

9th February 2012

Dear Parent

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. The initial suggestion was made by Year 1 children as part of their 'all creatures great and small' topic. Our school dog will be specially trained to work with children. 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- encouraging expression and participation in more withdrawn children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 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. Please see separate article link below.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2011/feb/28/dogs-listen-to-children-reading>

Our school dog will also be trained to work with children who have special needs, suffer bereavement or who are upset in any way and in need of calm, comfort and space before being able to tell an adult what has upset them.

It will also be available to work with children (and adults) who have had bad experiences with dogs or other animals. With parental permission, over a period of time children who react fearfully to dogs will be supported in approaching, handling and gaining confidence in managing their fear.

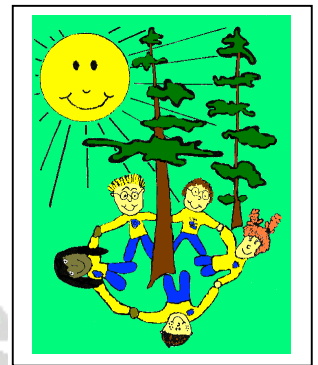
While the dog's main place of residence will be the office area, which is secure and separate from the classrooms, children will be able to interact with the dog under strict supervision at certain times of the week as long as parental permission has been given. The dog will not be given access to other visitors without supervision and mutual consent.

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). Labradors are also used successfully in other schools.

Labradors are by nature gentle and friendly creatures. They are also superb working dogs. We hope the children will gain a great deal of enjoyment from having their school dog and that he becomes an established part of life at North Baddesley Infant School.

"Happy, valued and achieving together"

Headteacher: Mrs Lucy Chambers B.Ed. Hons



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The school website will publish pictures of our school dog, from birth as it grows up.

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. In the meantime, please see the FAQs attached.

Yours sincerely

Lucy Chambers
Headteacher



"Happy, valued and achieving together"

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School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q

Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?

A

The legal owner of the dog will be a nominated member of staff who has volunteered to care for the dog out of school hours and will bear the costs associated with it; the school budget will remain unaffected.

Q

Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

A

Yes. We have researched breeders and have chosen a reputable breeder. The dog will be Kennel Club registered and the breeder is a **Kennel Club Accredited Instructor (Working Gundogs Advanced)**, a **Kennel Club Assured Breeder** with three accolades, and a **Kennel Club Affiliate Member**.

Q

Will the dog be a distraction?

A

The dog will be kept in the 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.

Q

Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

A

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. Mrs Chambers and representatives from the governing body have visited a local school to see a working school dog in action.

Q

Who is responsible for training?

A

The nominated member 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 PAT PRO (Pets As Therapy) assessment.

Q

How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?

A

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.

Q

Will the dog be allowed on the school playground?

A

The dog will not go onto the school playground at anytime. It will remain within school.

Q

How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A

The dog will be walked every lunchtime in the park opposite. 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 admin area/HT 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 food and water. We will work closely with other professionals to ensure the dog's welfare is always carefully considered.

Q

How will this be managed where children have allergies?

A

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.

Q

My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?

A

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.