



School Dog Policy

July 2022

Date adopted: 14th July, 2022

Date to be reviewed: July 2024

Policy written by Assistant Headteacher for Safeguarding and Wellbeing JLR Summer 2022

Additions for second dog: Comet added 29/1/2023

1. Rationale and Aim

1 - Introduction

Research has shown many benefits to therapy and reading dogs in school settings. Milford Haven School would like to introduce the use of a therapy dog into the emotional well-being provision at school.

This policy is designed to set out to pupils, parents and visitors the reasons for having a school dog at Milford Haven School (Section 2 – The benefits of a school dog) and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of pupils, 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 pupils, staff and visitors (Appendix A - Risk Assessment).

2 The benefits of a school dog

School dogs have been proven to help develop pupils' reading skills, improve behaviour, attendance and academic confidence, as well as increasing pupils' understanding of responsibility and developing empathy and nurturing skills.

At Milford Haven School we hope that a school dog will be a beneficial addition to the therapeutic offer, acting as an adjunct to the interventions already offered and promoting engagement for pupils who may have found it difficult to access talking therapies in the past.

Animal assisted therapy can:

- Teach empathy and appropriate interpersonal skills;
- Help individuals develop social skills;
- Be soothing and support the development of rapport between the professional and pupils, and improve individual's skills to pick up social cues imperative to human relationships;
 - Professionals can process that information and use it to help pupils see how their behaviour affects others;
- Therapy dogs have been shown to support emotional regulation through the positive impact on the autonomic nervous system;
 - A recent report highlighted children working with therapy dogs experienced increased motivation for learning, resulting in improved outcomes;
- Therapy dogs are being used to support children with social and emotional learning needs, which in turn can assist with literacy development.

Research into the effects of therapy dogs in schools is showing a range of benefits including:

- Increase in school attendance;

- Gains in confidence;
- Decreases in pupil's anxiety behaviours resulting in improved learning outcomes, such as increases in reading and writing levels;
- Positive changes towards learning and improved motivation, and;
- Enhanced relationships with peers and teachers due to experiencing trust and unconditional positive regard from a therapy dog. This in turn helps pupils learn how to express their feelings and enter into more trusting relationships.

The plan is to register the dog as an Emotional Support Animal by 2023, once the dog has completed accredited behavioural training ([Extremus Dog Training](#)).

2.1 Confidence benefits

"If children are partnered with a dog to read to, for example, the dog provides comfort, encourages positive social behaviour, enhances self-esteem, motivates speech and inspires children to have fun and enjoy the non-judgemental experience"

Bark & Read – The Kennel Club (<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/barkandread>)

2.2 ALN 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."

Therapy Dogs Nationwide (<http://www.tdn.org.uk/schools/>)

2.3 Mental Health Benefits

"There is emerging evidence to suggest that Animal Assisted Psychotherapy improves the efficacy of mental health treatments in self-selected adolescent populations via reductions in primary symptomatology, and via secondary factors that improve therapeutic processes and quality, such as engagement and retention".

Incorporating animal-assisted therapy in mental health treatments for adolescents: A systematic review of canine assisted psychotherapy Melanie G. Jones, Simon M. Rice, Susan M. Cotton. 2019; 14(1), 2019.

2.4 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/wpcontent/uploads/2018/02/School-Dog-Policy.pdf>)

2.5 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/wpcontent/uploads/2018/02/School-Dog-Policy.pdf>)

3 Principles

3.1 The Headteacher, Ms Morris and The Governors have agreed to the presence of a therapy dog at Milford Haven School.

3.2 Only the school dog is allowed on the premises. No other dogs are permitted unless the Headteacher has approved their visit.

3.3 The Therapy dog is named Evie/Comet, the breed -miniature dachshund. The Therapy dog is Kennel Club registered, selected for its temperament, reduced risk of congenital health issues, and hypoallergenic, non-shedding coat.

3.4 Ms Morris is the legal owner of the dog and has full responsibility for its welfare. Nearly all staff have full responsibility for the welfare of the school dog. All expenses relating to pet insurance, food and other expenses and ensuring that the dog is vaccinated, wormed and flea treated will be met by Milford Haven School.

3.5 Milford Haven School has produced a risk assessment which has been approved by the Safeguarding Lead and this will be reviewed annually.

3.6 The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of staff.

3.7 Milford Haven School'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 Evie's/Comet's time working at Milford Haven School

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 the dog Therapy sessions by emailing admin@milfordhavenschool.co.uk or calling 01646 690021

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

3.11 Evie/Comet will only meet pupils during Therapy and reading sessions once certified as a Therapy dog by Pets As Therapy (<https://petsasTherapy.org/>).

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 The Business Manager 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. The Business Manager and Headteacher has responsibility for ensuring appropriate alternative care for Evie/Comet. if she is not able to be in the school on a given day.

4.1.3 The Business Manager is responsible for ensuring Evie/Comet is trained and certified as a Therapy dog by Pets As Therapy.

4.1.4 Evie/Comet must be kept on a lead when on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of a trained adult (see clause 3.12).

4.1.5 Evie/Comet will be kept in the Headteachers office when not interacting with pupils for Therapy or reading sessions.

4.1.6 Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near Evie/Comet. Milford Haven school will keep a list of all pupils and staff who have reported an allergy to dogs and ensure that all trained handlers for Evie/Comet know who these pupils and staff are.

4.1.7 Staff leading Therapy or reading sessions with Evie/Comet have a responsibility to ensure all staff, pupils or visitors present are happy for Evie/Comet to enter the room.

4.1.8 Pupil's must never be left alone with Evie/Comet 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 Therapy session 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 staff monitor the situation. If the dog is displaying any warning signs such as growling or flattening of her ears, the dog 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 Milford Haven 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 - Pupils 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 Evie/Comet on her body, chest, back and not by her face or top of her head.

4.2.3 Pupils are not allowed to approach Evie/Comet or disturb the dog whilst 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.

4.2.6 Pupils are not allowed to eat during sessions with the dog.

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

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

Appendix A

Risk Assessment

[RISK ASSESSMENT School dog.docx](#)

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 - Evie is legally registered to Milford Haven School. Milford Haven School will bear the costs associated with the dog; the school budget will support liability insurance and staff training costs only where appropriate. Comet is legally owned by the Headteacher and will be brought to school on Friday's only to support Hafan pupils and to help pupils reduce attachment to one single dog.

Q - Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

A - Yes. The dog is from a home where both parents were seen and has been specifically chosen for its temperament.

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

A - The dog will be kept in the Headteacher's office area. The dog will only spend time in classrooms, the Library and the Milford Haven School grounds where pupils can interact safely outside of lesson times and therefore the dog will not be a distraction to pupils during lessons. The dog 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 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 - Milford Haven School will be responsible for his 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 the Pets As Therapy charity. The school will have the dog assessed and certified as a Therapy dog by Pets As Therapy before she begins 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 Headteachers office area. 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 staff. Therefore, a student will not be forced to be in contact with a 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 Headteacher's office area, 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 - Pupils 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, He 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>

Appendix D: Dog information

Evie is a 6 year old miniature dachshund



Appendix E: Dog information

Comet is a 7 year old King Charles cross with Jack Russel and has been spayed, who has one eye missing due to surgery.

