



School Dog Policy

Responsible Person

The person for the updating of this policy is: The Head of School

Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the full governing body.

Reviewed:

Signed: Holden Cook (Chair of Governors)

Date: Autumn 2023

Signed: Laurence Hughes (Head of School)

Date: Autumn 2023

Next Review due: Autumn 2025

1 Introduction

Research has shown many benefits to therapy and reading dogs in school settings. Albus has worked as a school dog who works with our students to improve literacy and student behaviour and wellbeing. This policy is designed to set out to students, parents and visitors the reasons for having a school dog at Wicklewood Primary School (*Section 2 - The benefits of a school dog*) and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of students, staff, visitors and the school dog. 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 (*AppendixA - 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 student understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills. At Wicklewood Primary School we have a school dog to support our staff team in bringing all of these benefits to our students.

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 of children trying to read they 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 Therapy benefits

“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 Attendance & punctuality benefits

“Mandy was a student with poor attendance and truancy. Mandy was encouraged back into school using caring for River, a dog, as an incentive. By telling Mandy that “if she didn't come to school to care for him, he wouldn't get walks, water or love,” Mandy came to school almost every day for the rest of the year, only missing two days.”

- Case Study - Hazel Oak School Dog Policy (<https://hazel-oak.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/School-Dog-Policy.pdf>)

2.4 Behaviour & rewards

“Researchers report that students can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel. It was found that violent behaviour in participating students declined by 55%, and general aggression went down 62%. Behaviour problems occur in school and these can interfere with learning. Some schools are using dogs to improve behaviour problems by promoting positive behaviour in students. In a controlled study, students were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Students’ behaviour improved toward teachers, and students also showed more confidence and responsibility. Additionally, parents reported that children seemed more interested in school as a result of having a dog at school.”

- **Hazel Oak School Dog Policy** (<https://hazel-oak.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/School-Dog-Policy.pdf>)

3 Principles

- 3.1 The Head of School, Laurence Hughes, and Chair of Governors, Holden Cook, both agree to a school dog (“Albus”) working in the school.
- 3.2 Only the school dog (“Albus”) is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the Head of School has approved their presence prior to the visit.
- 3.3 Albus is a Cockerpoo, chosen because it is an intelligent breed that will respond well to training and which is known to be good with children, sheds little hair, and is very sociable and friendly.
- 3.4 Albus’s legal owner is Mrs Burr Wilby. Mrs Burr Wilby has full responsibility for the welfare of the school dog and all expenses relating to pet insurance, food and other expenses and ensuring that the dog is vaccinated, wormed and flea treated.
- 3.5 Mrs Burr Wilby, the legal owner of the school dog, has produced a risk assessment which has been approved by the Safeguarding Lead and this will be reviewed annually.
- 3.6 The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Mrs Burr Wilby or other trained staff members.
- 3.7 Staff, parents and students will be informed in writing that a dog will be in school.
- 3.8 Parents can indicate that their child is not allowed to be present during dog therapy sessions by emailing office@wicklewood.norfolk.sch.uk or calling 01953 602333
- 3.9 The presence of a school dog will be sign posted to visitors at reception and the school website. Reception staff will relay visitor issues to Mrs Burr Wilby or Mr Hughes.
- 3.10 Only staff trained to handle the dog in student sessions will have permission to do so.

4 Code of Conduct

4.1 Staff Responsibilities

- 4.1.1 Mrs Burr Wilby will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.
- 4.1.2 If the dog is ill he will not be allowed into school. Mrs Burr Wilby has responsibility for ensuring appropriate alternative care for Albus if he is not able to be in the school on a given day.
- 4.1.3 Albus must be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of a trained adult.
- 4.1.4 Albus will be kept in the SLT office when not interacting with students for therapy or reading sessions.
- 4.1.5 Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near Albus. The school office keeps a list of all students and staff with a reported allergy to dogs (dander) and ensures that this list is shared with appropriate adults.
- 4.1.6 Staff leading therapy or reading sessions with Albus have a responsibility to ensure all staff, students or visitors present are happy for Albus to enter the room.
- 4.1.7 Students must never be left alone with Albus and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- 4.1.8 Students will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog.
- 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 s/he monitors the situation. If the dog is displaying any warning signs such as growling or flattening of her ears, she should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment by the trained staff member handling 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 Wicklewood staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog to better inform research into the benefits of a school therapy / reading dog.

4.2 *Student Responsibilities*

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

5 **The School Dog - Albus**



Appendix A - School Dog Risk Assessment

Hazard	At risk			Existing Control measures
	Students	Staff	Visitors	
<p>Animal behaviour</p> <p>Staff, pupils or visitors could be injured if the school dog is not comfortable in a specific school environment and reacts badly, including bites or scratches</p>	Medium	Medium	Medium	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 The dog will receive ongoing formal training, socialising and conditioning within the school environment 2 Pupils and parents are warned of the hazard before sessions with the school dog and take part only with consent 3 Students are taught appropriate behaviour around the school dog, what to do to prevent over stimulating or upsetting the dog and how to remain calm around her 4 Students are closely supervised by an adult during sessions 5 Students are never left with the dog unsupervised 6 The school dog will always be in the care of a responsible adult. 7 If the school dog exhibits any warning behaviours such growling or lowered ears she will be removed immediately from students 8 The school dog resides in the SLT office and is not out in the school community outside of the sessions 9 The dog will always be on a lead when he is out of the SLT office. 10 In the event that a student, staff member or visitor is bitten or scratched (even if only a “play” bite) the First Aider will inspect and assess the injury. The suitability of the 11 school dog will then be reassessed by the Head of School.
<p>Disease, Illness & Allergic Reactions</p> <p>Staff, pupils or visitors could suffer ill health if they come into contact with animal feces or</p>	Medium	Medium	Low	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 All immunisations are kept up to date and Mrs Burr Wilby is responsible for keeping a register of this. 2 The dog will not go in the school dining hall at meal times; he will not be permitted into the food preparation area of the kitchen or the cooking room.

urine or have an allergy to dogs				<p>4 The School Office keeps at all times an up to date list of students with known allergic reactions and these students are not present during any sessions with the dog</p> <p>5 The dog is taken regularly outside the school building for toilet facilities by a designated member of staff trained to handle the school dog.</p> <p>6 All waste produced by the dog, whether accidental or routine, is handled and disposed of hygienically by designated staff members only. Contaminated items and surfaces are immediately washed and disinfected.</p> <p>7 Pupils and adults are not allowed to eat around the school dog.</p> <p>8 Pupils and adults must always wash their hands after handling the school dog.</p> <p>9 Immediate medical assistance will be sought where an allergic reaction does not subside once the animal and afflicted person are kept apart.</p>
<p>Animal Phobias</p> <p>Staff or students could suffer distress themselves or distress the school dog if they become scared or upset around the school dog</p>	Medium	Low	Low	<p>1. Student are encouraged but never forced to take part in dog sessions.</p> <p>2. Where there are pupils with phobias, every effort is made to segregate the school dog from those with phobias - this may mean moving a student to another room until a session is over.</p> <p>3. Outside of sessions the school dog is kept in the SLT soffice and enters and exits the building outside or break and lesson changeover periods.</p> <p>4. Sessions will take place only in specific areas of the school where students can avoid contact withthe dog if desired.</p>
<p>School emergency evacuation (including drills)</p> <p>The dog could become distressed by the evacuation and behave in an unexpected way, e.g.</p>	Medium	Medium	Low	<p>1. The school dog is accompanied by an adult at all times. In the event of an emergency evacuation, immediately proceed to the nearest fire exit and then the adult walks as far as possible from other people evacuating whilst maintaining a safe distance from the building.</p> <p>2. Where possible, the school dog to be present for sounding of the alarms outside of school hours to observe their response.</p> <p>3. If the dog manages to escape from an adult during the evacuation, the adult must still evacuate immediately and notify staff outside of the dog's absence.</p>

become defensive or try to escape.				
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Appendix B: School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) - *to publish to parents*

Q Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?

A The legal owner of the dog will be Mrs Burr Wilby. She will bear the costs associated with owning the dog.

Q Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

A Yes. The dog is from a home where both parents were seen and has been specifically chosen for its temperament.

Q Will the dog be a distraction to students' learning?

A The dog will be kept in the SLT's office area. The dog will only spend time in classrooms, the library and group room at specific planned sessions where students can interact safely outside of lesson times and therefore the dog will not be a distraction to students during lessons. The dog will also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation, 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?

A Mrs Burr Wilby will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for her training.

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 outside the school by staff members.

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 SLT's office area. The office is separate from the classrooms / playground area which 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 of a trained member of staff.

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.

Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. Parents will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to be able to walk with a member of staff and the dog during that time. This will also be used as a behaviour reward.

The dog will be kept in the SLT's office area with its legal owner, Mrs Burr Wilby, and will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors.

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 was specifically chosen for being a breed known for sociable dispositions and minimal moulting, she will be given a high quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

Appendix C: Advice on School Dogs

The Dogs Trust - School Dogs

<https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/help-advice/factsheets-downloads/school%20dogs.pdf>

The Kennel Club - Bark and Read

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

BBC News - “Every school ‘needs dog as stress-buster’”

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-47655600>