



A proud member of



Dogs in School Policy

Date Written	October 2026	
Written By	Mrs D. Roper	
Date of review	October 2027	
Approved by:	(EHT)	Date:
	(Chair LSC)	Date:

The school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of all children and expects our staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Dogs in school Policy (October 2026)

CONTENTS

1. Aims and Purpose
2. Supporting Legislation
3. Principles of having a Dedicated School Dog
4. Occasions when other dogs or animals are permitted to be on site.
5. Systems to safeguard the school dog, and those it interacts with.
6. Interaction requirements and guidance
7. Roles and Responsibilities
8. Monitoring and Review
9. Linked Policies and Documents
10. Appendix 1: Supporting Information - Reasons to Have a School Dog
11. Appendix 2: Frequently Asked Questions

1. AIMS AND PURPOSE

This policy aims to:

- Provide clear guidelines on the principles of having a dedicated dog on school site, including how provision is managed to effectively cater for need.
- Provide clear guidelines as to when other dogs are permitted on school site.
- Provide a clear explanation of how safeguards are in place, monitored, assessed and reviewed.
- Explain how the school dog will be used to support the welfare of children - Identify roles and responsibilities.

2. SUPPORTING LEGISLATION

The following government legislation and advice can be applicable to the control and welfare of dogs in public places and in general, and in schools in particular.

- Health and safety Act 1974
- Environmental protection Act 1991
- The Litter (animal dropping) order 1991
- Dangerous Dogs (Amendment) Act 1977
- Clean Neighbours and Environment Act 2005
- Animal Welfare Act (2006, Appendix A)
- Department for Education Advice on Standards for school Premises (2015)

3. PRINCIPLES OF A DEDICATED SCHOOL DOG

At Moorcroft Wood Academy, the mental health and well-being of our pupils are central to ensuring that children feel safe, secure and supported within their environment. We aim to develop confident, resilient individuals who are equipped to approach the tasks, challenges and experiences they may encounter in the world around them. We also recognise the importance of regular school attendance and the positive impact this can have on children's education, personal development and future life opportunities.

Whilst our pastoral support systems play an important role in promoting positive mental health and well-being, we also recognise the valuable contribution that interaction with animals can make. Positive experiences with animals can provide children with opportunities to develop emotional regulation, confidence, empathy and a sense of connection, while creating a calm and supportive environment. For some children, animals can provide an additional source of comfort and reassurance, complementing the wider pastoral support available within school.

4. OCCASIONS WHEN DOGS OR OTHER ANIMALS ARE PERMITTED ON SCHOOL SITE

As a school, we recognise that there may be occasions when animals, including dogs, need to enter the school site. Such occasions may include:

- **Pre-booked visits involving animals** that support and enhance curriculum development and learning.
- **Assistance or service animals**, such as guide dogs, where their presence is required to support an individual.

Where parents or carers need to bring an assistance or service animal onto the school site, this must be discussed and agreed in advance with the Executive Head Teacher or Head of Academy. This will enable the school to consider any appropriate arrangements to ensure the safety, well-being and accessibility needs of all pupils, staff and visitors

5. SYSTEMS TO SAFEGUARD THE SCHOOL DOG, AND THOSE IT INTERACTS WITH

The School Dog – Sonny

Sonny, the school dog, is owned by Mrs Adair, Executive Head Teacher. Sonny is a Labradoodle, a cross between a Labrador Retriever and a Poodle. This breed was chosen due to its reputation for having a positive and sociable temperament, being intelligent and responsive to training, and shedding relatively little hair.

Staff, parents and pupils will be informed that Sonny may be present in school as a reward for achieving whole-class attendance targets and on other occasions considered appropriate by the school. The presence of Sonny will always be managed in accordance with the school's risk assessment.

A specific risk assessment has been completed for Sonny. This will be reviewed annually and whenever there is a significant change in circumstances, relevant legislation, guidance or advice that may affect the arrangements.

Health, Safety and Supervision

- Staff, pupils and visitors who are known to have an allergy or other adverse reaction to dogs must not approach or interact with Sonny. All visitors will be informed on arrival that a dog is present on the school site.
- Sonny will receive appropriate veterinary care and will be kept up to date with all necessary vaccinations and other preventative healthcare.

- If Sonny is unwell or there is any concern about his health or behaviour, he will not be brought into school.
- Sonny will be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms and when being walked around the school site, unless an alternative arrangement has been specifically risk assessed and agreed.
- Sonny will remain under the control and supervision of a designated responsible adult at all times.
- Pupils will **never be left unsupervised with Sonny**. An appropriate adult will be present and will supervise all interactions between pupils and the dog.
- Pupils will be taught and reminded about appropriate behaviour around Sonny, including how to approach, interact with and respond to the dog safely.

Parental Consent

Parents and carers will be consulted regarding their child's interaction with Sonny.

Parents and carers should inform the school of any allergies, fears, medical conditions or other circumstances that may affect their child's ability to safely interact with Sonny. Where appropriate, alternative arrangements will be made to ensure that all pupils can participate safely in school activities.

All visitors will be informed about the dog and related protocols on arrival and office staff will relay visitor issues, or concerns, to the Executive Head Teacher or Head of Academy immediately.

Staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog.

The Executive Head Teacher or Senior Leadership Team will know the whereabouts of Sonny and which staff are supervising at all times.

The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Mrs Adair or Mrs. Roper.

6. INTERACTION REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDANCE

Appropriate Behaviour Around Sonny

Children will be reminded regularly of how to behave safely and appropriately around Sonny. All interactions will be supervised by a responsible adult, and children will be expected to follow the following guidance:

- Children should remain **calm and quiet** around Sonny and avoid sudden movements or loud noises.
- Children should not stare directly into Sonny's eyes; as prolonged eye contact may be perceived as threatening by a dog.
- Children must **never put their face close to Sonny's face** and should always approach him while standing up.
- Children will be taught and encouraged to use **"Sonny breathing"** to help create and maintain a calm environment when interacting with him.
- Children must never approach, touch or disturb Sonny when he is **sleeping, resting or eating**.
- Children must not engage in rough play, chase games or other behaviour that could cause Sonny to become excited, frightened or agitated.
- Children should not eat food close to Sonny.
- When stroking Sonny, children should gently stroke his **body, chest or back** and should avoid touching his face or the top of his head.
- Children should never crowd around Sonny. If a large number of children are gathered around him, the supervising adult will monitor the situation closely and reduce the number of children if Sonny shows signs of discomfort or anxiety.
- Anyone who interacts with Sonny must **wash their hands before and after** interaction.
- Individuals with open or healing wounds on their hands must not interact directly with Sonny.

Recognising Sonny's Body Language

Children and adults will be encouraged to recognise and respect Sonny's body language. Dogs communicate how they are feeling through their posture, facial expressions and behaviour.

Signs that Sonny may be feeling **frightened, anxious, uncomfortable or threatened** can include:

- Flattened or lowered ears.
- A lowered or tucked tail.
- Hiding behind his owner or another person.
- Whining.
- Growling.
- Showing or baring his teeth.
- Other changes in body language or behaviour that indicate he is uncomfortable.

Any growling, showing of teeth or other warning behaviour must be taken seriously. If Sonny displays signs that he is frightened, anxious, uncomfortable or threatened, the supervising adult will immediately remove him from the situation and return him to the care of the Executive Head Teacher or Head of Academy.

Sonny's welfare will always take priority, and no child will be expected or permitted to interact with him if he is showing signs that he does not wish to do so.

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Governing Body

The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring that the school has a clear, written policy governing the presence and management of dogs on the school site.

Executive Head Teacher is responsible for:

- Evaluating Sonny's overall health and determining whether he is fit to attend school.
- Ensuring that appropriate veterinary health checks are undertaken and that Sonny's medical and welfare needs are met.
- Determining an appropriate schedule for Sonny's attendance and engagement in school, including his involvement in whole-class attendance rewards and other appropriate activities.
- Ensuring Sonny has access to appropriate training where required.
- Providing suitable facilities and arrangements for Sonny during his time in school, including access to water, rest areas, sanitation and appropriate personal care.
- Ensuring that any accidents or incidents involving Sonny are recorded and reported in accordance with the school's agreed procedures.
- Reviewing the school's risk assessment for Sonny on an annual basis, or sooner where circumstances, guidance or relevant information change.

School Staff are responsible for:

- Reading, understanding and abiding by this policy.
- Supporting and promoting safe and appropriate interaction between pupils, staff, visitors and Sonny.
- Ensuring that all interactions with Sonny are appropriately supervised.
- Monitoring Sonny's behaviour and well-being and responding appropriately to any signs of anxiety, discomfort, illness or distress.
- Ensuring Sonny's personal care and welfare needs are appropriately supported.
- Reporting any injury or illness involving Sonny to the Executive Head Teacher as soon as possible.
- Reporting any injury sustained by a pupil or member of staff in accordance with the school's agreed accident and incident reporting procedures.
- Ensuring that children are reminded of the expectations for safe and appropriate behaviour around Sonny.

Pupils are responsible for:

- Following this policy and the instructions provided by staff when Sonny is present.
- Behaving calmly and appropriately around Sonny.
- Following all guidance relating to safe interaction with Sonny.
- Respecting Sonny's space, particularly when he is eating, sleeping or resting.
- Following the instructions of the supervising adult and immediately reporting any concerns about Sonny's behaviour or well-being to a member of staff.

8. MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed by the Executive Head Teacher and Head of Academy on an **annual basis**, or sooner where necessary in response to any relevant changes in legislation, statutory guidance, professional advice or school circumstances.

Any significant changes to the policy will be communicated to relevant staff, pupils and parents/carers as appropriate.

9. LINKED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

- Health and Safety Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Accident Reporting Policy
- Risk Assessment for Sonny

10. APPENDIX 1: Benefits of having a Dog in School.

There is a growing body of research exploring the potential benefits of appropriately managed interactions between children and dogs in educational settings. At Moorcroft Wood Academy, we recognise that Sonny's presence can provide an additional, supportive element to the school's wider pastoral, social and emotional provision.

Potential benefits of appropriately supervised interaction with a school dog include:

1. Supporting engagement with learning and academic activities.
2. Encouraging positive attitudes towards school and attendance.
3. Supporting literacy development, particularly through reading activities.
4. Promoting calm and positive behaviours.
5. Developing social skills and self-esteem.
6. Building confidence and resilience.
7. Developing children's understanding of responsibility, respect and kindness towards living things.
8. Supporting positive engagement with school and reducing barriers to attendance.
9. Motivating pupils who may find it difficult to maintain attention or engagement with traditional learning activities.

Behaviour and Emotional Regulation

Children can develop empathy and understanding through their interactions with animals. By learning to recognise and respond appropriately to a dog's needs and emotions, pupils can develop a greater awareness of how others may feel. This can support the development of empathy, patience and respectful behaviour towards peers.

Challenging behaviour can sometimes create barriers to learning. The presence of a calm and appropriately managed school dog may provide an additional opportunity to encourage positive behaviour and emotional regulation. Interaction with Sonny will therefore be used alongside, and not as a replacement for, the school's existing behaviour and pastoral support systems.

Literacy and Reading

Sonny may be used to support reading activities where this is appropriate and where parental consent has been obtained. Dogs can provide a calm and non-judgemental audience for children who may lack confidence in their reading ability.

Reading to Sonny can provide pupils with an opportunity to practise their skills in a relaxed environment without the fear of making mistakes in front of their peers. Sonny's calm presence can help some children feel more comfortable and confident when engaging in reading activities.

Social Development

Interaction with Sonny can provide opportunities for pupils to develop social and emotional skills, including:

- Communication and interaction.
- Empathy and kindness.
- Respect for boundaries.
- Patience and self-control.
- Cooperation and sharing.
- Responsibility and caring for others.
- Confidence and self-esteem.

Where appropriate and risk assessed, pupils may participate in activities such as grooming, walking or simple training exercises under the **direct supervision of a responsible adult**. These activities can help pupils understand the importance of responsibility, consistency, boundaries and caring for another living being.

Sonny as a Positive Reward

Sonny may form part of the school's wider reward and recognition systems. Pupils who demonstrate positive attendance, make significant progress, achieve agreed targets or demonstrate positive behaviour may, where appropriate, be given the opportunity to spend designated time interacting with Sonny.

The opportunity to interact with Sonny will always be subject to:

- Appropriate parental consent.
- The pupil's willingness to participate.
- Sonny's health, welfare and behaviour at the time.
- Appropriate adult supervision.
- The school's risk assessment and safety procedures.

Interaction with Sonny will **not** be used as a substitute for other rewards or support and will not disadvantage pupils who are unable or do not wish to interact with a dog.

Individual Pastoral Support

Where appropriate, Sonny may also be incorporated into individual or small-group pastoral activities. A calm and appropriately supervised interaction with a dog may provide reassurance and an opportunity for pupils to develop confidence, communication and emotional regulation skills.

This may be particularly beneficial for some pupils who experience difficulties with social interaction, confidence, anxiety or emotional regulation. However, the school recognises that **not all children will**

benefit from interaction with a dog, and individual needs, preferences, allergies, fears and safeguarding considerations will always be taken into account.

Sonny's role is therefore intended to **complement the school's existing pastoral, safeguarding, behaviour and educational provision**, rather than replace professional or specialist support where this is required.

11. APPENDIX 2: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?

The legal owner of the dog will be Mrs Adair; she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support with some costings as deemed appropriate (e.g. specific facilities or school based equipment).

Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

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

Will the dog be a distraction?

The dog will be kept in the Executive Head Teacher/ Head of Academy's office. This is away from the classrooms and playground areas, but they are sufficient size for the school dog to walk freely.

Sonny will only come into contact with children who are happy to have contact with him and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision.

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

Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

Yes. The school has carefully considered having a dog on site and sought advice from many sources, including undertaking Dog Mentor training with Jenny Duckworth, 1:1 training with the Adair family with All Go Mutts and looking at other schools that successfully used a school dog.

Who is responsible for training?

Mrs Adair will be the legal owner of the dog and, as a result, will be responsible for Sonny's training. Appropriate professional training has been obtained, please see above.

How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?

In the interest of health and hygiene, Sonny will be toileted when taken out for short walks around the grounds. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed.

The school's policy of no dogs in the playground is still applicable as we are unable to put effective control measures in place that guarantee temperament and safety when children come into unsupervised contact with unknown dogs.

How will the dog's welfare be considered?

The dog will be walked regularly and given 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 designated / identified times. This may also be used as a behaviour reward, in line with our behaviour policy. The dog will be kept in the Executive Head Teacher's/ Head of Academy's office and will only have planned supervised contact with children and visitors. The dog has been Dog Learning Mentor trained to Gold stand and will have access to food and water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered.

How will this be managed where children have allergies?

Children will not need to touch the dog, 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 breed of dog is known for low shedding; he is given a high quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?

Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with him unless permission for this has been given. 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.