



HILDENBOROUGH CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,” (Philippians 4:13) so that I can be the best that I can be, for myself, for others and for God.

SCHOOL DOG POLICY

October 2025

We aspire for our community to flourish as we journey together to fulfil our God given potential by encouraging a delight in the pursuit of wisdom and knowledge. We cherish each person as unique and special, and celebrate God’s creation through providing rich experiences, which enlighten, challenge, shape and enhance life’s opportunities for all.

Last Reviewed	October 2024
Next Review Date	October 2026
Ratified by	FGB
Ratified on	25.09.2025
Lead Person	Ruth Ardrey

Purpose

Dogs teach children responsibility. Having to remember to feed, provide water and show support for a dog can give children a sense of importance and satisfaction that they can't get from other chores. The relationship that develops can be life-changing for a child and a great support system as they themselves continue to grow and develop.

Dogs teach children patience. Dogs do not always do as they are told first time!

Dogs teach children compassion. Just like humans, dogs feel emotion and pain. They are prone to injuries and the infirmities of age during their relatively short lives.

Dogs teach children about socialisation. Like most of us, dogs are social animals who enjoy and need attention and affection. By learning how to interact with a dog, children can learn how to better socialise with other children.

Dogs are fun. Last, but certainly not least, dogs are a lot of fun. They greet you with a wagging tail every day and can cheer you up even on your worst day.

Many people have studied dogs in attempts to decipher their behaviour, and the theories abound. However, you just have to witness the interactions between dogs and children to realise the potential for greatness. Across the UK, dogs have been trained to sense when children with epilepsy are about to have a seizure, they can sense when a diabetic child's sugar is low, and they can help children with severe physical disabilities find happiness in life.

Introduction

Hildenborough's school dog, Molly, lives at home with Mrs Ardrey and has done since late September 2022 when she was an 8 week old puppy. She was socialised and attended puppy training classes where she learnt obedience skills needed to be a school dog. This training continues with Mrs Ardrey and her partner, and Molly has now established herself as a wellbeing dog for the school- both children and adults.

Molly is a Kennel Club registered Cocker Spaniel. She has third party public liability insurance. This means she is able to come into school. Molly will regularly visit the vet for check-ups and yearly vaccinations.

In addition to the 5 key reasons for Molly joining us outlined in the purpose, we also believe she will improve the children's abilities within the school's core values.

Context

- The dog will be owned by Mrs Ardrey.
- Veterinary costs will be paid by the owner, with the exception of non-essential veterinary costs required by the school and Public Liability Insurance (updated annually).
- The dog is a Cocker Spaniel, chosen for its mild temperament, friendly and affectionate nature and low shedding coat.
- The Headteacher, staff and Governors have agreed that a dog will bring many benefits to Hildenborough CE Primary School.
- All pupils are very keen to have a dog on site. Where there are any concerns or fears expressed by individuals, a care plan will be put in place.
- The risk assessment will be reviewed at least annually or sooner if required.
- When visitors and pupils arrive at school they will be advised of the presence of a dog.
- The dog will be highly trained and in time will learn the skills to be a therapy dog; the cost of training will be borne by the owner unless the school decides further training is needed.

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Day-to-day Management

The dog will:

- Not be allowed in school if unwell.
- Be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms
- Be given times throughout the day where off-lead is essential. This is so that Molly can be trained and practice skills she has been taught. However, this is only done when the children are calm ie- during lesson times. Molly is not allowed off lead during a busy play time unless closely supervised by a key adult and confident children
- Be under the full control and supervision of an adult at all times.
- Be fully trained to listen to instructions.
- Have had all injections required and these will be boosted as required.

Guidelines to interaction with the School Dog

Under no circumstances will children have close interaction with the school dog if parents/carers have contacted the school to disallow contact. All children, upon entering the school will have access to Molly unless parents tell us otherwise.

No child shall be forced into interaction with the school dog if this makes them feel unhappy in anyway.

At all times, interaction with the school dog must be controlled and safe for adults, children and the school dog herself. If the following guidelines are not followed interaction with the school dog will be cancelled.

At all times of interaction there must be an authorised adult who takes the leading role when interacting with the school dog. If children, or visiting adults, do not abide by the guidance given by the authorised adult the interaction will be cancelled.

The following guidelines must be followed when interacting with the school dog. These guidelines apply to all adults and children:

- Never enter the school dog’s room (Mrs Ardreys’ office) without an authorised adult
- If the door to the school dog’s room is shut, make sure you knock and wait for the authorised adult to let you in. Never let yourself in unaccompanied.
- There must be an authorised adult present during all interaction
- Always approach the school dog calmly (voice and movement)
- Always approach the school dog slowly
- Never run up to the school dog
- To start interaction the back of a hand will be offered for the school dog to sniff and then your hand should approach the dog from below, rather than above the head.
- Keep noise levels low during interaction with the school dog
- All interaction must remain calm with the authorised adult staying in control at all times
- Only the authorised adult can move any of the school dog’s resources, including food and treats
- Visiting children and adults can only handle equipment if the authorising adult gives permission
- Only children confident to do so, will feed Molly food or treats

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- Food should never be taken away from Molly when she is eating
- No toys will be taken from the school dog if she is playing
- After all interaction with the school dog hands must be washed with soap and water/ hand gel

Molly is now more familiar with the children and the school environment and therefore, the children have more regular access to Molly while on her lead and while she is off lead. On these occasions the following guidelines apply in addition to the guidelines outlined above.

- No children will ever be asked to pick up faeces
- If walking the school dog, the authorised adult stays in control of the lead at all times. Children joining the walk must remain calm and quiet.
- Children must wash their hands after interaction with the dog

School Dog/Pupil interaction

At the age of 3 years and 2 months, Molly is now being cared for by the children under controlled supervision. Classes will take turns sharing the responsibility of ensuring Molly is watered, fed and trained regularly through the day. Children are selected to do this in pairs and are asked if they wish to.

An adult must be present at all times. If an adult is not available at the specified time, then the children must come back later.

Rainbows After School Club

Due to the location of Mrs Ardrey's office, in close proximity to the Rainbows After School club, it has been agreed that the children will support in the care of Molly on a regular basis. The same rules apply for the engagement. However, the children, under supervision are permitted to hold Molly's lead for a walk, support staff in training Molly and/or spend time with her in a controlled environment.

This small group of children have built up trust with Molly and all value the time that they spend with her. This allows Molly to become more used to the presence of children in play environments but also teaching settle and sit calmly, in time leading to 'wellbeing dog' characteristics.

Molly is allowed to be off- lead in this environment as long as she is calm and under close supervision with SS.

Should a bite (even playful) occur

- Parents will be contacted immediately.
- The wound will be cleaned and covered with a sterile, non-sticky dressing.
- The child/adult will be released for medical attention.
- All relevant staff will be informed.
- A full investigation into the circumstances will be led by the Headteacher.
- The suitability of the dog will be reassessed by the Governors.

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Appendix 1

Reasons to have a dog in school – some anecdotes

Reading Programmes with dogs are doing wonders for some pupils. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even adults are likely to be less scared to read to a dog. “It might be less stressful for a child to read aloud to a dog than to a teacher or a peer. After all, a dog won’t judge or correct you.” Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud. With the presence of a calm and well-trained dog pupils find social support and peer interaction.

Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have pupils read to them or join a group of children in the library whilst they are having a book reading session. Dogs give unconditional acceptance, as they are non-judgemental, which is especially crucial to struggling, emerging readers. The dogs also provide confidence to children, as they do not make fun of them when they read, but above all they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. Research has proved that students who read to dogs show an increase in reading levels, word recognition, a higher desire to read and write and an increase in intrapersonal and interpersonal skills.

Attendance

Some schools are using dogs to improve behaviour problems by promoting positive behaviour in pupils.

Social Development

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching pupils social skills responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help older pupils build self-esteem, learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility and boundaries. Older pupils use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness and empower pupils.

With a dog in the classroom, pupils have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving students in the daily care of classroom dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The pupils also learn about responsibility, caring and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school.

As a Reward

Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the pupils. Those pupils who have performed incredibly well during the week or those who have made progress in a particular subject, or those who have achieved tasks set for them, will be rewarded with spending time during lunch or break-time to interact with the dog. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities pupils will be allowed to undertake. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children’s social skills and self-esteem.

Support Dogs

Can work with pupils on a one-to-one basis and will especially help those pupils who have been bullied, abused, are going through upsetting/difficult times or are even scared of/phobic about dogs. The dog will bring much joy and help to all the pupils they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the pupils with whom they are spending time. Pupils who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.