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## SCHOOL DOG POLICY

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<p><b>The Policy was formally adopted by the Senior Leadership Team on:</b></p>	<p><b>Date: 17 June 2025</b></p>
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## Introduction

Micky is cared for and owned by Mrs Esser. Although he was bought with the aim of becoming a school dog, he is firstly a family dog. Micky is an Australian Labradoodle which is a breed known to have the right temperament for being around children and having the intelligence to be successfully trained as a school dog. Micky regularly visits the vet for check-ups and is compliant with annual vaccination and flea and wormer expectations.

This policy is designed to set out to pupils, staff, parents and visitors the reason for having a school dog at Springfield Primary School and responsibilities to ensure the safety of everyone and the dog.

### 1. The benefits of having a school dog.

#### Emotional wellbeing and mental health

- reduces anxiety and stress by lowering cortisol and increasing oxytocin levels.
- provides comfort and non-judgmental emotional support, especially for vulnerable or bereaved pupils.
- improves general mood and contributes to a calmer school environment. proven

#### Attendance and transitions

- increases school attendance for pupils who are anxious or reluctant to attend.
- acts as a motivator for morning routines and reduces school refusal behaviours.
- helps pupils transition into school calmly and with purpose.

#### Communication and confidence

- encourages verbal interaction, particularly beneficial for children with speech or social communication difficulties.
- boosts confidence in reluctant speakers or readers through 'read to the dog' activities.
- promotes expressive language and storytelling.

#### Academic motivation

- improves engagement and focus during lessons by fostering a positive emotional atmosphere.
- motivates learning by using dog time as a reward for completing tasks or good behaviour.
- enhances reading fluency and comprehension in a non-threatening setting.

#### Social skills and empathy

- helps children develop empathy, compassion, and respect for living beings.
- encourages sharing, cooperation, and teamwork through joint dog-related responsibilities.
- supports children with SEND and SEMH needs in building relationships and regulating emotions.

#### Responsibility and routine

- teaches care, patience, and the importance of routine through daily interactions and responsibilities.



- encourages respect for rules and appropriate behaviour around animals.
- promotes independence and pride in taking on small care roles.

#### Behaviour and regulation

- reduces behavioural incidents by encouraging self-regulation and calm.
- helps de-escalate tense situations or emotional outbursts.
- provides a grounding presence during challenging times.

#### Community and belonging

- strengthens the sense of community by acting as a shared, beloved member of the school.
- provides a common point of interest for conversation and connection among pupils and staff.
- supports a nurturing, inclusive school ethos

## 2. Principles

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

2.2 Micky is an Australian Labradoodle 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.

2.3 Micky's legal owner is Mrs Esser (NE). NE has full responsibility for the welfare of the school dog and all expenses relating to pet insurance, food and other expenses and ensuring that the dog is vaccinated, wormed and flea treated.

2.4 NE, the legal owner of the school dog, has produced a risk assessment which will be reviewed annually.

2.5 The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of NE or other trained staff members.

2.6 The school's liability insurance covers the school for risk related to a working dog on site, though additional insurance has been put in place. The Business Manager has responsibility for ensuring this remains on the school's policy during Micky's time at Springfield Primary School.

2.7 Staff, parents and pupils will be informed in writing that a dog will be in school.

2.8 A consent form for each pupil will be held at the school office which either provides consent or informs of those pupils who do not have consent to be around and interact with the school dog. A folder will be kept in the Deputy Headteachers office, this will have class lists indicating whether pupils have parental consent or not. Those who do not have consent from their parent to be around or interact with the school dog will be clearly highlighted. A copy of this will also be kept updated in the purple folders that are kept in each classroom for staff to access.

2.9 Parents can indicate at any time that their child is not allowed to be present during sessions with the dog by emailing either school office.

2.10 The presence of a school dog will be sign posted to visitors at the reception area and the school



website. Reception staff will relay visitor issues to the head teacher as soon as possible.

2.11 Only staff trained to handle the dog in pupil sessions will have permission to do so.

### 3. Code of Conduct

#### 3.1 Staff Responsibilities

3.1.1 NE will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.

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

3.1.3 NE is responsible for ensuring Micky is trained as a dog suitable to be in a school environment.

3.1.4 Micky 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.

3.1.5 Micky will be kept in Mrs Esser's office, Mrs Pick's office or the front office when not interacting with pupils. Micky will never be "free-roaming".

3.1.6 Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near Micky. The school office keeps a list of all pupils and staff with a reported allergy to dogs (dander) and ensures that all trained handlers for Micky know who these pupils and staff are.

3.1.7 Staff leading sessions with Micky have a responsibility to ensure all staff, pupils or visitors present are happy for Micky to enter the room.

3.1.8 Pupils must never be left alone with Micky and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.

3.1.9 Pupils will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog before any interaction during a session or visit. They will be trained not to stare at dogs as they find this aggressive.

3.1.10 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 s/he monitors the situation. If the dog is displaying any warning signs such as growling or flattening of her ears, tail tucked under her, excessive licking for no reason and unnatural panting, he should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment by the trained staff member handling her.

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

### 4 Pupil Responsibilities

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

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

4.2.3 Pupils are not allowed to approach Micky or disturb him whilst he is 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 him.

4.2.6 Pupils are not allowed to eat during sessions with Micky.

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

4.2.8 Pupils understand that any deliberate violence or threatening behaviour towards Micky will result in a fixed term suspension.

Pupils will:

- ✓ NOT have sole responsibility for, or be left alone with Micky
- ✓ Meet Micky in a group of no more than 4 children
- ✓ Be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around Micky every time they meet him
- ✓ Always remain calm
- ✓ Be gentle
- ✓ Not put their face near Micky's
- ✓ Not disturb a dog that is eating or sleeping
- ✓ Always approach Micky standing up (he must have 4 paws on the ground before contact)
- ✓ Not feed the dog
- ✓ Never tease the dog
- ✓ Not stare at the dog as this can be read as aggressive by him.

## 5. The school dog health and safety principles

Children will always wash their hands or use alcohol gel after handling the dog. Any dog foul will be cleared up immediately and disposed of appropriately by the adult in charge of Micky at the time. Children must never be allowed to do this. The cleaning contractor will be informed that there is a school dog and be shown the school risk assessment.

Micky will be on a leash at all times when moving around the school and will always be accompanied by an adult. Micky will also be fully insured to carry out his role thus allowing him to be on the school site.

Some children may have had upsetting experiences and thus have a fear of dogs (or another animal). As Micky matures, he will be calm and gentle. He was selected from his litter for his loving and gentle nature. Experience and research have shown that, with proper guidance and handling, children can learn to overcome their fear of animals and grow in respect and appreciation for them.

It is understandable that some parents may be concerned about possible allergic reactions to a school dog. The Australian Labradoodle breed is known to be hypo-allergenic. Micky will be subjected to a thorough cleanliness and grooming regime. We will ask parents who are concerned to make the school aware if their child has an allergy. Some parents may also be concerned for cultural or religious reasons about their child touching a dog. Please let the school know if this is the case for your child. Any parent who does not wish their child to interact with the school dog is invited to write to the school office to inform the school of their wishes.