



SCHOOL DOG POLICY

Reviewed policy agreed by GB on :	Spring 2025
Reviewed policy shared with staff on:	Spring 2025
Policy to be reviewed again on:	Spring 2028
Committee responsible for review:	Policy Committee

1. Introduction

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility, and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

This policy is designed to set out to children, parents and visitors the reasons for having a school dog (section 2 – The benefits of a school dog) and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of children, staff, visitors and the school dog (Section 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)

Dogs are not allowed anywhere on the school site at any time unless specifically authorised the Head teacher. This includes drop off and collection times. This policy outlines measures put in place to allow the school dog to be present on the school premises.

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

Yes there is, though there are a variety of accidents, which can happen within the school environment which far exceed the number of injuries or incidents caused by a dog. Therefore, it is another risk that needs to be managed. A thorough risk assessment has been carried out and this is included in this document (see appendix 3).

2. The benefits of a school dog

School dogs have been proven to help develop children's reading skills, improve behaviour, attendance, and confidence, as well as increasing student understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills. We have a school dog to support our staff team in bringing all these benefits to our children.

Milo is 3 years old and has been purchased from a specialised training programme. Milo has undergone rigorous temperament testing and extensive behaviour training. It is important, for our setting, that Milo has had this level of testing and training in order to ensure that he is able to manage the diversity within the school. Milo continues to undertake regular training and is a member of the Dog Mentor Team who have verified his suitability to work in the

school.

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 SEN 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 - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#) Melanie G. Jones, Simon M. Rice, Susan M. Cotton. 2019; 14(1), 2019.

2.4 Behaviour benefits

"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%. 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."

Hazel Oak School Dog Policy [School Dog Policy \(hazel-oak.co.uk\)](http://hazel-oak.co.uk)

3 Principles

- 3.1** The Head teacher, Rachel Harrison, and Chair of Governors, Lynne Wainright both agreed to a school dog ("Milo") working in the

school.

- 3.2** Only the school dog ("Milo") is allowed on the premises. No other dogs are permitted unless the Head teacher has approved the visit.
- 3.3** The school dog is a black Labrador 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. The school dog is Kennel Club registered.
- 3.4** The school dog's (Milo) legal owner is Willow Dene School, with guardianship being with Katie Dooley.
- 3.5** Willow Dene School is responsible for healthcare costs including injury and illness as well as ongoing vaccinations, flea and worming treatment.
- 3.6** Katie Dooley has responsibility for the welfare of the school dog and all expenses relating to food and maintenance costs.
- 3.7** Katie Dooley (Guardian) of the school dog and the Head of Estates, have produced a risk assessment which has been approved by the Head Teacher and Governing Body and this will be reviewed annually.
- 3.8** The dog is covered by the Trust's Public Liability Insurance policy and the Head of Estates/Finance Officer has the responsibility for ensuring this remains on the school's policy during Milo's time working at the school.
- 3.9** Staff, parents and children will be informed in writing that a dog will be in school.
- 3.10** Parents will need to sign a consent form in order for their child/children to be present during sessions with the dog. Staff will also be consulted and have an option to opt out if they require.
- 3.11** The presence of a school dog will be sign posted to visitors at reception and the school website. All visitors will be informed about the dog and the related protocols on arrival. The Office staff will relay any visitor issues to the Head teacher or a member of SLT as soon as possible.
- 3.12** The school office will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.
- 3.13** The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Nicola Barber or other trained staff members.

3.14 Only staff trained to handle the dog in sessions will have permission to do so. Trained staff are: Lisa Parascandolo, Katie Dooley, Rachel Harrison, Nicola Barber.

3.15 Children must always be accompanied in sessions by adequate numbers of support staff. The role of the Dog Handler is to facilitate sessions and read the dog's body language.

4. Code of Conduct

4.1. Staff Responsibilities

4.1.2. Nicola Barber and office staff will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.

4.1.3. If the dog is ill he will not be allowed into school. Katie Dooley has responsibility for ensuring appropriate alternative care for the dog if he is not able to be in the school on a given day.

4.1.4. Katie Dooley is responsible for ensuring the training and accreditation of the dog.

4.1.5. The school dog 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.

4.1.6. The school dog will be kept in Nicola Barber's office at Swingate Lane when he is having a rest period and in the meeting room at Oakmere Road.

4.1.7. Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the school dog. The main office keeps a list of all students and staff with a reported allergy to dogs (Milo). Class staff which children are allergic and this information is also held on the child's individual risk assessment and red file.

4.1.8. Nicola Barber when leading sessions with the school dog has a responsibility to ensure all staff, children or visitors present are happy for Milo to enter the room.

4.1.9. Children must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.

4.1.10. Children will be supported to learn appropriate behaviour around the dog and guided to appropriate interactions during a session.

4.1.11. 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 they monitor the situation. If the dog is displaying any warning signs such as growling or flattening of his ears, he should be immediately removed from that particular

situation or environment by the trained staff member handling him.

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

4.1.13. The school staff will maintain records and evidence of the work and impact of the school dog to better inform research into the benefits of a school dog.

4.2 Children's Responsibilities

4.2.1 Children whose parents have withdrawn consent are not allowed to attend sessions.

4.2.2 Children and adults should be careful to stroke Milo on his body, chest, back and not by his face or top of head.

4.2.3 Children and adults are not allowed to approach Milo or disturb him whilst he is sleeping or eating.

4.2.4 Children and adults are not allowed to play roughly with the dog.

4.2.5 Children are not allowed to eat during sessions with the dog.

4.2.6 Children always wash their hands after handling/stroking the dog.

4.2.7 Children will be guided around what is appropriate behaviour around the dog.

4.2.8 Children should be guided to remain calm around the dog.

4.2.9 Parents/Children understand that any deliberate violence or threatening towards Milo will result in the termination of a session.

5. Actions

If someone reports a concern with the dog, this information must be passed to the Head teacher as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by the Head teacher or Katie Dooley.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in School.

The Head teacher is responsible for implementing this policy.

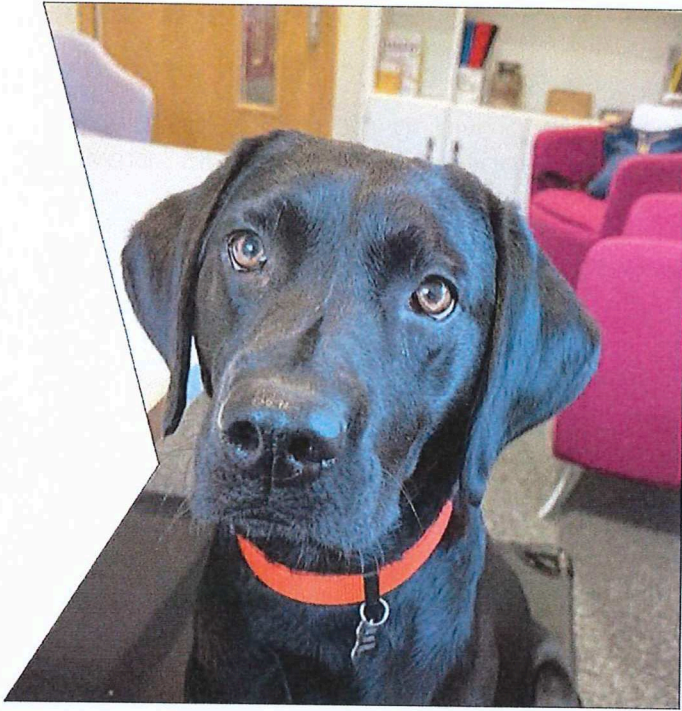
Teachers, staff, children, parents and visitors are required to abide by this policy.

The curriculum will support learning about dogs and how best to behave around our dogs. This will include highlighting that not all dogs are well trained and that caution must be used around unknown dogs outside school.

The Head of Estates is responsible for providing information, advice and guidance as and when required in support with WorkNest (H&S provider)



The School Dog – Milo



- Appendix 1 – Risk Assessment
- Appendix 2 – Reasons to have a dog in school
- Appendix 3 – FAQs
- Appendix 4 – Consent letter

Appendix 1 Risk Assessment to follow

Appendix 2 Reasons to have a dog in school

In summary, academic research has shown that dogs working and helping in the school environment can achieve the following:-

1. Improve academic achievement
2. Increase literacy skills
3. Calming behaviours
4. Increase social skills and self-esteem
5. Increase confidence
6. Teach responsibility and respect to all life
7. Help prevent refusing to go to school
8. Motivate students who are often less attentive

The following information has been taken from a range of sources to provide further detail about the benefits of having a dog in school:

Behaviour

Attendance

Education

Social Development

As a reward

Appendix 3 - School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs? The legal owner of the dog is Willow Dene School and his guardian is Katie Dooley. There are agreed costs that each will bear. The school budget paid for the initial cost of the dog, support liability insurance, medical bills and training costs. Katie Dooley pays for the day to day maintenance of the dog.

Q Is the dog from a reputable breeder? Yes. The dog was trained by Ravenkeeper Gundogs. He is from a reputable Irish breeder who has a history of providing quality dogs. He is registered with the Irish Kennel Club. The certificates are kept with Katie Dooley.

Q Will the dog be a distraction? The dog will be kept in Nicola Barber's office when he is not working to ensure that the dog has enough rest. The office is separate from the classrooms/playground area to ensure he only meets children who are happy to have contact 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. The dog will support the holistic development of children and will enrich the curriculum offer.

Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken? 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 and a reputable dog behaviourist. These include: Bowdenhouse School. Crestwood Community School, Swanmore College, Regent Park Secondary School and Barton Peveril.

Q Who is responsible for training? Katie Dooley will be the guardian of the dog and a result, will be responsible for its training. Appropriate professional training will be obtained including ongoing behaviour and obedience training and certification with the Dog Mentor Programme.

Q How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all? In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks in designated areas. These are the green areas outside the school gates. Only staff members will clear this way appropriately, leaving no trace on the ground.

Q What if my child is scared of dogs? Will they be forced to be in the same room as the dog? The dog will be kept in an office space and handlers will ensure the school dog only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, and under strict supervision. A child will not be forced to be in contact with 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 using evidence based interventions such as graded exposure.

Q How will the dog's welfare be considered? The dog will be walked regularly and given free time. 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 specific times of the school day. The dog 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 unlimited access to water. He has regular meals across the day. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered.

Q How will this be managed where children have allergies? Children with allergies should not be close enough to touch the dog, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions, managed by class staff. 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.

Appendix 4 – Parental and staff consent letter

Dear Parent/Carer,

As you may already know, at Willow Dene school we now have our own school dog who is called Milo.

Milo has been purchased from a specialised training programme. He has undergone rigorous temperament testing and extensive behaviour training. It is important, for our setting, that Milo has undergone this level of testing and training in order to ensure that he is able to manage the diversity within the school.

We are pleased to announce that Milo is a member of The Dog Mentor programme. The Dog Mentor programme has built upon the benefits of the human-animal bond by providing children positive experiences with dogs that can help them educationally, developmentally, emotionally and socially.

Over the last eight years The Dog Mentor programme has been proven to have a positive impact on children in all areas including self-esteem, behaviour, peer relationships and better engagement skills. These improvements then result in improved academic achievement.

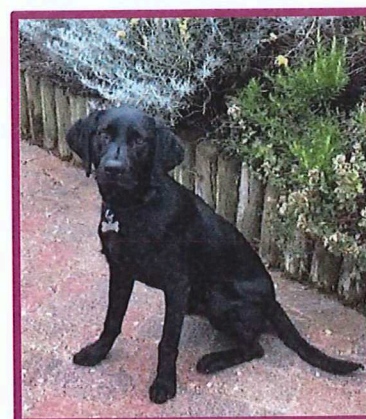
Milo will follow a timetable of activities and interactions across both sites, which will be organised half termly. There will be a schedule of where in the school Milo will be at any given time and this will include rest periods. Decisions as to where and with whom Milo will interact, will be made alongside parents and teachers and will have set goals. There will be a mixture of whole class sessions (held in the classroom), small group and individual sessions (to be held at a location away from the classroom).

Research shows that children can benefit from regular interaction with animals. Benefits include:

- Emotional regulation
- Physical and mental wellbeing
- Self confidence
- Increased understanding of responsibility
- Development of empathy

Milo will support children with the following areas:

- Petting for calming and mental health
- Physical for motivating exercise and MOVE
- Communication
- Empathy and caring for an animal
- Learning to be around animals (well-being)
- Relaxation benefits to health and well-being



Many children also get great enjoyment out of caring for and interacting with animals and benefit therapeutically from this relationship.

Milo will travel around the school and can be referred for group and individual sessions. If you would not like your child to participate in these sessions or your child has an allergy or fear of dogs, please complete the form below so that we can tailor accordingly. If you have any individual questions or queries, please do not hesitate to contact Katie Dooley or Lisa Parascandolo.

Yours faithfully,

Katie Dooley

Child's name:

Child's class:

Please tick as appropriate:

- I am happy for my child to be around the dog, but I want to make you aware that my child is **nervous** around dogs.
- My child has an **allergy** which means that they must not come into direct contact with the dog.
- I **do not** give my permission for my child to come in direct contact with the dog.

Parent / Carer's signature:



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Hazard	Who is affected/at risk	Control Measures	Additional control measures	By Who	Residual Risk Likelihood + Impact = Risk Rating
Dog welfare, distress	Dog	<p>No child will be left alone with the dog</p> <p>The dog will always be with an adult in school</p> <p>The dog has a permanent place to relax</p> <p>There is a timetable for the activities involving the dog, ensuring he has adequate rest time away from children and other staff members.</p> <p>Exercise (walks with handler or a member of trained staff).</p> <p>Oakmere Road – The meeting room</p> <p>Swingate Lane – The areas allocated for the dog are:</p>	<p>Named handlers working with him</p> <p>Signage for room door where Milo is resting</p> <p>Signage to indicate that Milo is on site</p> <p>Notices will make staff, Children and visitors aware the dog is around in case of people having allergic reactions or phobia to the dog.</p> <p>Not to chase a ball on concrete.</p> <p>Always kept on a lead when walking.</p>	Handler / School	L I R



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	<p>Nicola Barber's office Head's office Claire Celisse's office</p> <p>Dog has regular flea and worm treatment.</p> <p>Dog will wear a harness attached to a seatbelt in a vehicle when travelling either to or from school or to or from school sites.</p> <p>Dog will have access to a fan, a doggie pool and a cooling mat when the weather is warm.</p> <p>Dog will be removed for any situation where a child could cause harm, such as very heavy petting, pulling or ears and tail.</p>	<p>Given regularly by handler in the home.</p> <p>Staff to be very aware of what children are like around the dog and to remind them of being gentle and kind.</p> <p>The meeting point for dog and handler are away from the meeting points of the staff and children to ensure that the dog is safe and not overwhelmed.</p>		
<p>Fire alarm protocol</p>	<p>Dog / Handler</p> <p>If the fire alarm goes off at Swingate Lane: Handler to exit with dog via the nearest fire exit. If this is towards the main car park, then handler and dog will cross the road using the zebra crossing and</p>			



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<p>Provision of food for dog</p>	<p>Dog</p>	<p>then sit on the grass verge opposite the main building away from others at the meeting point. If the exit is towards the playground, then handler and dog should be just inside the gated area by the specialist office so that the dog is away from others at the meeting point. At Oakmere Road, dog and handler follow protocols for the nearest fire exit and work their way towards the gates by the main entrance. The handler and dog will go through the gates and stay in the corner away from others at the meeting point.</p>	<p>Dog water bowls to be kept in an area away from children. Feeding of dog's meals will be away from children. The dog will be fed meals in rest areas only.</p>	<p>Handler</p>			
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<p>Aggressive Behaviour/Dog bite</p>	<p>Children, staff and visitors who may be at the school</p>	<p>Dog food to be kept in in a sealed container on a separate shelf away from other foods.</p> <p>The dog will be fed in the morning and evening, before and after the school day at the handler's home. If the handler is late leaving school due to demands of the school day the dog can be fed at school.</p>	<p>Children to be informed on the correct behaviour around a dog. (e.g. teach children not to chase dog, to leave a dog alone when it goes into its bed or place of security, not to approach dog even if previously friendly)</p> <p>Dog to always be on a lead during movement around the school.</p> <p>Ensure that children and adults do not interact with the</p>	<p>Handler / school</p>		
		<p>Pre assessment of the dog, trial acclimatisation prior to its permanent position in the school.</p> <p>Temperament tested through Raven Keeper Gundogs. Ongoing training in place.</p> <p>The dog should be introduced very slowly at the start of each Autumn term and build socialization and work up to the number</p>				



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		<p>of sessions.</p> <p>No child should be left alone with the dog.</p> <p>If the dog exhibits signs of aggression or anxiety it should be kept separate from Children until it has totally calmed down or removed from site.</p> <p>The dog was assessed by a qualified behaviourist in Summer 2022. The dog has been assessed by The Dog Mentor team and a qualified dog trainer. The dog's behaviour will be monitored at all times.</p> <p>Separation of dog and children by using safety equipment where necessary (e.g. safety gate/stable door/closed door/crates/playpen etc</p> <p>Gradual familiarisation with children and dog in sessions.</p>	<p>school dog without supervision. Ensure that all interaction with the school dog is completed in the agreed way.</p> <p>Review risk assessment to ensure it is suitable and sufficient</p>	
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		<p>No interaction is allowed without authorisation. Interaction will be cancelled if the school dog shows signs of incorrect behaviour. Rewards/praise will be given to reinforce the desired behaviour.</p> <p>Assess if any child at the school has any individual needs which may require a separate assessment and additional control measures.</p> <p>Dog must be supervised when playing with toys if children are present.</p> <p>The school dog will be contained at all times. The school dog will have his own toys to play with and normal school resources will be removed.</p>			
Destruction of materials	If allowed the school dog may chew/destroy some school materials/resources		Monitor that the equipment used to contain the school dog is appropriate and effective	Handler	





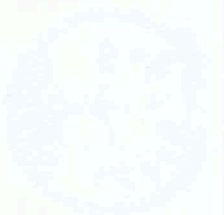
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Running Loose	If the school dog was to run loose he could accidentally hurt Children/adults or damage property	The school dog will be contained at all times either in an office (with a clear sign on the door) or on a lead	Monitor that the equipment used to contain the school dog is appropriate and effective	Handler		
Incorrect/inconsistent interaction with dog	If a child/adult interact with the school dog in the incorrect or inconsistent way this will affect the school dogs training and have a negative impact on future interaction	Agreed guidelines that must be followed at all times when interacting with the school dog. There cannot be any interaction with the school dog without authorisation	If there are any inconsistencies in approach with the school dog the adult/child will have the interaction stopped	Handler/school		
Use of rewards/treats	Children and adults could be harmed if the school dog is over excited when receiving a reward/treat. Children / adult must wash their hands after handling treats	Anti-bacterial gel will be available to all adults and Children. Treats will only be given to the school dog with authorization Children and adults should give treats with a flat hand	Reminders to the children to wash hands / use anti-bacterial gel after handling treats. Treats to be locked away to ensure they can only be used after authorisation	Handler / school		



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Children/staff knowledge of interaction with a dog	If adults and Children have limited knowledge of how to interact correctly this could result in harm to the school dog or themselves	ALL staff given permission to handle Milo will be given strict instructions to follow and appropriate training	There will be an agreed format for how to interact with the school dog.		
School events	If the school dog is overwhelmed he may become boisterous	The school dog will only attend school events if they are appropriate and he will be under the control a supervising adult	Monitor the school dog's reaction to school events. If the school events are too overwhelming the school dog might not attend school on that day.	Handler / school	
Claim is made against the school re: behaviour of the dog	School not adequately covered financially	The school has public liability insurance Milo is affiliated with The Dog Mentor Programme and had training in October 2022.	Children will be supported not to over stimulate or upset the dog and how to remain calm around him. Milo will receive ongoing formal training, socializing and conditioning within the school environment.	School	





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<p>Communicable disease</p> <p>Pets carry infectious diseases that can pass to humans</p>	<p>Staff, children, visitors</p>	<p>All Children to wash hands thoroughly if they have been in contact with the dog or dogs toys etc.</p> <p>Children to avoid dogs licking their faces, face to face contact between the dog and child or visiting persons should be prevented.</p> <p>Strict cleanliness measures in place to prevent spread of infections. Clean touch points such as door handles/light switches etc. on regular basis with sanitizer</p> <p>Any dog toys provided must be able to be suitably cleaned at regular intervals.</p> <p>Checks carried out with children and staff, parent's non consent to working with the dog has been obtained.</p> <p>Visitors arriving at the site are made aware of the dog</p>	<p>Education</p> <p>Anti-bacterial gel as well as hand washing.</p> <p>Cleaning schedule</p>	<p>Handler / school and class staff</p>	
<p>Allergic reaction</p>	<p>Staff, visitors & children who may be at the school- The proteins from the hair, saliva or urine of dogs</p>		<p>Records of children and staff who have an allergy to dogs to be detailed on individual risk assessments, aware of by class teams and main office to have a record of. When staff are moving</p>		



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	<p>may trigger an allergic reaction that attacks the eyes and airways (similar to hay fever) and may result in asthmatic symptoms. Other allergic reactions may include Atopic Dermatitis, a more common allergy linked to dogs</p>	<p>being on site and check to see if they are allergic to dogs, this is to be documented when visitors sign in.</p> <p>Any medication brought to the school must be kept locked away from the dog and children.</p> <p>Permanent signage displaying around the sites</p>	<p>around the school and encounter Milo, they put their hand up to signal to the dog handler that they have someone who is allergic / fearful with them.</p> <p>All children and staff should wash hands after sessions, and sessions will not take place in classroom where there is either a child or adult with a dog allergy.</p>	
<p>Toxocarasis (Dog faeces)</p>	<p>Staff, visitors & children who may be at the school-Dog faeces are associated with a number of transmissible diseases and infections. The most widely known health risk is toxocarasis</p>	<p>Exercise (walks with handler include toilet break) away from the school.</p> <p>School grounds are not to be used to toilet the school dog.</p> <p>All dog faeces will be collected and disposed of correctly.</p> <p>Poo bags and gloves to be taken during walks for the</p>	<p>Milo is to be toileted before, during and after his walks during the day, and therefore will not need to go to the toilet during sessions.</p> <p>Dog Handlers will look for any signs that the dog needs to go to the toilet or signs sickness or change in behaviour.</p>	<p>Handler</p>



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	<p>which is passed from the parasite Toxocara, which is a round worm commonly found in dogs and puppies. Toxocara eggs are present in the faeces of infected animals and can remain in soil for several years after faeces have disappeared. Eggs can also cling to the coat of infected animals. Children who swallow these and although very rare, serious illness can occur. Ingestion may occur through contact with</p>	dispense of faeces.				
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	contaminated soil or from patting and stroking of infected dogs					
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All risks relative to the following matrix:

Impact	Catastrophic	M	H	VH	VH	VH
	Significant	M	H	VH	VH	VH
	Moderate	M	M	H	H	H
	Minor	L	L	M	M	M
	Insignificant	L	L	L	L	L
		Negligible	Rare	Unlikely	Possible	Probable
Likelihood						