

## Dogs in School - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Questions and concerns are inevitable when it comes to introducing a new and perhaps perceived radical programme into a school.

Most frequently asked questions relate to the following areas:

- Legal Implications and Liability
- Allergic Reactions
- Risk Management



The reality is that all of these objections can be adequately mitigated when schools do their homework, prepare teachers and students properly, communicate clearly with parents, and work with qualified and competent therapy dog organisations like The Dog Mentor.

By comparison, numerous health centers such as hospitals are using therapy dogs and their requirements may be even more demanding.

### Legal liability

The Dog Mentor is fully insured to work with dogs as a therapy medium with full Public Liability and Professional Indemnity insurance coverage up to £2,000,000.

### Allergic reactions

Parents and educators may be concerned about potential allergic reactions to dogs within the school environment. The Dog Mentor ensure full cleanliness and grooming requirements minimizing allergic contact. Students with parental consent voluntarily participate in the dog mentor programme thus avoiding risky contact. Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog. All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school.

### Risk Management

- **Supervision** - The Dog Mentor will supervise the dog at all times, children will not be left alone with the dog. The dog will be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of the trained Dog Mentor.
- **Animal maintenance** - The Dog Mentor requires regular veterinarian checks for their dogs along with regular evaluations of their handlers to maintain their certification status. The Dog Mentor handlers are trained to watch for potential harm to either a child or their own dog and are primarily responsible to manage the animal when on site.
- **Hygiene** - In the interest of health and hygiene The Dog Mentor will ensure the dog is toileted when taken out for short walks in the grounds. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed.
- **Fear of dogs** – Some children have a fear of dogs, these fears may be based on prior negative interactions or from parents warnings to be careful around dogs which instils an emotional response of anxiety. The Dog Mentor programme is implemented by permission or voluntarily, and only in areas where unwanted contact with a dog can be avoided, the fear issue can be minimized. Experience and research has also shown that with proper guidance and handling, children can learn to overcome their fear of animals and with it, grow in respect and appreciation of them.