

Moss Hall Schools Federation

School Dog Policy

Date: October 2025

Next Review: October 2026



1. Introduction

Our schools federation does have a 'no dogs' policy.

There are also 'No Dogs' signs at the school entrance. This means that we do not allow dogs of any size on our school site past the entrance gates on the school path.

However, Zuki will be the school dog and will be in school for a specific purpose. Only Zuki and any other therapy dog (e.g. Poppy the Reading Dog) that we introduce will be allowed on our school site.

This policy is designed to set out to pupils, staff, parents and visitors the reason for having a school dog at MHS and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of everyone and the dog.

2. The benefits of having a school dog.

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills, through contact with a suitable, calm dog. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with animals. By having a school dog we want to encourage those children who are vulnerable, or those less confident at reading to have a friendly audience and look forward to reading as a treat. The breed of Australian Labradoodle carefully selected as suitable for this type of environment. Zuki is well cared for and responsibly owned by Ms Vierthaler.

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 pupil 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>)

2.4 Behaviour & rewards

"Researchers report that pupils 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 pupils 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 pupils. In a controlled study, pupils were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog

than schools without. pupils' behaviour improved toward teachers, and pupils 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 Executive Headteacher and Chairs of Governors agree to a school dog ("Zuki") working across the Federation.

3.2 Only the school dog ("Zuki") is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the Executive Head has approved their presence prior to the visit.

3.3 Zuki is an Australian Labradoodle 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 Zuki's legal owner is Ms Marney Vierthaler (MV). MV 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 MV, the legal owner of the school dog, has produced a risk assessment which has been approved by the Safeguarding Lead and Federation Business Manager and this will be reviewed annually.

3.6 The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of MV or other trained staff members.

3.7 The Federation's liability insurance covers the school for risk related to a working dog on site, though additional insurance has been put in place. The Business Manager has responsibility for ensuring this remains on the school's policy during Zuki's time working at MHSF .

3.8 Staff, parents and pupils 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 sessions with the dog by emailing either school

office.

3.10 The presence of a school dog will be sign posted to visitors at each reception area and the school website. Reception staff will relay visitor issues to the Executive Head as soon as possible.

3.11 Zuki will only have pupil well-being and reading sessions once certified by the Kennel Club as of the right temperament.

3.12 Only staff trained to handle the dog in pupil sessions will have permission to do so.

4. Code of Conduct

4.1 Staff Responsibilities

4.1.1 MV 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. MV has responsibility for ensuring appropriate alternative care for Zuki if she is not able to be in the school on a given day.

4.1.3 MV is responsible for ensuring Zuki is trained and certified as a dog suitable to be in a school environment.

4.1.4 Zuki 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 Zuki will be kept in the Headship base in the junior building when not interacting with pupils. Zuki will never be “free-roaming”.

4.1.6 Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near Zuki. The School welfare officer keeps a list of all pupils and staff with a reported allergy to dogs (dander) and ensures that all trained handlers for Zuki know who these pupils and staff are.

4.1.7 Staff leading therapy or reading sessions with Zuki have a responsibility to ensure all staff, pupils or visitors present are happy

for Zuki to enter the room.

4.1.8 Pupils must never be left alone with Zuki and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.

4.1.9 Pupils will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog before any interaction during a well-being session or visit. They will be trained not to stare at dogs as they find this aggressive.

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, tail tucked under her, excessive licking for no reason and unnatural panting, 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 MHSF staff will share anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog to Ms Vierthaler and the SENCos/leadership team

4.2 Pupil Responsibilities

4.2.1 Pupils whose parents have withdrawn consent are not allowed to attend dog therapy sessions 4.2.2 Pupils should be careful to stroke Zuki on her body, chest, back and not by her face or top of head.

4.2.3 pupils are not allowed to approach Zuki or disturb her whilst she is sleeping or eating.

4.2.4 Pupils are not allowed to play roughly with the dog.

4.2.5 Pupils must wait until the school dog is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking her. 4.2.6 Pupils are not allowed to eat during sessions with Zuki.

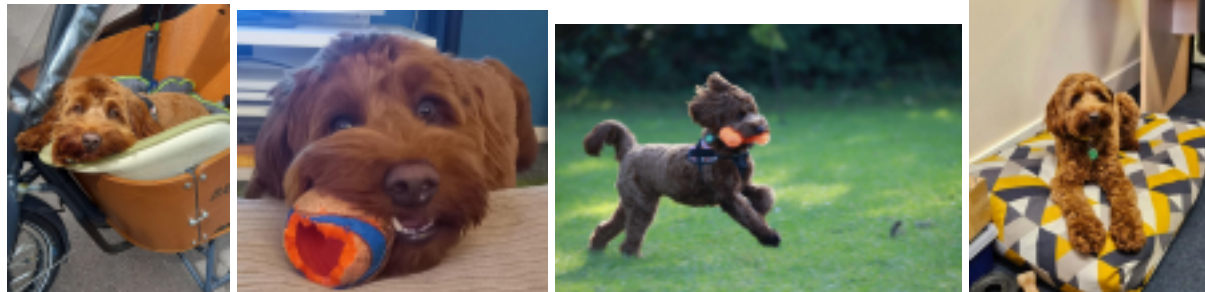
4.2.7 Pupils must always wash their hands after handling / stroking Zuki.

4.2.8 Pupils understand that any deliberate violence or threatening behaviour towards Zuki will result in a fixed term suspension .

School Pupils will:

- NOT have sole responsibility for, or be left alone with Zuki
- Meet Zuki in a group of no more than 4 children in MHJ and 2 in MHI.
- Be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around Zuki every time they meet her
- Always remain calm
- Be gentle
- not put their face near Zuki's
- not disturb a dog that is eating or sleeping
- Always approach Zuki standing up - she must have 4 paws on the ground before contact.
- not feed the dog
- Never tease the dog
- Not stare at the dog as this can be read as aggressive by her.

5. The School Dog - Zuki



Health and Safety Principles

Children will always wash their hands or use alcohol gel after handling the dog.

Any dog foul will be cleared up immediately and disposed of appropriately by the adult in charge of Zuki at the time. Children must never be allowed to do this.

The cleaning contractor will be informed that there is a school dog and be shown the school risk assessment.

Concerns

Our school does have a 'no dogs' policy, however Zuki will be the school dog and will be in school for a specific purpose. She will be on a leash at all times when moving around the school property and will always be accompanied by an adult. Zuki will also be fully insured to carry out her role thus allowing her to be on the school site.

Some children may have had upsetting experiences and thus have a fear of dogs (or another animal). Zuki will be calm and gentle around children; she has a very loving and gentle nature. Experience and research have shown that, with proper guidance and handling, children can learn to overcome their fear of animals and grow in respect and appreciation for them.

It is understandable that some parents may be concerned about possible allergic reactions to a school dog. The Australian Labradoodle breed is known to be hypo- allergenic. Zuki will be subjected to a thorough cleanliness and grooming regime. We will ask parents who are concerned to make the school aware if their child has an allergy.

Some parents may also be concerned for cultural or religious reasons about their child touching a dog. Please let the school know if this is the case for your child.

Any parent who does not wish their child to interact with the school dog is invited to write to Ms Wynne to inform her of their wishes.

Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Premises, Finance and Resources Committee. The impact of having a school dog will be monitored by the Safeguarding Team .

Is there a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment?

This policy shows that we have thought carefully about school life with a dog and how, through careful management, there is a very low risk of harm.



Moss Hall Schools Federation. % Nether Street, London, N3 1NR.

Appendix A: Risk Assessment

Activity: Dog on school premises

Hazard & Risk	Who could be harmed	What precautions are in place?	What else can be done?
Animal Behaviour	<i>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</i>	• The dog will receive ongoing formal training, socialising and conditioning within the school environment • The dog will be certified by the Kennel Club as having a suitable temperament to be a well-being support dog before commencing therapy and reading sessions • Pupils and parents are warned of the hazard before sessions with the school dog and take part only with consent • Pupils 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 Pupils are closely supervised by an adult during dog interaction sessions • Pupils are never left with the dog unsupervised • The school dog will always be in the care of a responsible adult who will have received handling training • If the school dog exhibits any warning behaviours such growling or lowered ears she will be removed immediately from pupils • The school dog resides in the headship rooms in MHJ1 and is not out in the school community outside of designated well-being, reading and reward sessions • The dog will always be on a lead when she is out of the headship rooms. Signage will indicate that pupils are only allowed in this area with staff supervision. • In the event that a pupil, staff member or visitor is bitten or scratched (even if only a “play” bite) the School Welfare officer will inspect and assess the injury. The suitability of the school dog will then be reassessed by the Executive Head.	The dog received a positive report from a certified Dog Behaviourist in October 23 “Overall I was very impressed with Zuki who presented herself as a well-adjusted dog that was ready to interact with anyone. Keen to be everyone’s friend” “I do not think for a moment that Zuki presents any risk or danger to the children or staff at the school” Report available .. Moss Hall School - ...

Animal Health, diseases and parasites	Pupils/Staff/Visitors	• Dog to have necessary vaccinations before coming into school • Dog to have regular veterinary checks • Dog to be bathed regularly (see below) • Dog to live with owner when not in school • Dog will not be allowed to come into contact with wild rodents due to possibility of disease transmission	
Dog excrement & urine - illness and falls/slips Hygiene/Infection	Pupils/Staff/Visitor	• Dog will be wormed every 3 months • Dog will be kept free of fleas, ticks. (monthly treatment) MV to keep a record of this • Any excrement or urine will be cleaned up immediately and thoroughly disposed of responsibly and hygienically by the owner or adult with responsibility at the time of the incident • Hand washing facilities close to where the dog will be. • A bag containing poo bags/plastic bags, kitchen roll and rubber gloves will be carried by the member of the staff walking the dog. • Adequate provision for hand washing • Do not allow children to touch any part of their face with their hands before hands are washed • Younger pupils should be seen washing their hands • All wounds on exposed skin are suitably covered • Dog Food stuff stored carefully to prevent contamination and infestation • Dog to be bathed regularly at owner's home/ groomers	Dog will be exercised out of school daily. Dog will be encouraged to use one or two identified places (not used by children) where to urinate when on school premises Hand sanitiser also available in HT office, foyer and medical rooms
Dog getting over excited when interacting with children and jumping up, scratching or biting.	Pupils/Staff/Visitors	• The dog will always be in the care of a responsible adult and will never be allowed to freely roam the school premises. • Children are not left with the dog unsupervised. • The dog will always be on a lead when she is out of the Head's office. • Pupils will be taught how and when to greet the dog • Pupils will be taught the impact of their actions. • Pupils will be taught what to do to prevent the dog from chasing them. (i.e. stand still, cross arms) • The dog will attend the groomers' regularly to make sure her claws are kept short and is also walked on concrete/tarmac to keep them trimmed.	The responsible adult to remove the dog from the situation if she is over excited

Dog hair causing allergies	Pupils/Staff/Visitors	• Parents have been asked to inform the schools of any known allergies prior to introduction of the dog to school. A list of any children who should not interact with the dog will be kept in the welfare room. • Children will be taught to wash their hands after active participation with the dog.	Hand gel to be installed in key areas around the schools
Animal Phobias	<i>Staff or students could suffer distress themselves or distress the school dog if they become scared or upset around the school dog</i>	• Pupils are encouraged but never forced to take part in dog well-being or reading sessions. • 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. • Outside of well-being or reading sessions the school dog is kept in the Headship offices in MHJ, and enters and exits the building outside of break and lesson changeover periods. • Well-being, reading and reward sessions will take place only in specific areas of the school where pupils can avoid contact with the dog if desired	

- The school dog is accompanied by a trained 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.
- Where possible, the school dog is present for the sounding of the alarms outside of school hours to observe their response.
- 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.

- The school has public liability insurance
 - The dog will be assessed at Level 1 and Level 2 of the Kennel Club training for puppies to assess temperament.
- Additional Insurance has been secured for the dog on the school premises