



Adopted and approved by governors	19.03.2026
Policy's next review date	19.03.2029
Headteacher	Mrs Reynecke-Raybould
Dog Handler	Mrs Reynecke-Raybould
Chair of Governors	Rev. Brenda Brundritt
Dog's name and breed	Jaffle Winston Reynecke-Raybould – Miniature Dachshund
Chair of Governors' Signature	

1. Purpose and Scope

This policy sets out the framework for the safe, ethical, and beneficial integration of Jaffle Winston, our school dog, into the daily life of our school. It applies to all staff, pupils, governors, volunteers, and visitors.

The policy has been developed in response to growing evidence of the benefits of therapy and school dogs in educational settings, and reflects our commitment to the holistic wellbeing, emotional development, and academic engagement of every child in our care.

2. Rationale and Benefits

Research from the University of Lincoln, Bath Spa University, the British Psychological Society, and the Chartered College of Teaching consistently demonstrates that well-managed school dogs can:

- Reduce stress and anxiety levels in pupils and staff
- Improve reading confidence and motivation through structured reading dog programmes
- Promote empathy, emotional intelligence, and social skills
- Support emotional regulation during potentially stressful academic activities
- Increase engagement and attendance for pupils who find school challenging
- Provide a calming, nurturing presence that supports pupils with SEND or emotional vulnerabilities

We are committed to realising these benefits whilst maintaining the highest standards of safeguarding, health and safety, and animal welfare.

3. About Jaffle Winston

Jaffle Winston is a Miniature Dachshund who joined our school community in January 2025. He is owned by and lives with the Headteacher, Mrs Reynecke-Raybould.

Jaffle is on a structured training journey, which includes:

- Socialisation training (commenced January 2025 – ongoing)
- Continued puppy and basic obedience training
- Reading dog programme training
- Future goal: formal therapy dog certification

Until Jaffle holds an appropriate formal qualification, he will be treated as a school dog in training and all interactions with pupils will be supervised, structured, and voluntary.



4. The Reading Programme

One of Jaffle's most important roles is serving as a reading companion. During break and lunch times, children have the opportunity to visit Jaffle in the Headteacher's office and read to him. This is entirely voluntary. From September 2026 the school operates an opt-out arrangement: a pupil may take part unless their parent or carer has told the school that they would rather they did not. Families are written to each September, and families of new and mid-year admissions are asked directly at induction. No reason for opting out is required and none will be sought, and a family may change their decision at any point in the year.

4.1 How the Programme Works

- Sessions take place during break and lunch times in the Headteacher's office
- No more than four pupils are with Jaffle at any one time
- Opt-out decisions are recorded centrally and shared with all staff running sessions; the session register is checked against the opt-out list each half term
- Participation is entirely voluntary – no pupil is ever required to take part
- Jaffle provides a non-judgemental, calming audience – he never reacts to pronunciation errors or reading speed
- Children who feel anxious reading to adults or peers often find confidence reading to Jaffle
- Pupils with severe allergies are offered equivalent alternative reading activities if they want to read to staff/headteacher
- All sessions are supervised by a responsible adult at all times (handler/headteacher)

4.2 Recognition and Rewards

Every child receives a written comment in their reading records with a 'Jaffle' sticker. Additionally, each Friday during Celebration Assembly, selected pupils who have shown dedication to reading with Jaffle are awarded the "Pawsome Reader" certificate. This may be given to an individual or a group. Recipients also have their photograph featured in the weekly school newsletter and are celebrated on the school website. For those children who have consent, a picture might sporadically appear on our social media as well.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 The Headteacher (Lead Handler)

- Takes overall responsibility for Jaffle's welfare, training, and conduct in school
- Ensures this policy is implemented and monitored, and reviewed every 3 years; ensures the associated risk assessment is reviewed annually
- Maintains Jaffle's vaccination, health, and grooming records
- Liaises with parents, staff, and governors regarding any concerns
- Ensures Jaffle is only present when fit, calm, and well

5.2 All Staff

- Familiarise themselves with this policy and the associated risk assessment
- Report any concerns regarding Jaffle's behaviour or welfare to the Headteacher immediately
- Never leave Jaffle unsupervised with pupils
- Respect dog-free zones and the needs of pupils with allergies or animal fears
- Support pupils in understanding appropriate behaviour around Jaffle

5.3 Governors

- Approved the initial risk assessment on 5th December 2024, and approve the risk assessment annually thereafter

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- Receive a report on the operation of this policy every three years (through staff/parent/pupil survey)
- Ensure the policy aligns with the school's wider safeguarding and health and safety frameworks

5.4 Parents and Carers

- Notify the school of any known allergies, phobias, or other concerns relating to dogs
- Tell the school if they would prefer their child not to take part in reading sessions with Jaffle, at any point in the year
- Keep the school informed of any changes to their child's health or comfort levels
- Support the school's approach by reinforcing appropriate dog behaviour with their children at home

6. Safeguarding and Child Protection

The safety and wellbeing of our pupils is our highest priority. The following principles apply at all times:

- Jaffle will NEVER be alone with a pupil or group of pupils without a responsible adult present
- All interactions between Jaffle and pupils will be voluntary – no child will ever be pressured or required to interact with him
- Jaffle will not be used in any situation that could cause distress to a vulnerable child
- Any incident involving Jaffle (including scratches, nips, or distress to a pupil) will be recorded and reported in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures
- Parents/carers will be informed promptly of any incident involving their child

7. Health and Safety

7.1 Risk Assessment

A comprehensive risk assessment was completed prior to Jaffle's introduction and was approved by the governing body on 5th December 2024. The risk assessment is reviewed:

- Annually, and approved by the governing body
- Following any incident involving Jaffle
- Following any significant change in circumstances (e.g. change in Jaffle's health, behaviour or training status)

The risk assessment is available to any parent, carer, or member of staff upon request.

7.2 Jaffle's Presence in School

- Jaffle is present in school four days per week, increasing or decreasing as the risk assessment and his welfare require (this could be adjusted on a weekly basis if and when required)
- He will always be accompanied by his designated adult handler
- He will never be allowed to roam freely around the school premises
- Jaffle's home base during school days is the Headteacher's office, where he has his own bed, toys, and a comfortable resting space. He will not roam beyond designated areas when not engaged in structured activities
- Jaffle will not be brought into school if he is unwell, injured, or showing any signs of stress or aggression

7.3 Vaccination, Health, and Grooming

- Jaffle's vaccinations, flea and worm treatments, and annual health checks are kept up to date and records are held by the Headteacher
- Jaffle receives regular hypoallergenic grooming treatments to minimise allergen shedding
- The school has purchased a dedicated air purification system to reduce dog dander in areas where Jaffle is present (headteacher's office)

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- Enhanced cleaning protocols are in place across all school areas, with particular attention to surfaces and soft furnishings in areas Jaffle visits

7.4 Pupil Conduct around Jaffle

All pupils will be taught the following behaviours as part of their introduction to Jaffle:

- Always ask permission before approaching or touching Jaffle
- Approach calmly and quietly – no running or loud noises near Jaffle
- Do not disturb Jaffle when he is eating, sleeping, or in his resting area
- Do not put faces close to Jaffle's face
- Wash hands before and after handling Jaffle;
- Staff will reinforce these expectations consistently.

8. Pupils and Staff with Allergies or Animal-Related Fears

8.1 Our Commitment

We are wholly committed to ensuring that no pupil or member of staff is disadvantaged, distressed, or put at risk by the presence of Jaffle. The following provisions are in place:

8.2 Dog-Free Zones

The following areas are designated as permanent dog-free zones:

- All classrooms (unless a specific, agreed session is taking place with appropriate safeguards)
- Dining areas (while these are in use – Jaffle might walk through the hall at times but not during dining times)
- The library
- The learning zone / IT suite
- Any other area designated by the Headteacher following consultation with affected families

8.3 Individual Protocols

Where a pupil or member of staff has a known allergy or animal-related fear or phobia, the school will:

- Contact the family or individual directly to discuss a personalised plan
- Review the child's specific allergy or fear profile and incorporate this into the risk assessment
- Create strictly monitored boundaries to ensure no direct contact occurs unless the family expressly requests otherwise
- Provide advance notice of any planned sessions or activities involving Jaffle
- Ensure a named, trusted member of staff is always available to provide immediate reassurance
- Review the plan regularly and update it in response to any changes

8.4 Medical Preparedness

- Emergency protocols are in place for any unexpected allergic reaction, including access to relevant medication in accordance with the pupil's individual healthcare plan
- All relevant staff are briefed on the needs of individual pupils
- Parents/carers are asked to provide any medical documentation that may help refine the school's approach

9. Animal Welfare

Jaffle's physical and emotional welfare is of paramount importance. The school (headteacher) is committed to:

- Ensuring Jaffle always has access to fresh water and is fed appropriately
- Providing a quiet, comfortable, and safe resting space within the school

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- Limiting the length of time Jaffle is engaged in structured activities so he is not over-stimulated or fatigued
- Ensuring that all interactions are positive and that Jaffle can withdraw from situations if he shows signs of stress
- Recognising the signs of stress in dogs (yawning, lip-licking, ears back, tail tucked, growling) and responding by removing Jaffle from the situation immediately
- Allowing Jaffle to attend all necessary veterinary appointments without restriction

The Headteacher, as Jaffle's owner and handler, holds primary responsibility for his welfare.

10. Insurance and Legal Requirements

- Jaffle Winston is covered by personal pet insurance. The insurer has been informed of and has acknowledged that Jaffle regularly attends his owner's place of work; this arrangement is confirmed as covered under the policy. Insurance documentation is held by the Headteacher and is available for inspection upon request
- The school's own public liability insurance has been reviewed to confirm that the presence of a school dog is covered
- This policy operates within the school's broader health and safety, safeguarding, and risk management frameworks
- The school complies with all relevant legislation including the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, the Animal Welfare Act 2006, and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

11. Communication with Families

We are committed to open, transparent, and sensitive communication with all families. This includes:

- Writing to all families before Jaffle's introduction, as completed in December 2024
- Writing individually and confidentially to families of children with known allergies or animal-related fears, as completed in December 2024
- Making this policy and the associated risk assessment available to any parent or carer upon request
- Providing termly updates during the initial integration period
- Contacting families immediately in the event of any incident involving their child
- Welcoming ongoing feedback and treating all concerns with care and respect

Parents or carers with questions or concerns are encouraged to contact the Headteacher directly at any time.

12. Monitoring, Review, and Complaints

12.1 Monitoring

The Headteacher will monitor the operation of this policy on an ongoing basis and will maintain a log of:

- Any incidents involving Jaffle
- Any concerns raised by parents, carers, or staff
- Jaffle's health, training progress, and vaccination records

12.2 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years by the Headteacher and governing body. The associated risk assessment is reviewed annually, on a separate cycle. Either will be reviewed sooner if:

- An incident occurs that requires the policy to be updated
- There is a significant change in Jaffle's health, behaviour, or training status
- Relevant legislation or statutory guidance changes

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- The needs of the school community change

12.3 Complaints

Any parent, carer, or member of staff who has a concern about the operation of this policy should raise it with the Headteacher in the first instance. If the concern cannot be resolved informally, it will be addressed through the school's formal complaints procedure.

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Appendix A – Signs of Stress in Dogs

All staff should be aware of the following signs that a dog may be feeling stressed or uncomfortable, and should remove Jaffle from the situation immediately if these are observed:

- Yawning (when not tired)
- Lip-licking or excessive drooling
- Ears pinned back against the head
- Tail tucked under the body
- Crouching low to the ground
- Whites of the eyes visible (whale eye)
- Growling, snapping, or showing teeth
- Turning away or attempting to leave a situation
- Panting heavily when not hot or thirsty

If in doubt, remove Jaffle from the situation and seek guidance from the Headteacher.

Appendix B – Quick Reference: Dog-Free Zones

Dog-Free Zone	Notes
All classrooms	Unless a specific agreed session is in place
Dining areas / hall	At all times, including lunch and snack time
Library	Dog-free zone
IT suite / learning zone	Dog-free zone
Any area designated by Headteacher	Following consultation with affected families

Appendix C – Amendment Record

This policy was adopted on 19th March 2026. The following amendments were made and approved by the Full Governing Body in October 2026. The next full review date is unchanged at 19th March 2029.

- Section 4 – reading programme consent changed from written opt-in consent to an opt-out arrangement, with annual written notice to all families and direct enquiry at induction for new admissions
- Section 4.1 – a maximum of four pupils with Jaffle at any one time, and a half-termly check of the session register against the opt-out list
- Sections 5.1, 5.3, 7.1 and 12.2 – the risk assessment moves to an annual review and annual governor approval, on a separate cycle from the three-yearly policy review
- Section 5.4 – parents and carers asked to tell the school at any point in the year if they would prefer their child not to take part