

Hounsome Fields PRIMARY SCHOOL

SCHOOL DOG POLICY

2025-2027



Date of Approval:	July 2025
Date of Next Review:	July 2027

1. Introduction

Research has shown many benefits to therapy and reading dogs in school settings. Hounsome Fields Primary School have embedded a school dog into the emotional well-being provision at school. The well-being dog works with our children to improve reading, behaviour and wellbeing. This policy is designed to set out to children, parents and visitors the reasons for having a school dog, and visiting therapy dogs, at Hounsome Fields Primary and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of children, staff, visitors and the school dog (Sections 3 and 4 – Principles and Code of Conduct). Although there is a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment, this can be mitigated against with a robust risk assessment to ensure the safety of all students, staff and visitors (Appendix C - Risk Assessment).

2. The benefits of a school dog

School dogs have been proven to help develop students' reading skills, improve behaviour, attendance and academic confidence, as well as increasing children's understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills. At Hounsome Fields Primary, we hope that a dog will be a beneficial addition to our existing academic support, nurture, well-being and emotional support provision.

Research into the effects of therapy dogs in schools is showing a range of benefits including:

- Increase in school attendance;
- Gains in confidence;
- Decreases in learner anxiety behaviours resulting in improved learning outcomes, such as increases in reading and writing levels;
- Positive changes towards learning and improved motivation, and;
- Enhanced relationships with peers and teachers due to experiencing trust and unconditional positive regard from a therapy dog. This in turn helps students learn how to express their feelings and enter into more trusting relationships.

In time, the dog will be registered as an Emotional Support Animal by Miss Nolan, once the dog has passed through adolescence and completed accredited behavioural and anxiety trainings (Dogs Trust/Kennel Club). Miss Nolan plans to obtain additional therapy dog registration through an organisation.

2.1 Literacy benefits

“Reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop literacy skills and build confidence, through both the calming effect the dogs' presence has on children and the fact that the dog will listen to the children read without being judgemental or critical. This comforting environment helps to nurture children's enthusiasm for reading and provides them with the confidence needed to read aloud. When dogs are in a room, children trying to read become less stressed, less self-conscious and more confident because dogs are non-judgemental. If children are partnered with a dog to read to, the dog provides comfort, encourages positive social behaviour, enhances self-esteem, motivates speech and inspires children to have fun and enjoy the experience of reading.”

Bark & Read – The Kennel Club

<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/barkandread>

“Children who read to dogs are less likely to be embarrassed reading aloud and find the experience less stressful. Research has proved that children who read to dogs show an increase in reading levels, word recognition, and a higher desire to read and write.”

School Dog Policy – The White Horse Federation
(<https://www.ridgewayschool.com/downloads/default/TWHF-School-Dog-Policy-V2.pdf>)

2.2 SEN Benefits

School dogs have been shown to support emotional regulation through the positive impact on the autonomic nervous system. A recent report highlighted children working with school dogs experienced increased motivation for learning, resulting in improved outcomes. Therapy dogs are being used to support children with social and emotional learning needs, which in turn can assist with literacy development.

“Therapy Dogs Nationwide dogs have also shown to help with special needs and autistic children and adults by giving focus and providing a calming environment.”

School Dogs - Therapy Dogs Nationwide
(<http://www.tdn.org.uk/schools/>)

2.3 Confidence Benefits

“If children are partnered with a dog to read to, for example, the dog provides comfort, encourages positive social behaviour, enhances self-esteem, motivates speech and inspires children to have fun and enjoy the non-judgemental experience”

Bark & Read – The Kennel Club
(<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/barkandread>)

2.4 Mental Health Benefits

“There is emerging evidence to suggest that Animal Assisted Psychotherapy improves the efficacy of mental health treatments in self-selected adolescent populations via reductions in primary symptomatology, and via secondary factors that improve therapeutic processes and quality, such as engagement and retention”.

[Incorporating animal-assisted therapy in mental health treatments for adolescents: A systematic review of canine assisted psychotherapy](#) Melanie G. Jones, Simon M. Rice, Susan M. Cotton.
2019; 14(1), 2019.

3. Principles

- 3.1 The Head Teacher, Sarah Kennedy and The Governors have agreed to the presence of a school dog at Hounsme Fields Primary School.
- 3.2 Only the school dog is allowed on the premises. No other dogs are permitted unless the head teacher has approved their visit.
- 3.3 The School dog is an Cavachon. The School Dog is not Kennel Club registered as it is a cross-breed, selected for its temperament, reduced risk of congenital health issues, and hypoallergenic, non-shedding coat.
- 3.4 Mr Carter is the legal owner of the dog and has full responsibility for its welfare. Mr Carter will pay all expenses relating to pet insurance, vaccinations, flea and worm treatment, food and maintenance costs.

3.5 Mrs Carter and the head teacher have produced a risk assessment which has been approved by the Local Advisory Committee and this will be reviewed annually.

3.6 The School Dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Mrs Carter or other trained staff members.

3.7 The dog is covered by the school's Public Liability Insurance policy and the Business Manager has responsibility for ensuring this remains on the school's policy during the presence of a School Dog at Hounsome Fields Primary School. The dog is also fully insured by Mr Carter.

3.8 Staff, parents and children will be informed in writing that a dog will be in school.

3.9 Parents will need to consent to interaction with the School Dog (as part of their admissions pack). For current families, this will be a one-off consent form. Children and families can opt-out or opt-in at any point.

3.10 The presence of a school dog will be made clear to visitors upon their arrival at the School Office.

3.11 Only staff trained to handle the dog will have permission to do so. Whilst training, this will be limited to his/ her owner and handler, Mr Carter and selected members of staff with prior agreement.

4. Code of Conduct

4.1 Staff Responsibilities

4.1.1 Mr Carter will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times. See appendix for example timetable

4.1.2 If the dog is ill he/she will not be allowed into school. Mr Carter has responsibility for ensuring appropriate alternative care for the dog if he/ she is not able to be in the school on a given day.

4.1.3 Mr Carter is responsible for ensuring the training and accreditation of the dog.

4.1.4 The school dog must be kept on a lead when moving around the school.

4.1.5 The school dog will be in the Head Teachers office or the school office, when Mr Carter is working with children for whom animal assisted therapy is not indicated.

4.1.6 Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the school dog. The senior team and school office keeps a list of all students and staff with a reported allergy to dogs

4.1.7 Children must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.

- 4.1.8 Children will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog before any interaction during a therapy session or visit.
- 4.1.9 If the dog is surrounded by a large number of children, the dog could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that she/he monitors the situation. If the dog is displaying any warning signs such as growling or flattening of his/ her ears, he/ she should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment by the trained staff member handling him/ her.
- 4.1.10 Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by the trained dog handling staff only.
- 4.1.11 The school will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog to better inform research into the benefits of animal assisted therapy.

4.2 Children's Responsibilities

- 4.2.1 Children whose parents have withdrawn consent are not allowed to attend dog therapy sessions.
- 4.2.2 Children should be careful to stroke the dog on his/her body, chest, back and not by his/her face or top of head.
- 4.2.3 Children are not allowed to approach or disturb the dog whilst he/she is sleeping or eating.
- 4.2.4 Children are not allowed to play roughly with the dog.
- 4.2.5 Children must wait until the school dog is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking her.
- 4.2.6 Children are not allowed to eat during animal assisted therapy sessions.
- 4.2.7 Children must always wash their hands before and after stroking and handling the dog.
- 4.2.8 Children understand that any deliberate violence or threatening behaviour towards the dog will result in a fixed term suspension.

Appendix A – FAQs

Appendix B – Example Timetable

Appendix C – School Dog Risk Assessment

Appendix A - School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs? A The legal owner of the dog will be Mr Carter. She will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support liability insurance and training costs only where appropriate.

Q Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

A Yes. The dog will be from a home where both parents were seen. The dog will be chosen specifically for his/her temperament, intelligence, and hypoallergenic coat. **Q Will the dog be a distraction to**

students' learning?

A The dog will be kept in the The Hubble when engaging in interventions and support, in the Head Teacher's Office or the School office when not escorted around school on a lead. When this is not possible, the dog will be cared for in areas of school which are not accessible to students. The dog will also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation, and support staff well-being, following consultation with staff beforehand.

Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken? A Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog.

Q Who is responsible for training?

Mrs Carter will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for his/ her training. Appropriate professional training will be obtained and the dog will work towards being trained as a therapy dog in dog training classes with advice from the Pets As Therapy charity, The Dogs Trust, and The Kennel Club. **Q How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?**

A In the interest of health and hygiene, our school dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks around the grounds. **Q What if my child is scared of dogs? Will they be forced to be in the same room**

as the dog?

A The dog will be kept in the designated spaces, away from children. We will ensure the school dog only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision. A student will not be forced to be in contact with dog at any time against their wishes. 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 using evidence based interventions such as graded exposure. **Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?**

A The dogs welfare will be carefully monitored. The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside of sessions to rest and play. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have appropriate access to food and water.

Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?

A Children will not need to touch the dog or be in the same room as the dog at any point which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for children and adults that are allergic to dogs. Individual needs will always be met and we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies. The school dog will be specifically chosen for being a breed known for its hypoallergenic, non-shedding coat. He/she will be given a high quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

Appendix B –Timetable *to be adapted as Henny’s training progresses

Where	8.30-8.50	8.50-9.10	9.10–9:45	9:45 –10	10.00-10.30	10.30 - 10:40	10:40 – 11:05	11.00 - 11.30	11.30 - 12.00	12.00 -1.00	1.00-1:30	1:30- 2:30	2:30 – 3:00
	Cars / Walkers	Front Office	Reception	Office			Playground						Outside
Mon	Walk about greeting children with Walkers <small>(A calming effect on pupils)</small>	Support with late children with <small>(Improving attendance)</small>	Rest	REST	Rest	ASSEMBLY TIME	Walk	Walk outside and Learning Walk with SLT <small>(Increasing staff morale and wellbeing)</small>	Rest	LUNCHTIME	Walk outside and Learning Walk with SLT <small>(Increasing staff morale and wellbeing)</small>	Rest	Daily Mile Year 1 <small>(Supporting with the development of cooperative play)</small>
Tue	Walk about greeting children with Cars <small>(A calming effect on pupils)</small>	Support with late children with <small>(Improving attendance)</small>	Rest		Rest		Breaktime Walk	Walk outside and Learning Walk with SLT <small>(Increasing staff morale and wellbeing)</small>	Rest		Walk outside and Learning Walk with SLT <small>(Increasing staff morale and wellbeing)</small>	Rest	Daily Mile Year 2 <small>(Supporting with the development of cooperative play)</small>
Wed	Walk about greeting children with Walkers <small>(A calming effect on pupils)</small>	Support with late children with <small>(Improving attendance)</small>	Rest		Rest		Breaktime Walk	Walk outside and Learning Walk with SLT <small>(Increasing staff morale and wellbeing)</small>	Rest		Walk outside and Learning Walk with SLT <small>(Increasing staff morale and wellbeing)</small>	Rest	Daily Mile Year 3 <small>(Supporting with the development of cooperative play)</small>
Thu	Walk about greeting children with Cars <small>(A calming effect on pupils)</small>	Support with late children with <small>(Improving attendance)</small>	Rest		Rest		Breaktime Walk	Walk outside and Learning Walk with SLT <small>(Increasing staff morale and wellbeing)</small>	Rest		Walk outside and Learning Walk with SLT <small>(Increasing staff morale and wellbeing)</small>	Rest	Daily Mile Year 4 <small>(Supporting with the development of cooperative play)</small>

Appendix C – School Dog Risk Assessment

Introduction:

The value of pet ‘therapy’ is widely accepted as a powerful aid to stimulation and communication. Studies have shown that the presence of companion animals can improve the well-being of children and lower the rate of anxiety, simply by making the environment happier and more enjoyable.

We will ensure that there are no diseases associated with the dog as the owner will be responsible for vaccinations completing regular health checks and necessary treatment. A copy of the dog’s health records will be updated and kept in school. The dog will also be insured.

The risk assessment below is a working document and will be checked annually by key staff.

Key: 1 Low risk 3 medium risk of injury 5 high risk of injury

Hazard	Risk	Risk 1 - 5	Controls in place	Review date
Dog getting over excited when interacting with children.	Child knocked to the ground.	2	<p>The dog will always be in the care of the designated handler or a “responsible adult”. “Responsible Adult” shall mean any member of staff who has read the policy fully, received appropriate training and is aware of the risks and responsibilities to both children and staff.</p> <p>The dog will never be left unattended.</p> <p>The dog will never be allowed to roam freely around the school premises.</p> <p>The dog must not be passed to any member of staff not deemed a “responsible adult” as defined above.</p> <p>Children will not be left unsupervised with the dog.</p> <p>The dog will always be on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk by the designated handler or responsible adult while the children are in school.</p> <p>Pupils have been and will continue to be taught about the consequences of their actions.</p> <p>Education of this nature is continually given to children, and often to the whole school through assemblies and PSHE sessions.</p>	
	Child scratched by dog. Child bitten by dog.	4		

			<p>Pupils will be taught what to do to prevent the dog from chasing them.</p> <p>The dog will undergo formal training from the age of 14 weeks with an experienced dog trainer. Evidence must be recorded and kept in school. Risk of scratching and biting will reduce and the risk assessment will be reviewed as he/ she progresses through his/ her weekly training. Evidence must be recorded and kept in school.</p> <p>All staff will have been introduced to the dog and expectations of having a school dog.</p> <p>The legal owner will ensure the dog attends the vets regularly to ensure he/ she is in good health and that his/ her claws are kept short. Evidence must be recorded and kept in school.</p> <p>The room where the dog is kept will have a sign on the door to inform others that the dog is present.</p> <p>The room where the dog is kept must have a lock on it out of the reach of children, and the door must be locked if the dog is in there on their own.</p>	
<p>The dog causing allergies.</p>	<p>Children or staff have allergic reactions</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>Parents have been asked to inform the school of any known allergies before the introduction of the dog to the school.</p> <p>If required a list of any children/staff who should not interact with the dog will kept in school.</p> <p>The children will have the opportunity to interact with the dog under the supervision of the designated handler or responsible adult and those with allergies will be able to opt out of interaction.</p>	

			Children will be taught to wash their hands after active participation with the dog.	
Children getting germs from the dog.	Children or staff will contract diseases that can be carried by dogs.	1	<p>Should the dog defecate on the school site a member of staff will clear this up immediately and dispose of it in a safe way.</p> <p>He/ She will be trained to toilet in an area of the grounds that children have limited access to. The area will be disinfected as required.</p> <p>All immunisations are kept up to date in accordance with the European Pet Passport Scheme and a record will be kept of this. Evidence must be recorded and kept in school.</p> <p>Flea treatment is carried out at 4 week intervals and is recorded. Evidence must be recorded and kept in school.</p> <p>The dog will not be allowed in the school dining hall at meal times; and never in the food preparation area.</p> <p>The dog will be regularly wormed. Evidence must be recorded and kept in school.</p>	

Noise/barking	Some children unable to cope with the noise	1	<p>The dog is being introduced in to the school environment from an early age so will be used to a noisy environment so is less likely to bark.</p> <p>Extra orientation sessions in place for specific children.</p> <p>Ensuring some children have ear defenders if needed.</p>	
Financial cost of the dog's upkeep.	School unable to afford the ongoing cost of the dog's day to day upkeep or medical bills.	3	<p>The dog will be insured to be in school under the school's Public Liability Insurance.</p> <p>All vets costs are covered by 'Pet Plan' under his/ her private insurance, paid for and under the legal owner's name.</p>	