

School Dog

Dear Parents/Carers

We are writing to let you know that the school, with full support from the staff and Governors, has decided to take on a school dog.

There are a number of reasons for this. Research shows that the Reading to Dogs scheme can improve a child's chance of reading success and improve their confidence and general well-being. Our school dog will be specially trained to work with children.

Over the last year or so, we have undertaken a significant amount of research and are aware of many benefits to having a school dog:

- a calming effect on pupils, particularly those with behavioural or learning difficulties;
- improved behaviour and concentration, reduced stress and improved self-esteem;
- encouraging expression and participation in more withdrawn children;
- fostering a sense of responsibility;
- motivating pupils to think and to learn, as most children have a high level of natural interest in, enthusiasm for and enjoyment of animals;
- encouraging respect and thereby improving pupils' relationships with each other, parents and teachers;
- teaching children to nurture and respect life;
- helping work undertaken with the most vulnerable children, and educational improvements with low achievers;
- helping children build confidence in reading.

Our school dog will also undertake special accredited School Dog training to work with children and support with reading.

While the dog's main place of residence will be in the Senior Leadership office area, which is secure and separate from the classrooms, children will be able to interact with the dog under strict supervision at certain times of the week as long as parental permission has been given. The dog will not be given access to other visitors without supervision and mutual consent. Please understand that we will do everything we can to reassure children who are fearful and that under no circumstances will they be forced to meet with the dog.

Whilst moving around the school, the dog will be kept on a short lead or harness and will always be with an adult. Our puppy (Faith) will move in with Mrs Long & Mrs Quigley who will be looking after Faith in the future. She will start coming in to school at the end of June and for her sake and the sake of the pupils, we will be introduced slowly to each class. We have chosen a Labrador as the most appropriate breed of dog for the school. The breed has been carefully selected because of its ideal temperament and because it is used widely in the field of therapy and support (e.g. guide dogs).

We hope the children will gain a great deal of enjoyment from having their school dog and that she becomes an established part of life at Christ Church Primary School. We will publish pictures of our school dog, as it grows up on the school website. You may also like to visit the following website to learn more:

<http://www.dogshelpingkids.co.uk>

We understand that it is not possible for all families to have a family dog and therefore we hope that this is an opportunity for children to have a 'share' in a dog and gain from a relationship and contact on a regular basis.

We would very much welcome queries or questions on the matter

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Long & Mrs Quigley



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Name of child(ren)

Please tick as appropriate:

I am happy for my child to be involved with all aspects of caring for the school dog, including supervised lunchtime walks.

My child is a little nervous of dogs but I am happy for him/her to be involved in all aspects of caring for the school dog, including supervised lunchtime walks.

My child is fearful of dogs but, in time, I would like them to work with the dog to develop their confidence with and understanding of dogs.

I do not give permission for my child to come into direct contact with the dog.

School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

- **Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?** The legal owner of the dog will be Mrs Long & Mrs Quigley who have volunteered to care for the dog out of school hours and will bear the costs associated with it; the school budget will support training of the dog and costs associated with its work in school.
- **Is the dog from a reputable breeder?** Yes. We have researched breeders and have chosen a reputable breeder who is Kennel Club Assured.
- **Will the dog be a distraction?** The dog will be kept in SLT office area. The office is separate from the classrooms/ playground area to ensure it only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision. We will be careful to ensure that time spent with the school dog is shared among the children fairly. We will also ensure that children who do not have permission for direct contact with the dog are still able to participate in a number of ways, should they wish to do so.
- **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. There will also be a School Dog Policy, available to view on the Website from September.
- **Who is responsible for training?** The nominated members of staff will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for its training. Appropriate professional training will be obtained and the dog will work towards a Dogs Help Kids Accredited assessment.
- **How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?** In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted in a sectioned-off area of the school site where children have no access. Thus there will be no chance of the children coming into contact with faeces. Our policy of no dogs in the playground is still applicable as we are unable to put effective control measures in place that guarantee temperament and safety when children come into unsupervised contact with unknown dogs.
- **Will the dog be allowed on the school playground?** The dog will only go onto the school playground when supervised by Mrs Long or Mrs Quigley and not when there are lots of children around.
- **How will the dog's welfare be considered?** The dog will be walked at lunchtime; 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 that time. This will also be used as a behaviour reward, in line with our behaviour policy. The dog will be kept in the SLT Office and 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. We will work closely with other professionals to ensure the dog's welfare is always carefully considered.
- **How will this be managed where children have allergies?** Children will not need to touch the dog, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. 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.
- **My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?** Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with it unless permission for this has been given. 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.