

The American School in London

Animals in School Policy

Policy Owner (Accountable)	Director of Finance and Operations
Policy Coordinator (Responsible)	Operations Manager
Approved by	Building & Grounds Committee
Approval date	September 2026

The current version of any policy, procedure, protocol or guideline is the version posted on the ASL website. It is the responsibility of all employees to ensure that they are following the most up-to-date version.

1. General Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidance on the circumstances in which animals may be permitted on campus, and the procedures that must be followed in such cases. It also aims to ensure that, where appropriate, the School community can benefit from the presence of animals in a way that is safe, well-managed, and consistent with the School's responsibilities for safeguarding, health and safety, and animal welfare.

As a general principle, animals are not permitted on school grounds, including indoor facilities, playgrounds, and sports fields, unless explicitly permitted under this policy. The School has a responsibility to provide a safe, hygienic, and inclusive environment for all students and staff. The presence of animals may pose risks, including allergies, phobias, and issues relating to safety, hygiene, and site maintenance. In addition, the School is not generally equipped to accommodate or care for animals on a day-to-day basis.

Personal pets belonging to students, staff, parents, or visitors are not permitted on campus unless explicitly approved under this policy.

However, the School recognises that, in appropriate circumstances, interaction with animals can provide valuable educational benefits. These may include:

- developing students' respect, empathy, and sense of responsibility for living things
- encouraging consideration of the needs of others, including peers, staff, and families
- promoting interest in the natural environment and supporting experiential learning across the curriculum
- fostering calm, confident, and sensitive interaction skills
- demonstrating good practice in animal care and raising awareness of animal welfare and related careers

The School also recognises that certain animals, such as assistance dogs, play an essential role in supporting individuals with disabilities.

Accordingly, the presence of animals on campus may be permitted in specific, controlled circumstances, subject to prior approval and adherence to defined procedures.

This policy is intended to ensure compliance with relevant legislation, including the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and the Equality Act 2010.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all students, staff, parents, contractors and visitors to the American School in London (ASL) campuses at Waverley Place and Canons Park (an exception for dogs only applies for Canons Park - see section 6 later in this policy).

3. Roles and Responsibilities

- The Head of School (or delegated senior leader) is responsible for approving the presence of animals on campus.
- Operations and Security are responsible for implementation and enforcement of this policy.
- Employees are responsible for ensuring appropriate supervision and adherence to approved procedures.
- Human Resources and Divisional Student Support Teams are responsible for coordinating arrangements relating to assistance dogs.

3. School Pets

To ensure the safety of students and animals, the following measures apply before and after acquiring resident animals:

Pre-Acquisition Requirements:

- **Permission & Responsibility:** Employees must obtain prior approval from the Head of School (or delegated senior leader). The responsible employee must assume ongoing responsibility for the animal's welfare, including arrangements for care during weekends and holidays, and rehoming if required.
- **Vetting & Research:** The particular needs of the specific species should be adequately researched to ensure suitability for the school environment (e.g. for this reason, no wild-caught or nocturnal animals are allowed) and ensure a local vet can provide treatment if needed.
- **Planning:** A robust plan for weekend/holiday care and a clear curriculum integration plan must be in place.
- **Risk Assessment:** A written assessment will identify lead staff and address **student** allergies, compromised immune systems, or behavioural issues.
- **Parental Communication:** Parents will be informed about student interaction with animals where relevant and should be given the option to withdraw their child from animal-related activities.
- **Liability:** The School must confirm that appropriate insurance coverage is in place for any resident animal.

Ongoing Care & Safety:

- **Welfare:** Suitable housing, social groups, correct nutrition, and preventative healthcare will be provided.
- **Hygiene:** Housing and surrounding areas will be kept clean. Strict hand-washing procedures must be followed by all students and staff after contact with animals.
- **Supervision:** Students will only handle animals under close staff supervision.
- **Safety:** Chemicals (such as cleaning, sanitising, grooming or hygiene products) and medications will be stored in accordance with Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) policies.

4. Visiting Animals

Visits from domestic, exotic, or farm animals are permitted under the following conditions:

- **Approval:** Prior planning and permission from senior management are mandatory.
- **Provider Vetting:** Verification of the provider's risk assessments, public liability insurance, and welfare policies must be verified in advance. Providers must hold appropriate public liability insurance.
- **Safety:** Providers must confirm animals are vaccinated. Animals must be appropriately restrained or contained when not being directly supervised.
- **Inclusion:** Risk assessments will specifically account for students with allergies or phobias.

Any animals brought onto campus without prior approval may be refused entry or required to be removed. Security and designated staff are authorised to enforce this requirement.

5. Assistance Dogs (Legal Exceptions)

In accordance with the **Equality Act 2010**, mandatory exceptions are made for disabled individuals who rely on an assistance dog.

Definition and Requirements:

- **Disability Mitigation:** The dog must be specifically trained to perform tasks that mitigate the effects of the handler's disability.
- **Public Access Behavior:** The dog must demonstrate appropriate behaviour for a school environment (sitting quietly, no wandering, no unprovoked barking, and fully toilet-trained).
- **Distinction from Emotional Support Animals (ESAs):** Under UK law, ESAs are not classified as assistance dogs and are **not permitted** on campus.

- **Doctors' Fit Note:** If an employee provides a GP-issued fit note requesting an **Emotional Support Animal (ESA)**, ASL's Human Resources team will evaluate the request. Please be advised that all such applications are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and are not guaranteed.

Handler Responsibilities:

- **Health:** The dog must be clean and up-to-date with vaccinations/parasite treatments.
- **Control:** The dog must remain under full control (usually on a lead) at all times.
- **Liability:** The handler is responsible for any damage or injury caused by the dog.

Procedures for Access

- **Visitors:** Visitors bringing an assistance dog are requested to notify Security (visitors@asl.org) in advance to ensure smooth entry.
- **Staff & Students:** Students or staff requiring an assistance dog for daily use must consult with Human Resources or Student Support to integrate the dog into an individual support plan.
- **Prohibited Areas:** Dogs must not be left alone on the pavement or school grounds. Security personnel cannot supervise pets.

6. Dogs at Canons Park

As an exception to the School's general prohibition on personal pets, School families and visitors may bring pet dogs to the Canons Park sports ground when attending sports matches or other School events, subject to the following requirements:

- **Health:** Dogs must be clean, in good health, and up to date with vaccinations and parasite treatments.
- **Control:** Dogs must be kept on a lead and under the control of a responsible adult at all times. Dogs must not be left unattended at any time. Dogs must be kept away from playing areas while sporting activities are taking place and from any other areas designated by the School as dog-free.
- **Behaviour:** Dogs must be well behaved and must not pose a risk or unreasonable disturbance to students, staff, visitors, other dogs, or activities taking place at the facility.
- **Cleanliness:** Handlers must immediately clean up and appropriately dispose of any waste produced by their dog.
- **Responsibility:** The handler is responsible for any damage or injury caused by the dog.
- **School discretion:** The School may require a dog to be removed from the facility if these requirements are not followed or if the dog's behaviour gives rise to safety, welfare, or other concerns.

The School maintains a risk assessment covering the presence of dogs at Canons Park within its risk assessment library.