

School Dog Policy

SLIMBRIDGE PRIMARY SCHOOL



Approved by:	Full Governing Board	Date: December 2025
Last reviewed on:	November 2025	
Next review due by:	December 2027	
Reviewed by:	Lisa Hillman (Headteacher)	

Contents

Slimbridge Primary School Dog Policy: Holly, the Therapy Dog	2
Introduction	2
Purpose	3
Holly's Training and Qualifications	3
Responsibilities of the Dog Handler	3
Guidelines for Holly's Presence and Interactions	3
No Other Dogs Allowed on School Site	4
Reporting Issues or Concerns	4
Review and Revision	4
Holly the Golden Labrador Factfile	4

Slimbridge Primary School Dog Policy: Holly, the Therapy Dog in Training

Introduction

Slimbridge Primary School is excited to introduce Holly, our beloved therapy dog, who passed her Therapy dog assessment in October 2025 to be a registered Pets as Therapy Dog. Holly provides emotional support and assistance to our students and staff. Holly has undergone specialised training to become a therapy dog, and her presence contributes positively to our school community. Holly also visits local nursing homes to provide support for the elderly in our community.

This policy outlines the guidelines and expectations for having Holly at our school, as well as the prohibition of other dogs on the school premises, in compliance with GCC (Gloucestershire County Council) rules.



Purpose

The purpose of having Holly, the therapy dog at Slimbridge Primary School is to enhance the well-being and educational experience of our students and staff. Holly's presence helps reduce anxiety, improves emotional resilience, and provides comfort and companionship to those in need. This policy ensures that Holly's activities align with our school's mission and values while maintaining a safe and inclusive environment.

Holly's Training and Qualifications

Holly has undergone comprehensive training to become a certified therapy dog. She has learnt the necessary skills, behaviors, and socialisation techniques required to interact effectively and safely with individuals of all ages, including children and those with specific needs or allergies. Holly's training includes obedience training, therapy dog protocols, and appropriate health screenings to ensure her well-being and safety.

Responsibilities of the Dog Handler

Holly belongs to Mrs Hillman, the headteacher, and she is known as 'the dog handler'. Mrs Hillman is responsible for Holly's well-being and day-to-day care. As the dog handler, she also ensures that Holly is always properly supervised, maintains her health records, and manages her interactions with students and staff. Mrs Hillman is also responsible for ensuring that Holly's behaviour and conduct align with the highest standards of safety and professionalism. The school also has a risk assessment for Holly, which is available on request.

Guidelines for Holly's Presence and Interactions

a. Training Sessions: Holly's training sessions continue to take place throughout the school day, when appropriate. Children learn to walk her on her lead and teach her to chase after a ball and drop it. This encourages pupils to turn take and to wait patiently for their turn to care for Holly.

b. Controlled Interactions: Holly has completed her training. Her interactions with students and staff are supervised and controlled. These interactions may be limited to certain individuals, small groups, or specific activities as arranged by teachers or approved by the school. Holly will be walked on a lead at lunch-time or play-time in a controlled manner but she is also allowed to run free at less busy times. For instance, the children enjoy throwing a ball to her and she likes to run after it and bring it back to each child in turn.

c. Parental Consent: The school allows parents or guardians to make informed decisions regarding their child's involvement and can choose to decline interaction. Parents should notify the school of any allergies or fears of dogs on signing our Home School Agreement. This forms permission to be involved in day-to-day interactions with Holly the Dog.

d. Staff Engagement: Holly's presence is also intended to provide support and companionship to school staff. Staff members are welcome to seek comfort from Holly during their breaks or when needed.

e. Allergies and Phobias: Students and staff with known allergies or phobias related to dogs should inform the school administration or the headteacher and all due consideration will be taken to avoid contact. Accommodation will be made to ensure their comfort and well-being without compromising Holly's presence at the school.

No Other Dogs Allowed on School Site

In compliance with GCC rules and to maintain the safety and focus on Holly providing emotional support for pupils and staff, no other dogs, apart from Holly, are allowed on the school premises at any time. This includes the school buildings, playgrounds, and surrounding areas. This rule applies to students, parents, staff, and visitors alike, unless with the express permission of the headteacher.

Reporting Issues or Concerns

Any concerns or issues related to Holly's behavior, her presence on the school premises, or interactions with students or staff should be reported immediately to the school administration or the headteacher. All reports will be taken seriously and addressed promptly to ensure a safe and positive environment for everyone.

Review and Revision

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with relevant regulations. Any necessary revisions will be made to address emerging needs and maintain the highest standards in promoting a positive school environment.

By adhering to this policy, Slimbridge Primary School aims to provide a supportive and inclusive atmosphere for students, staff, and the ongoing training of Holly as a therapy dog.

Holly the Labrador Retriever Factfile

Name: Holly

Breed: Labrador Retriever

Age: 3 years old

Gender: Female

Appearance:

Holly is a charming Labrador retriever with soft, golden fur and angel wing markings. Her adorable face is highlighted by expressive, round eyes that sparkle with warmth and friendliness. Holly has a wagging tail that never stops showing her excitement and joy.

Personality:

Holly is a playful and friendly dog. She loves to interact with people, especially children. She is known for her gentle nature and eagerness to make new friends. Holly is always ready for a fun game of fetch or a belly rub. She has a knack for bringing smiles to everyone's faces with her boundless energy and happy disposition.

Training:

As a 3 year old golden Labrador retriever, Holly has achieved her therapy dog training accreditation and has a certified Pets as Therapy number. She is a quick learner and always eager to please.

Special Skills:

Holly provides comfort and support to those around her. Her friendly and affectionate nature make her well-suited for therapy work. Holly enjoys spending time with children, having a ball thrown to her and offering cuddles and a listening ear when times prove challenging. Holly has already successfully helped reception children integrate into school and has helped provide a listening ear when children want to talk about their worries and anxieties but won't necessarily talk to an adult. Holly is loving and kind and enjoys having stories read to her.

Favorite Activities:

Holly loves going for walks in the park, where she can explore and sniff all the interesting scents. She also enjoys playing fetch, chasing after balls, and playing with her favourite teddy bears, Winnie the pooh and Panda. Holly adores being around children, as their laughter and playfulness bring her great joy. Keep all of your soft 'cuddlies' away from her though as she likes to carry these back to her bed!

Note: Holly's factfile reflects her current age and stage of training. As she continues to grow and develop, her abilities and skills may change.

