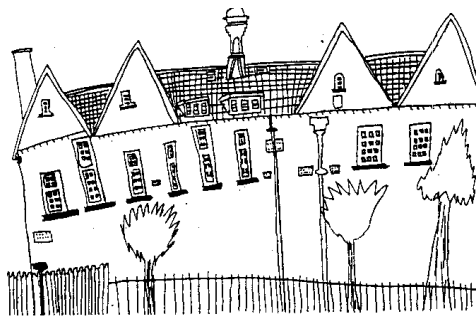


Letchmore Infants' And Nursery School

School Dog Policy and Risk Assessment



September 2023

Review Date - September 2027

1. Introduction

Research has shown many benefits to therapy and reading dogs in school settings. Letchmore Infants' and Nursery School has a school dog who works with our children to improve literacy and student behaviour and wellbeing. This policy is designed to set out to parents and visitors the reasons for having a school dog at Letchmore Infants' and Nursery School (Section 2 - The benefits of a school dog) 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 children, staff and visitors (Appendix A - Risk Assessment).

2. The benefits of a school dog

School dogs have been proven to help develop children's reading skills, improve behaviour, attendance and academic confidence, as well as increasing understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills. At Letchmore Infants' and Nursery School we have a school dog to support our staff team in bringing all of these benefits to our children. Our school dog will be coming in as a pet, while she continues to train to be a certified 'Pets as Therapy' dog.

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>)

2.1 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/>).

2.2 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/wpcontent/uploads/2018/02/School-Dog-Policy.pdf>).

2.3 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/wpcontent/uploads/2018/02/School-Dog-Policy.pdf>).

3. Principles

3.1 The Headteachers, and Chair of Governors, both agree to a school dog ("Miss Honey") working in the school.

3.2 Only the school dog ("Miss Honey") is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and one of the Co-Headteachers has approved their presence prior to the visit.

3.3 Miss Honey is a Labrador chosen because it is an intelligent breed that will respond well to training and which is known to be good with children and is very sociable and friendly. She also has extensive experience of being a school dog.

3.4 Miss Honey's legal owner is Mrs Connolly. Mrs Connolly 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 Connolly, 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 trained staff members.

3.7 In addition to our general liability insurance, Miss Honey has dedicated dog insurance covering her whilst in school. Her insurance is with Pet Business Insurance.

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

3.9 Parents can indicate that their child is not allowed to be present during dog therapy sessions by completing the consent section on Arbor.

3.10 The presence of a school dog will be sign posted to visitors at the school office and the school website. School office staff will relay visitor issues to the Headteacher as soon as possible.

3.11 Miss Honey is attending as a pet and will only accompany children in sessions under the close supervision of a named adult.

3.12 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 Connolly or one of the Co-Headteachers will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.

4.1.2 If the dog is ill she will not be allowed into school. Mrs Connolly has responsibility for ensuring appropriate alternative care for Miss Honey if she is not able to be in the school on a given day.

4.1.4 Miss Honey 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 (see clause 3.12).

4.1.5 Miss Honey will be kept in the Co-Headteachers office area or in The Nest in a crate, when not interacting with children for therapy or reading sessions.

4.1.6 Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near Miss Honey. The school office keeps a list of all students and staff with a reported allergy to dogs (dander) and ensures that all trained handlers for Miss Honey know who these students and staff are.

4.1.7 Staff leading therapy or reading sessions with Miss Honey have a responsibility to ensure all staff, children or visitors present are happy for Miss Honey to enter the room, or be taken out of her crate.

4.1.8 Children must never be left alone with Miss Honey and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.

4.1.9 Children will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog before any interaction during a session or visit.

4.1.10 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.

4.1.11 Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by the trained dog handling staff only. Miss Honey will be given a space that is not used by children or staff to 'toilet'.

4.1.12 Letchmore 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 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 Miss Honey on her body, chest, back and not by her face or top of head.

4.2.3 Children are not allowed to approach Miss Honey or disturb her whilst 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 sessions with Miss Honey.

4.2.7 Children must always wash their hands after handling / stroking Miss Honey.

4.2.8 Children understand that any deliberate violence or threatening behaviour towards Miss Honey could result in a fixed term exclusion.

5. The School Dog - Miss Honey



Appendix A – School Dog Risk Assessment

RISK ASSESSMENT FOR <i>Letchmore Infants and Nursery School</i>	School dog on site for the purposes of pastoral support for children (to improve mental and social and emotional functioning with the aid of animals)	
Risk assessment number/ref: Assessment by: Mrs Connolly	Date: November 2023	
Manager Approval: Jo Harding	Date: November 2023	

Pet Business Insurance Policy Number: ACE022111

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
Animal Health Diseases, parasites	Staff, pupils, visitors Diseases / infections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrangements in place for care outside of school day, lives with legal owner. • Regular veterinary health check. All vaccinations and worm / flea treatment in place. • Groomed and clean before going into school. 				

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Quiet space' available for dog, time limit on daily activities so dog does not get tired (max. 3 active hours / day¹) crate in The Nest and bed in headteacher's office. • Dog's needs/behaviours closely monitored and acted upon by staff. • Bed and fresh drinking water available. • Planned and supervised contact with pupils and visitors. • If unwell alternative arrangements made for dog's care, would not be allowed back into school until fully recovered. • Has dog walker. 				
Dog Behaviour	Staff, pupils, visitors Cuts / abrasions	Dog of suitable breed and attending weekly training sessions, working towards becoming a Pets as Therapy trained dog.				

¹ Suggested max 3 hours figure comes from advice in Kennel club Bark and read standards of practice "Each active session with the dog must be no longer than one hour and dogs should work for no more than three active hours during a day".

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
<p>Bites and scratches</p> <p>Being knocked over / tripped over by dog</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog has had slow conditioning to school environments (minimum of 12 months old to be involved in active sessions in school). • Staff and pupils instructed and reminded of how to behave, meet, and handle the dog. • No unsupervised contact with pupils. • Staff handling the dog able to understand and recognise signs of the dog being over stimulated, fatigued, or anxious and will remove the dog to a safe place to rest. • Dog's nails kept clipped. • Dog works with small group sizes. • Kept on lead in school grounds when moving between classes under control of handler. • Avoid movement in corridors during busy times. 				

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
<p>Allergy</p> <p>Phobias</p>	<p>Staff/Pupils and Visitors</p> <p>Skin rashes, irritation to the eyes and nose or breathing difficulties</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular grooming undertaken. • Clear communication to ensure any children / staff with potential allergic reactions / phobias are identified. • Existing school system to record medical needs or allergies. Staff are made aware of any children with phobias/ allergies in order their access is restricted. • Parental permission sought for children to interact with dog and able to opt-out of close contact. • Consent is double checked before any child starts direct one to one work with her. • Alternative activities are provided in a separate room for those with allergies. • Good general hygiene and hand washing followed. • Signs at school entrance / reception advising visitors of dog presence. e.g. photo. 				

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office staff will relay any visitor issues to the Head Teacher asap. • Room where dog is to be kept well ventilated. • All bedding, crate, and equipment to be cleaned regularly. • Staff to supervise dog at all times and be sensitive to all children's reactions. • School Head will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times. 				
<p>Hygiene</p> <p>Infection</p>	<p>Staff/Pupils and Visitors</p> <p>Disease/infections</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No eating / drinking when handling dog. • Dog toileted in appropriate area(s), away from play areas, faeces cleared immediately, bagged, and disposed of in outside bins. • No entry into food preparation areas, and will not enter dining areas (canteen, staffroom) when in use. • Cover any open cuts or abrasions on the exposed skin of hands and 				

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
		<p>arms with waterproof adhesive dressings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate provision for hand washing (soap/ hot water / antibacterial gel) readily available. Wash hands after contact. • Paper towels provided rather than communal hand towels. • Do not allow children to touch any part of their face with their hands before hands are washed. • Younger pupils should be seen to wash their hands. 				
<p>Damage caused to school materials, equipment, and the school site</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog remains on a lead at all times when moving around the school. • Dog kept in secured rooms, with closed doors. • Suitable toys available if necessary. 				

Benefits

There should be a clear reason and justification for keeping animals in schools or bringing animals into a school

Behaviour

- Calming behaviours
- Develop empathy
- Promote positive behaviours

Attendance

- Help improve attendance

Social Development

- Increase social skills and self-esteem
- Increase confidence
- Teach responsibility and respect

Overall Risk v benefit Judgement

Overall benefits out way the risks of having Miss Honey on site and no previous issues at previous school

Appendix B: 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 Mrs Connolly. 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 mum was seen and has been specifically chosen for its temperament. She also has previous, successful experience of being a school dog

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

A The dog will be kept in the Co-Headteachers office area or in The Nest. The dog will only spend time in classrooms 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. We will be careful to ensure that time spent with the school dog is shared among the children fairly. We will also ensure that children who are not involved in regular, direct contact with the dog are still able to participate in a number of ways, should they wish to do so.

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. There is also a School Dog Policy and Risk Assessment available to view on the Website.

Q Who is responsible for training?

A Mrs Connolly will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for her training. Miss Honey receives weekly training sessions and is working towards becoming a certified Pets as Therapy trained dog.

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 or taken to the specified outside area which is not used by children or staff.

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 Co-Headteachers office area or in The Nest. 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. Therefore 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 support them how to manage this. Miss Honey has successfully helped several children to manage their fear of dogs previously.

Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. The dog will be kept in the Co-Headteachers office area or in The Nest and will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. The dog will have appropriate access to food and water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered.

Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?

A We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for children and adults that are allergic to dogs. 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. Individual needs will always be met and we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in place. Miss Honey will be given a high-quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens. Miss Honey is vaccinated, wormed and flea treated.

Q Are other dogs now allowed on the school premises?

A No, Our policy of no dogs in the playground is still applicable as we are unable to put effective control measures in place that guarantee temperament and safety when children come into unsupervised contact with unknown dogs.

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>