



ST. JOSEPH'S
CATHOLIC PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL
'LEARNING TO LOVE, LOVING TO LEARN'

ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL SCHOOL DOG POLICY

Introduction

Research has shown many benefits to having reading and emotional support dogs in school settings. St Joseph's has two school dogs who works with our pupils to improve literacy and student behaviour and wellbeing. This policy is designed to set out to pupils, parents and visitors the reasons for having a school dog at St Joseph's (*Section 2 – The benefits of a school dog*) and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of pupils, staff, visitors and the school dogs (*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 pupils, staff and visitors (*Appendix A - 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 St Joseph's we have school dogs to support our staff team in bringing all of these benefits to our children. St Joseph's school dogs are registered Emotional Support Animals through the ESA Registry. This registration is supported by the veterinary practice.

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."

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School Dog Policy – The White Horse Federation

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

2.2 Therapy benefits

“Therapy and Emotional Assistance 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 Headteacher, Emma Cashier, and Chair of Governors, Johanna Jones, both agree to school dogs (“Abou and Kooki”) working in the school.

3.2 Only the school dogs (“Abou and Kooki”) are allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the Headteacher has approved their presence prior to the visit.

3.3 Both dogs are Yorkshire Terriers chosen because they are an intelligent breed that will respond well to training, known to be good with children, sheds little hair, and is very sociable and friendly. Companionship and emotional support are two key aspects of a Yorkshire Terriers interaction with children. With their small size and gentle temperament, Yorkshire Terriers make excellent companions for children.



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3.4 The dogs legal owner is Miss Cashier. Miss Cashier has full responsibility for the welfare of the school dogs and all expenses relating to pet insurance, food and other expenses and ensuring that the dog is vaccinated, wormed and flea treated.

3.5 There is a risk assessment, which has been approved by the Governors, and this will be reviewed annually.

3.6 The dogs will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Miss Cashier or other trained staff members.

3.7 Public liability insurance through the RPA scheme covers third party claims in relation to the dogs in school. Both dogs also have their own insurance which Miss Cashier is responsible for renewing for Abou and Kooki's time working at St Joseph's. (See Appendix A)

3.8 Staff, parents and students were informed in writing that school dogs will be in school.

3.9 Parents can indicate that their child is not allowed to be present with the dogs when they are on school site by emailing info@stjosephs.wandsworth.sch.uk or calling 0208 874 1888 to inform the school office.

3.10 The presence of school dogs will be sign posted to visitors at reception and the school website. Reception staff will relay visitor issues to the leadership team as soon as possible.

3.11 The dogs will be kept in the Headteachers office and will not be in classrooms during the school day. Children visiting the dogs will do so in the office or adjoining office area under the supervision of the Headteacher or another appropriate member of staff.

3.12 The dogs will only provide therapy/reading sessions once they have completed their training.



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4 Code of Conduct

4.1 Staff Responsibilities

4.1.1 Miss Cashier will know the whereabouts of the dogs and which staff are supervising at all times.

4.1.2 If either dog is ill she will not be allowed into school. Miss Cashier has responsibility for ensuring appropriate alternative care for the dogs if they are not able to be in the school on a given day.

4.1.3 Miss Cashier is responsible for undertaking and confirming when Abou and Kooki are trained and certified as a therapy dogs.

4.1.4 The dogs must be kept on a lead when on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of an appropriate adult (see clause 3.12).

4.1.5 Abou and Kooki will be kept in the Headteachers office when not interacting with children. Abou and Kooki will interact with the children in the Headteachers office and/or adjoining area only and not be allowed in other areas of the school during the school day (unless approved by the Headteacher in advance).

4.1.6 Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near Abou or Kooki. The School keeps a medical register of all children and staff with a reported allergy to dogs (dander) and ensures that these children do not interact with Abou and Kooki.

4.1.7 The headteacher/ appropriate member of staff is responsible for ensuring staff, children or visitors present are happy to enter the room with the dogs. If not, the dogs stay in the adjoining school office.

4.1.8 Children must never be left alone with the dogs 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 visit.

4.1.10 If a 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 appropriate staff member handling her.

4.1.11 The dogs will be taken off the school site during the school day to toilet. Any dog foul should be scooped into a bag and deposited in an external bin.

4.1.12 St Joseph's staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dogs to better inform research into the benefits of having school dogs.



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4.2 Student Responsibilities

4.2.1 Students whose parents have informed the school they do not consent to their child interacting with the dogs are not allowed to attend dog visits.

4.2.2 Students should be careful to stroke Abou and Kooki on their body, chest, back and not by their face or top of head.

4.2.3 Students are not allowed to approach the dogs or disturb them whilst they are sleeping or eating.

4.2.4 Students are not be allowed to play roughly with the dogs.

4.2.5 Students must wait until the appropriate member of staff tells them the dogs are ready for the visit.

4.2.6 Students are not allowed to eat whilst with the dogs.

4.2.7 Students must always wash their hands after handling / stroking the dogs.

4.2.8 Students understand that any deliberate violence or threatening behaviour towards the dogs will result in a fixed term exclusion.

5 The School Dogs – Abou and Kooki



Please see separate document: School Dogs Risk Assessment



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Appendix A:

Risk Protection Arrangement (summary of cover) RPA will provide an indemnity if a school is legally liable to pay compensation in the event of third-party death/injury or third-party property damage caused by an animal that is owned by or under the control of the school. Unless covered under a more specific pet insurance policy, the RPA will also provide an indemnity under the Third Party Liability section if an animal brought into school for educational or therapy/wellbeing reason, causes any third party property damage or injury to a third party (including pupils/students) to the extent that the school is legally liable to pay compensation or damages to the claimant. The Employers Liability section will provide an indemnity to the school if the school is legally liable to pay compensation to damages to an employee injured by an animal on school premises in the course of the employee's employment with the school. The RPA would not provide an indemnity to the individual owner of the animal for their legal liability. The RPA rules do not exclude damage to the school property caused by the animal but cover for Material Damage claims are subject to the member retention (excess) of £500 per loss reducing to £250 each and every loss for Nursery and Primary schools. To confirm the RPA would not compensate the school if an animal dies or is stolen, and will not provide cover for vet fees if the animal becomes ill or is injured therefore separate insurance would be required if needed. The animals will not be covered under the RPA and separate insurance will be required, if needed. However, we can confirm that the RPA will provide indemnity to the member school when handling the animals to the extent that the school are legally liable (negligent) in causing injury to school staff under the Employers Liability section and injury to third parties (including pupils/students etc.) and damage to their property under the Third Party Public Liability. The RPA will defend claims and provide damages or compensation that the school is legally required to pay to the claimant.