an authorised Dog Mentor to be present.

3. Adoption Arrangements and Review

This policy is adopted by the Governing Body and will be reviewed annually, or sooner if required.

4. Rationale

The Dog Mentor Programme is a UK-based, regulated programme underpinned by academic research. Evidence demonstrates positive impact on attendance, wellbeing, behaviour and progress for children and young people.

Pupils and staff benefit educationally and emotionally through structured interaction with a trained dog, developing empathy, responsibility and emotional regulation.

While the presence of a dog introduces risk, this is comparable to many other risks routinely managed within a school environment. Governors are responsible for ensuring that appropriate risk assessments are in place and that guidance from The Dog Mentor Programme is followed.

At the heart of The Dog Mentor Programme is a belief in the power of connection. Strong, trusting relationships are the foundation for emotional wellbeing, learning and personal growth. The programme prioritises emotional regulation, resilience and calm responses to challenge, supported by a trained dog acting as a therapeutic presence.

The Dog Mentor Programme is a structured, evidence-informed intervention with measurable outcomes. It is rooted in inclusion, ensuring that all pupils – including those with SEND, SEMH needs or at risk of disengagement – can access appropriate support. Pupil voice, open communication and progress tracking through behaviour logs, attendance data and wellbeing observations are integral to the programme.

The safety and welfare of both pupils and dogs are central to all aspects of delivery.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Body

Ensures a written policy is in place and that appropriate oversight and approval is given.

Head of School

Responsible for implementation, risk assessment, monitoring and responding to concerns.

Staff, Pupils, Parents and Visitors

Must comply with this policy at all times.

Part B: Procedures and Safeguarding Measures

6. School Commitment and Conditions of Access

The school commits to the following:

- The dog will be owned by a member of staff.
- Only a trained Dog Mentor is permitted on site.
- The dog has been selected for temperament, sociability and suitability for working with children.
- The dog will wear identifiable uniform while working.
- A timetable will be in place for sessions in school.
- Parents, staff, pupils and governors will be informed prior to implementation.
- A risk assessment will be completed and reviewed annually.
- Visitors will be informed on arrival that a dog is on site.
- The dog will not attend school when unwell.

7. Behaviour Expectations Around the Dog

- The dog must be supervised by a trained adult handler at all times.
- Children must never be left alone with the dog.
- Pupils will be taught appropriate behaviour around the dog.
- Pupils must remain calm and not disturb the dog when sleeping or eating.
- Rough play is not permitted.
- The handler will monitor situations where large numbers of pupils are present.
- Warning signs in dog behaviour will result in immediate removal from the situation.

8. Health, Safety and Welfare

- Pupils and staff with allergies will not have contact with the dog.
- Children should not eat near the dog.
- Pupils should stroke the dog appropriately (body, chest, back).
- Hands must be washed after contact.
- Any fouling will be cleaned immediately and disposed of safely.
- The dog will be included in fire evacuation and lockdown procedures.

9. Risk Assessment and Incident Management

Any concerns or incidents must be reported immediately to the Headteacher. All concerns will be responded to promptly.

Part C: Additional Information

10. Curriculum and Intervention Use

The curriculum will include learning about dogs, safe behaviour around animals and recognising that not all dogs outside school are trained.

The Dog Mentor may be used for: - Emotional regulation and wellbeing support - Attendance and engagement incentives - Behaviour and social skills development - Reading and curriculum interventions.

11. Monitoring, Evaluation and Record Keeping

Appropriately trained staff will maintain records of sessions, progress and impact using behaviour logs, attendance data and wellbeing observations.

Appendix 1: Benefits of a School Dog

Research indicates that dogs in schools can:

1. Improve attendance
2. Improve academic achievement
3. Increase literacy skills
4. Promote calm behaviour
5. Improve social skills and self-esteem
6. Increase confidence
7. Teach responsibility and respect
8. Reduce truancy
9. Motivate disengaged learners

Appendix 2: Frequently Asked Questions

Who owns the dog?

The dog is owned by a member of staff. Ownership costs are the responsibility of the owner; training and insurance may be supported by the school.

Is the dog trained?

Yes. The dog and handlers are trained and assessed through The Dog Mentor Programme.

How are allergies and fears managed?

Access is carefully managed, and reasonable adjustments are made in consultation with parents.

Has a risk assessment been completed?

Yes. A full risk assessment has been undertaken and is reviewed annually.