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Headteacher: Ms Maria Lewington



## School Dog Policy

Reviewed by:	General Governing Body
Date Implemented:	
Date Amended	2023
Next Review:	2024
Ratified by Governors:	2023
Governor Signature:	

## 1 Introduction

Research has shown many benefits to therapy and reading dogs in school settings. JSP has 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 JSP (*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 (*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 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 JSP we have a school dog to support our staff team in bringing all of these benefits to our students. JSPs school dog will be trained as a therapy dog once she has settled fully into school. (*see Section 4 – code of conduct*).

### 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 Headteacher, Maria Lewington, and Chair of Governors, Kevin Hinde, both agree to a school dog (“Luna”) working at the school.
- 3.2 Only the school dog (“Luna”) is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the HT has approved their presence prior to the visit.
- 3.3 Luna is a Spanish Water dog cross 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 Lunas legal owner is Maria Lewington. She 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 Maria, the legal owner of the school dog, has produced a risk assessment which has been approved by the Safeguarding Lead and LBTH Juniper and this will be reviewed annually.
- 3.6 The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Maria Lewington 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 [admin@johnscurr.towerhamlets.sch.uk](mailto:admin@johnscurr.towerhamlets.sch.uk)
- 3.9 The presence of a school dog will sign posted to visitors at reception and the school website. Reception staff will relay visitor issues to the Headteacher as

soon as possible.

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 Maria Lewington 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. Maria has responsibility for ensuring appropriate alternative care for Luna if she is not able to be in the school on a given day.
- 4.1.3 Maria is responsible for ensuring Luna is trained.
- 4.1.4 Luna 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
- 4.1.5 Luna will be kept in the Heads office when not interacting with students for therapy or reading sessions. Luna will only visit designated therapy or reading lessons and not be allowed in other areas of the school.
- 4.1.6 Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near Luna. Our MIS and Inclusion lead keeps a list of all students and staff with a reported allergy to dogs (dander) and ensures that all trained handlers for Luna know who these students and staff are.
- 4.1.7 Staff leading therapy or reading sessions with Luna have a responsibility to ensure all staff, students or visitors present are happy for Luna to enter the room.
- 4.1.8 Students must never be left alone with Luna and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- 4.1.9 Students will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog before any interaction during a therapy sessions 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.
- 4.1.12 JSP 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 Luna on her body, chest, back and not by her face or top of head.
- 4.2.3 Students are not allowed to approach Luna 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 Luna.
- 4.2.7 Students must always wash their hands after handling / stroking Luna
- 4.2.8 Students understand that any deliberate violence or threatening behaviour towards Luna will result in Step 3 Behaviour Policy sanctions and possibly a fixed term exclusion.

## 5 The School Dog – Luna





## **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 Maria. She will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support liability insurance and staff training costs only where appropriate.

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

**A** The dog will be kept in the Head teachers office area. The dog will only spend time in classrooms, the library, small group rooms and 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 socialization, 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** Maria Lewington will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for her training. Appropriate professional training will be obtained and the dog will work towards being trained as a school dog in dog training classes with advice from PAWS therapy dog team.

### **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 Headteachers office areas. 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.

The school dog will not be allowed into the main playground area and will only visit classrooms and small group rooms for short supervised interaction with students. 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 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 Headteachers office with it's legal owner, and will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. The dog will be carefully trained

over a period of time and 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** 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>