



**Low Road and Windmill
Music Federation**

School Dog Policy

2025

Introduction

Research has shown many benefits to therapy and reading dogs in school settings. Music Federation [Low Road and Windmill Primary Schools] have two school dogs who work 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 Music Federation (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).

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 Music Federation we have school dogs to support our staff team in bringing all these benefits to our students. Music Federation's school dogs will be trained as a therapy dogs and certified by Paws Therapy Dogs, as well as being trained as a reading dogs through their puppy training (see Section 4 – code of conduct).

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>)

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/>)

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>)

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>)

Principles

The Executive Headteacher, Andrew Gamble, and Chair of Governors, Julie Holmes, both agree to a school dogs (“Monte & Ralf”) working in the federation.

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

Monte & Ralf are Cocker Spaniels chosen because they are an intelligent breed that will respond well to training and which are known to be good with children, shed little hair, and are very sociable and friendly. <https://www.waggle.co.uk/blog/post/are-cocker-spaniels-good-family-dogs>

Monte’s legal owner is Mrs. Troughton. Mrs. Troughton has full responsibility for the welfare of Monte and all expenses relating to pet insurance, food and other expenses and ensuring that the dog is vaccinated, wormed and flea treated.

Ralf’s legal owner is Mrs. Senior. Mrs. Senior has full responsibility for the welfare of Ralf and all expenses relating to pet insurance, food and other expenses and ensuring that the dog is vaccinated, wormed and flea treated.

Mrs. Troughton and Mrs. Senior, the legal owner of the school dogs, abide by a risk assessment which has been approved by the Executive Headteacher, Governing Body and recommended by the School Improvement Partner. This will be reviewed annually.

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

The Federation’s liability insurance covers the school for risk related to a working dog on site. The Business Manager has responsibility for ensuring this remains on the school’s policy during Monte and Ralf’s time working at Music Federation.

Staff, parents and students will be informed in writing that the working dogs will be in school.

Parents can indicate that their child is not allowed to be present during dog therapy sessions by emailing info@musicfederation.co.uk or calling 0113 2712115/ 0113 2716051 to inform the school offices.

The presence of the school dogs will sign posted to visitors at reception and the school website. Reception staff will relay visitor issues to the Executive/ Federation Headteacher as soon as possible.

Monte and Ralf will only have student therapy and reading sessions once certified as a therapy dog by Paws Therapy (<https://paws-therapydogs.com>)
Only staff trained to handle the dog in student sessions will have permission to do so.

Code of Conduct

Staff Responsibilities

Mrs. Troughton and Mrs. Senior will know the whereabouts of the dogs and which staff are supervising at all times.

If a dog is ill, he will not be allowed into school. Staff owners have responsibility for ensuring appropriate alternative care for Monte and Ralf if they are not able to be in the school on a given day.

Mrs. Troughton and Mrs. Senior are responsible for ensuring Monte and Ralf are trained and certified as a therapy dog by Paws Therapy Dogs.

Dogs must be kept on a lead when moving between rooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of a trained adult (see clause 3.12).

Monte will be kept in the Federation Headteacher's office when not interacting with students for therapy or reading sessions. Ralf will be kept in the Safeguarding office/ annex office when not interacting with students for therapy or reading sessions.

Monte and/ or Ralf will only visit designated therapy or reading lessons and not be allowed in other areas of the school.

Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dogs. The school offices keep a list of all students and staff with a reported allergy to dogs (dander) and ensures that all trained handlers for Monte and Ralf know who these students and staff are.

Staff leading therapy or reading sessions with Monte or Ralf have a responsibility to ensure all staff, students or visitors present are happy for a dog to enter the room.

Students must never be left alone with Monte or Ralf and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.

Students will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog before any interaction during a therapy sessions or visit.

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.

Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by the trained dog handling staff only.

Federation 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.

Student Responsibilities

Students whose parents have withdrawn consent are not allowed to attend dog therapy sessions

Students should be careful to stroke Monte and/or Ralf on the body, chest, back and not by the face or top of head.

Students are not allowed to approach Monte or Ralf or disturb the dogs whilst they are sleeping or eating.

Students are not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.

Students must wait until the school dog is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking them.

Students are not allowed to eat during sessions with the dogs.

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

Students understand that any deliberate violence or threatening behaviour towards dogs will be treat according to the behaviour policy.

Monte



Ralf



Appendix A – School Dog Risk Assessment

Hazard	At risk			Existing Control measures
	Students	Staff	Visitors	
Animal Behaviour 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	Medium	Medium	Medium	1. The dogs will receive ongoing formal training, socialising and conditioning within the school environment. 2. The dogs will be certified by Paws Therapy before commencing therapy and reading sessions. 3. Pupils and parents are warned of the hazard before therapy sessions with the school dogs and take part only with consent. 4. Students are taught appropriate behaviour around the school dogs, what to do to prevent over stimulating or upsetting the dogs and how to remain calm around them. 5. Students are closely supervised by an adult during dog therapy sessions. 6. Students are never left with the dogs unsupervised. 7. The school dogs will always be in the care of a responsible adult who will have received handling training. 8. If the school dogs exhibit any warning behaviours such as growling or lowered ears, they will be removed immediately from students. 9. The school dogs reside in the safeguarding and federation heads office and are not out in the school community outside of designated therapy, reading and reward sessions. 10. The dogs will always be on a lead when they are out of the office. Signage will indicate that pupils are only allowed in this area with staff supervision. 11. In the event that a student, staff member or visitor is bitten or scratched (even if only a “play” bite) the staff at the school office will inspect and assess the injury.
Disease, illness and allergic reaction. Staff, pupils or visitors could suffer ill health if they come into contact with animal faeces or urine or have an allergy to dogs	Medium	Medium	Low	4. The School office keeps at all times an up-to-date list of students with known allergic reactions and these students are not present during therapy, reading or reward sessions with the dogs. 5. The dogs are taken regularly outside the school building for toilet facilities by a designated member of staff trained to handle the school dogs. 6. All waste produced by the dogs, whether accidental or routine, is handled and disposed of hygienically by designated staff members only. Contaminated items and surfaces are immediately washed and disinfected. 7. Pupils and adults are not allowed to eat around the school dogs. 8. Pupils and adults must always wash their hands after handling the school dogs. 9. Immediate medical assistance will be sought where an allergic reaction does not subside once the animal and afflicted person are kept apart.

Animal Phobias. Staff or students could suffer distress themselves or distress the school dog if they become scared or upset around the school dog	Medium Low Low	1. Students are encouraged but never forced to take part in dog therapy or reading sessions. 2. Where there are pupils with phobias, every effort is made to segregate the school dogs from those with phobias. 3. Outside of therapy or reading sessions the school dogs are kept in the safeguarding office and the Federation Head's office and enter and exit the building outside of break and lesson changeover periods. 4. Therapy, reading and reward sessions will take place only in specific areas of the school (e.g. the Nurture room, Sanctuary room, Federation Headteacher Office, Safeguarding Office)
School emergency evacuation (including drills)	Medium Medium Low	1. The school dogs are 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. 2. Where possible, the school dogs are to be present for sounding of the alarms outside of school hours to observe their response. 3. If the dogs manage to escape from an adult during the evacuation, the adult must still evacuate immediately and notify staff outside of the dog's absence.
Claim is made against school. A parent or visitor could make a claim against the school relating to the behaviour of the dog.	Low High Medium	1. The school has public liability insurance which covers liability for a working therapy dog with certification. 2. The school dogs will be assessed as Paws Therapy dogs once their training and adolescence are completed prior to working in therapy sessions with students.

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 owners of the dogs are Mrs Troughton and Mrs Senior. They will bear the costs associated with owning the dogs; the school budget will support liability insurance and staff training costs only where appropriate.

Q Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

A Yes. The dogs are from a home where both parents were seen and has been specifically chosen for its temperament. Both dogs are registered with The Kennel Club.

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

A The dogs will be kept in the Safeguarding and Federation Head's offices. The dogs will only spend time in the nurture room and Sanctuary room at specific planned sessions where students can interact safely outside of lesson times and therefore the dogs will not be a distraction to students during lessons.

The dogs will also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation, following consultation with staff beforehand.

Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

A Yes, we have carefully considered having dogs in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog.

Q Who is responsible for training?

A Mrs Troughton and Mrs Senior will be the legal owner of the dogs 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 Paws Therapy. The school will have the dog assessed and certified as a therapy dog by Paws Therapy before they begin therapy and reading sessions.

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. The dog will not be allowed in the main playground at any time.

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 Safeguarding office and Federation Head's office. The offices are 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 or classrooms. Therefore, a student will not be forced to be in contact with the dogs 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 dogs 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 dogs will be kept in the designated offices area with their legal owner, Mrs Troughton and Mrs Senior and will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. The dogs 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 dogs were specifically chosen for being a breed known for sociable dispositions and minimal moulting, they 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>