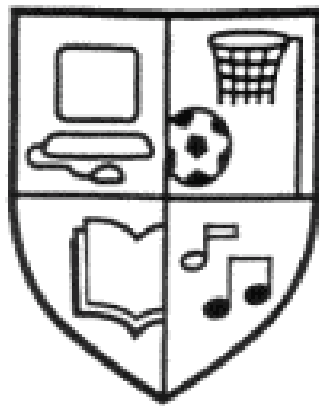


Manland Primary School

School Dog Policy



Last Review by School	May 2026
Next Review by School	May 2029

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Introduction

Research has shown many benefits to therapy and reading dogs in school settings. Manland Primary has a school dog who works with our pupils to improve literacy and student behaviour and wellbeing. This policy is designed to set out to pupils, parents and carers and visitors the reasons for having a school dog at Manland Primary 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).

Beryl is a young, friendly, and wonderfully placid miniature Labradoodle, a breed well known for its calm temperament, intelligence, and hypoallergenic coat. Labradoodles are often chosen as therapy and support dogs because they are highly sociable, quick to learn, and enjoy being around children. Beryl has already completed her first round of puppy school, where she learned basic obedience, socialisation skills, and how to remain calm in busy environments.

We completely understand that children will all have very different experiences and feelings around dogs—some may have grown up with them, some may never have been around one before, and others may feel a little nervous or unsure. Because of this, there will be very clear rules and boundaries in place at all times to make sure everyone feels safe and comfortable. Beryl will always be on a lead, closely supervised, and children will never be expected or encouraged to interact with her if they do not want to. Any interactions will be calm, gentle, and carefully managed so that both the children and Beryl have a positive experience

The Benefits of a School Dog

There is a growing body of evidence showing the positive impact that well-trained school dogs can have on children’s wellbeing and learning. Some of the benefits include:

- **Improved emotional wellbeing** – dogs can help reduce anxiety and provide comfort.
- **Increased motivation and confidence** – children often feel more relaxed reading aloud or practising skills with a dog present.

- **Enhanced social skills** – interacting with a dog encourages empathy, responsibility, and communication.
- **A calmer school environment** – dogs can help create a sense of warmth and community.
- **Encouraging nurture and kindness** – caring for and respecting animals can help children develop patience, gentleness, and consideration for others.
- **Supporting emotional regulation** – spending time with a calm dog can help some children feel settled and ready to learn.
- **Promoting positive engagement with school** – having a school dog can make school feel welcoming and enjoyable, particularly for children who may find school challenging at times.
- **Building confidence in social situations** – a dog can often act as a gentle conversation starter and help children feel more comfortable interacting with adults and peers.

“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>)

“Stroking animals, such as cats and dogs, releases endorphins, having a calming effect and therefore reducing stress levels.....Pet therapy has also been proven to help children overcome emotional disorders and overcome speech problems.”

- Benefits of Pets as Therapy – Elysium Healthcare

(<https://www.elysiumhealthcare.co.uk/benefits-pets-therapy/>)

“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>)

"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>)

Policy Principles

The Headteacher agrees to a school dog ("Beryl") working at Manland Primary School. The school dog risk assessment has been reviewed by the Safeguarding Governor.

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

Beryl is a "miniature Labradoodle", chosen because it is an intelligent breed that will respond well to training and which is known to be good with children and pupils, sheds little hair and is very sociable and friendly.

Beryl's legal owner is Mrs Wicks. Mrs Wicks has full responsibility for the welfare of the school dog and all expenses relating to food and other expenses. This includes ensuring that the school dog is fully vaccinated, wormed and flea treated.

A full risk assessment has been carried out and is available to all staff, parents and visitors (Appendix 1).

The school dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure, under the supervision of Mrs Wicks or other identified and trained members of staff.

Manland Primary School's insurance (The Risk Protection Arrangement) covers the risk related to a dog under the ownership or control of the school. A summary of this cover is available to all staff, parents and visitors (Appendix 2).

A poster will be displayed in the school entrance to let staff, parents and pupils know that a school dog will be on site at times during the academic year. Additional information will be accessible via the school website.

Parents can indicate that their child is not allowed to be present during activities involving the school dog. This can be communicated by completed of the online form on our school website.

Where external services are providing additional Therapy Dog sessions, permission will be sought from parents/carers separately. Parents, carers have the right to withdraw permission from any activity involving our school or external therapy dog at any time.

The presence of a school dog will be signposted to visitors at reception, the school website and via our digital displays. Reception staff will relay visitor issues to the Headteacher as soon as possible.

Only staff trained to handle the school dog in young person sessions will be granted authority to do so.

School Dog: Roles and Responsibilities

Staff

Mrs Wicks will know the whereabouts of the school dog and which member of trained staff is supervising at all times.

If the school dog is unwell, they will not be allowed into school. Mrs Wicks has responsibility for ensuring appropriate alternative care for Beryl if she is not in school on a given day.

Beryl will be kept on a lead when moving around the school building or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of an appropriately trained adult.

When on school site, and unless participating in sessions with pupils, the school dog will be based in the Headteacher's Office.

Beryl will only visit designated areas of the school and will not access areas where personal hygiene or food preparation takes place.

Staff, visitors and pupils known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not approach or handle Beryl. Records of pupils and staff with a reported allergy to dogs is held centrally, on our school MIS system and ensures that all trained handlers for Beryl know who these pupils and staff are.

Staff leading on reading sessions with Beryl have a responsibility to ensure all staff, pupils and visitors are comfortable with Beryl entering the room and participating in the activity.

Pupils must never be left alone with Beryl. There must be appropriate supervision at all times.

Pupils will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the school dog before any interaction.

If the school dog is surrounded by a large number of pupils, the dog could become nervous or agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the school dog must ensure that s/he monitors the situation closely. If Beryl displays any warning signs such as growling or flattening of her ears she should be immediately removed from that situation or environment by the member of staff handling her.

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

Manland Primary School 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 dog.

Pupils

To help make Beryl's time in school safe, calm, and enjoyable for everyone, we ask all pupils to follow these simple rules:

- ✓ Approach Beryl calmly and quietly.
- ✓ Always ask an adult before stroking or interacting with her – gentle hands only
- ✓ No shouting, running, or rough play around Beryl.
- ✓ Beryl will always be on a lead and supervised by a member of staff.
- ✓ Children who do not want to interact with Beryl will never be expected to.
- ✓ Beryl will have quiet spaces where she can rest without being disturbed.
- ✓ Hands should be washed or sanitised after interacting with Beryl.

Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed by the Headteacher on a 3 yearly basis, or as the need arises following a change in circumstances.

RISK ASSESSMENT FOR Manland Primary School		School dog	
Risk assessment number/ref: Beryl	Assessment by: Miss Arbury		Date: May 2026
	Manager Approval: Mrs Wicks		Date: May 2026

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
Animal Health Diseases, parasites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff, pupils, visitors • Diseases / infections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog of suitable breed / from a reputable breeder • Arrangements in place for care outside of school day, lives with legal owner • Regular veterinary health check. All vaccinations and worm / flea treatment in place. • Groomed and clean before going into school. • 'Quiet space' available for dog, time limit on daily activities so dog does not get tired (max. 3 active hours / day¹). • Dog's needs/behaviours closely monitored and acted upon. • Detail where dog will be kept – within Headteacher office. • Bed and fresh drinking water available • Planned and supervised contact with pupils and visitors. • If unwell alternative arrangements made for dog's care, would not be allowed back into school until fully recovered. 				

¹ Suggested max 3 hours figure comes from advice in Kennel club Bark and read standards of practice "Each active session with the dog must be no longer than one hour and dogs should work for no more than three active hours during a day".

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
<p>Dog Behaviour</p> <p>Bites and scratches</p> <p>Being knocked over / tripped over by dog</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff, pupils, visitors • Cuts / abrasions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beryl has completed her first round of puppy school, where she learned basic obedience, socialisation skills, and how to remain calm in busy environments. • Staff and pupils instructed and reminded of how to behave, meet, and handle the dog. • No unsupervised contact with Pupils • Handler, or other agreed adult, is present with dog at all times • Staff handling the dog able to understand and recognise signs of the dog being over stimulated, fatigued, or anxious and will remove the dog to a safe place to rest. • Dog's nails kept clipped • Dog works with small group sizes • Kept on lead in school grounds and moving between classes under control of handler, or other agreed adults. • Avoid movement in corridors during busy times. 				
<p>Allergy Phobias</p>	<p>Staff/Pupils and Visitors</p> <p>skin rashes, irritation to the eyes and nose or breathing difficulties</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breed of dog is known for low shedding, regular grooming undertaken • Clear communication to ensure any children / staff with potential allergic reactions / phobias are identified. • Existing school system to record medical needs or allergies. Staff are made aware of any children with phobias/ allergies in order their access is restricted. • Parental permission sought for children to interact with dog and able to opt-out of close contact • New families asked to complete the school dog consent form. • Alternative activities are provided in a separate room for those with allergies 				

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good general hygiene and hand washing followed. • Sign at school office advising visitors of dog presence. • Office staff will relay any visitor issues to the Head Teacher asap. • Notice placed on door of office / class dog is in, removed once dog has left room. • Room where dog is to be kept well ventilated. • All bedding, crate, and equipment to be cleaned regularly. • Dog kept in Headteacher office - flow of children minimal and controlled • Staff to supervise dog at all times and be sensitive to all children's reactions. • School Head will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times. 				
<p>Hygiene</p> <p>Infection</p>	<p>Staff/Pupils and Visitors</p> <p>Disease/infections</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No eating / drinking when handling dog • Dog toileted in appropriate area(s), away from play areas, faeces cleared immediately, bagged, and disposed of in outside bins • No entry into food preparation areas, and will not enter dining areas (canteen, staffroom) when in use. • Cover any open cuts or abrasions on the exposed skin of hands and arms with waterproof adhesive dressings • Adequate provision for hand washing (soap/ hot water / antibacterial gel) readily available. Wash hands after contact. • Paper towels provided rather than communal hand towels. 				

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not allow children to touch any part of their face with their hands before hands are washed. Younger pupils should be seen to wash their hands. Dog food stored carefully to prevent contamination and infestation. 				
Damage caused to school materials, equipment, and the school site		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dogs remain on a lead at all times when moving around the school Dogs are kept in secured rooms, with closed doors Suitable toys available if necessary 				

Benefits
<p>There should be a clear reason and justification for keeping animals in schools or bringing animals into a school.</p> <p>There is a growing body of evidence showing the positive impact that well-trained school dogs can have on children's wellbeing and learning. Some of the benefits include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved emotional wellbeing – dogs can help reduce anxiety and provide comfort. Increased motivation and confidence – children often feel more relaxed reading aloud or practising skills with a dog present. Enhanced social skills – interacting with a dog encourages empathy, responsibility, and communication. A calmer school environment – dogs can help create a sense of warmth and community. Encouraging nurture and kindness – caring for and respecting animals can help children develop patience, gentleness, and consideration for others. Supporting emotional regulation – spending time with a calm dog can help some children feel settled and ready to learn. Promoting positive engagement with school – having a school dog can make school feel welcoming and enjoyable, particularly for children who may find school challenging at times. Building confidence in social situations – a dog can often act as a gentle conversation starter and help children feel more comfortable interacting with adults and peers.

Rules for children and the school community around Beryl

To help make Beryl's time in school safe, calm, and enjoyable for everyone, we ask all children and members of the school community to follow these simple rules:

- ✓ Approach Beryl calmly and quietly.
- ✓ Always ask an adult before stroking or interacting with her – gentle hands only
- ✓ No shouting, running, or rough play around Beryl.
- ✓ Beryl will always be on a lead and supervised by a member of staff.
- ✓ Children who do not want to interact with Beryl will never be expected to.
- ✓ Beryl will have quiet spaces where she can rest without being disturbed.
- ✓ Hands should be washed or sanitised after interacting with Beryl.

Overall Risk v benefit judgement

Low risk - sufficient controls are in place (see above). The benefits outlined above outweigh the residual level of risk.

Appendix C: School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Parents and Carers

Question	Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?
Answer	The legal owner of the dog will be Mrs Wicks. She will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget only covers liability insurance as part of the Risk Protection Arrangement with HM Government. Any additional training relating to working arrangements within school will be considered on a case-by-case basis e.g. reading dog training.
Question	Is the dog from a reputable breeder?
Answer	Yes. The dog is from a home where both parents were seen and has been specifically chosen for its temperament. There has been a 12-month research period to ensure the right breeder was selected.
Question	Will the dog be a distraction to pupils' learning?
Answer	The dog will be kept in the Headteacher's office. The dog will only spend time in classrooms and the meeting room at specific planned sessions 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.
Question	Has a risk assessment been undertaken?
Answer	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. (See Appendix B)
Question	Who is responsible for training?
Answer	Mrs Wicks will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for her training.
Question	How will the dog be toileted to ensure good hygiene for all?
Answer	In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks in a designated area at the front of the school or outside the school by staff members. The designated areas are those which are out-of-bounds for pupils so the risk of coming into contact with urine or faeces is significantly reduced.
Question	What if my child is scared of dogs? Will they be forced to be in the same room as the dog?
Answer	The dog will be kept in the Headteacher's office. The office is separate from the classrooms / playground area which will ensure the school dog only comes into contact with pupils who are happy to have contact, under strict supervision of a trained member of staff. No young person will be forced to be in contact with dog at any time against their wishes. We hope to work closely with parents of pupils who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.
Question	How will the dog's welfare be considered?
Answer	The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. Pupils will 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 have appropriate access to food and water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered.
Question	How will this be managed where children have allergies?
Answer	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 pupils 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, to be hypoallergenic and with minimal shedding. She is fed a high-quality, fresh food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

Appendix D: Additional Reading 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>

Inclusive Pedagogy, Institute for Educational Science – The Impact of a School Dog in Children’s Social Inclusion and Social Climate in a School Class - <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10813843/>

The National School Dog Alliance – Rationale, Vision & Aims - <https://www.nationalschooldogalliance.co.uk/>