

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What makes a school dog different to a family dog kept as a pet?

A school dog is one who undergoes specific training and is assessed by an organisation such as Pets as Therapy, but not before they are at least 9 months old. A school dog initially undergoes specialised puppy training and then is slowly acclimatised into the school environment whilst continuing with further dog training. This continued training is important for the well-being of both the dog and the children at school.

2. Who will be the legal owner of the School Dog and who will pay its' costs?

The school dog's legal owner will be Mrs Heritage who will care for it out of school hours in her home and will bear all the costs associated with having a pet dog. The School will support the costs associated with its work in School.

3. Will the dog be from a reputable breeder?

Yes, we have searched very carefully to ensure we only deal with a reputable breeder. We have chosen a breeder where we are able to meet the puppy's parents to ensure the correct temperament. The breeder will monitor the puppies for 8 weeks and then has agreed to advise us as to which puppy best suits our requirements.

4. Will the school dog be a distraction?

The dog will be primarily kept in the Mrs Heritage's office. The dog ***only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact with a dog under strict supervision.*** In the early stages, interaction with the children will be very limited.

5. Will the dog roam freely around the school?

Certainly not. The dog will be on its lead at all times when moving around school and when interacting with children. The only time the dog will be off its lead is when it is resting and sleeping in the offices.

6. Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

Yes - a formal Risk Assessment has taken place. We have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a School Dog. **There will also be a School Dog Policy, available for parents to view on the website.**

7. Who will be responsible for the training?

Mrs Heritage will be the legal owner of the School Dog and as a result, will be responsible for its training. Appropriate professional training will be obtained; initially it will complete advanced puppy training and then work towards becoming a well-being and therapy dog.

8. How will the Dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?

In the interest of health and hygiene, the dog will be toileted either away from the school building or in a sectioned-off area of the school where children have no access.

9. When will the dog come into school?

The dog will come into school for short periods in the Pentecost Term 2020 so that it becomes familiar with the environment and is socialised. However there will be very limited interaction with the children at this stage. It will gradually increase its time in school during the academic year 2020-2021 and will be in school on a Thursday and a Friday each week.

10. How will the dog's welfare be considered?

Over the Easter holidays, the dog will initially come to school for a few hours every few days and this will gradually be built up. Once term begins, it will be in school a few days each week but have limited access to the children. It will be regularly walked either by Mrs Heritage or another member of staff and have plenty of opportunities to use the toileting area. It will be kept in Mrs Heritage's office and will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. It will be provided with food and unlimited access to water, a bed and some toys. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and we will work very closely with other professionals to ensure its welfare is always carefully considered.

11. What happens if my child has an allergy to dogs?

Labradoodles have wavy/curly coats and our dog will be groomed regularly. In day-to-day life the children will be exposed to many more allergens by sitting next to others who have dogs and cats than by being at school alongside the school dog. In order to interact with the dog, children will not need to touch it unless of course they wish to, and this will therefore relieve some of the possibility of reactions. We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for those who 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 where needed.

12. My child is afraid of dogs. I am afraid of dogs. How will this be managed?

Access to the school dog will be carefully managed and supervised. ***Children/adults will not need to have any contact with the dog unless they are keen to do so.*** Nonetheless, we hope to work closely with any children, or adults, fearful of dogs to alleviate the fear and help them manage it. School Dogs are trained to help with this particular issue.