



St Catherine's C of E School

Executive Headteacher: Mrs Louise Hussey Head of School: Ms Pippa Warner

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Dear Parents & Carers,

I am writing to inform you that we will soon have a new member of our school community. We have decided to have our very own School Well-being Dog.

As a school we have been considering introducing a school dog for the past two years. We are delighted to introduce Luna, a 2 month old, black-coloured, Springador (Springer Spaniel crossed with Labrador). Dogs are increasingly being welcomed into schools with great success. Some of you may have seen, in the media that therapy dogs are now being used in some hospitals which impacts greatly on patients' improving health and emotional well-being. Please understand that we will do everything we can to reassure children who may be fearful and that under no circumstances will they be forced to meet with Luna. We hope the children will gain a great deal of enjoyment from having their school dog and that she becomes a full member of our team.



Luna is Mrs Parish's (our school secretary), puppy and will be joining our team alongside Mrs Parish's working hours. As a puppy she has an intense year ahead of her; lots of training and socialisation is needed to eventually become a fully trained well-being dog. She will be kept in our school office and will not be classroom-based. She will be regularly tested for health. We hope that Luna will be able support the children within our community in the ways that will help them to continue to thrive.

There are many benefits to having a school dog, including:

- the presence of companion animals can improve the well-being of children and lower anxiety levels, simply by making the environment happier and more enjoyable.
- dogs can be used to calm fears, relieve anxieties and teach skills.
- improved behaviour and concentration, reduced stress and improvement in pupils' self-esteem;
- encouraging expression, participation and confidence for all 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 children build confidence in reading;
- improving overall attendance;
- further promoting our well-being agenda for pupils and staff.

Mrs Parish has visited the home of the breeder to ensure that the puppy's temperament and that of its parents, was suitable for interaction with children. Luna will be fully vaccinated, wormed and have flea treatment in line with current expectations. She is under a Pet Health Care Plan which will ensure future treatments will continue. Luna will live with Mrs Parish, who has two children: 2 and 10 years old. They will help with the puppy's development. There will always be a designated member of staff present during any interaction with pupils.

Please know that we are aware of those pupils with allergies and that a full risk assessment has been completed. Luna will not be based in any classrooms and therefore contact with any children who may have an adverse reaction can be avoided. Luna's main place of residence will be in the main office area, where Mrs Parish is based. She will slowly be introduced to the school community and we will begin by introducing her to small numbers of children- never more than 2 at a time. Whilst moving around the school, Luna will be kept on a short lead and will always be with an adult. In a further assembly, before her arrival, we will discuss with the children the rules and expectations about having Luna in school and we will again highlight the many benefits and rewards, too.

However, should you have any queries or questions on the matter then please do not hesitate to contact the school. Equally should you wish your child NOT to meet with or spend anytime with Luna please register your concerns to withdraw your child from contact. In the meantime, please see the FAQs below.

To complete a permission form for your child, please click on the link below:

<https://forms.gle/KPbV4ZVY1bBQe5BL9>

Sincerely yours,

Louise Hussey

Executive Headteacher

Frequently Asked Questions

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

A. The legal owner of the dog is Mrs Parish and she will care for Luna out of school hours. Mrs Parish will bear the costs associated with Luna; the school budget will remain unaffected. The dog is insured by the owner, Mrs Parish and is also covered by the school's public liability insurance.

Q Has the school dog come from a reputable breeder?

A. Yes. Luna is a Spaniel - Labrador cross-breed. Her parents are working dogs – mum a working Labrador and dad is a working spaniel. This breed is renowned for being well-trained and used as a therapy dog. The home was visited and checked to be suitable.

Q Will a school dog be a distraction?

A. Luna will be kept in Mrs Parish's office area. 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 are not involved in regular, direct contact with the dog are still able to participate in a number of ways, over the course of the school year, should they wish to do so.

Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

A. Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and we have sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog. We are finalising our School Dog Policy and that and the risk assessment will be available to view on our website.

Q Who is responsible for training?

A. Mrs Parish is the legal owner of the school dog and, as a result, she will be responsible for Luna's training. Appropriate training has already been investigated.

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

A. In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted away from the play areas where children have access. Thus, there will be no chance of the children coming into contact with any faeces. Our policy of no dogs in the playground is still applicable. 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 How will the school dog's welfare be considered?

A. Luna will be walked during lunchtimes or at the end of the day. Luna will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors and she will have a basket for her own space. Luna will have unlimited access to water.

Q How will she be managed where children have allergies?

A. We already manage a number of allergies at school and have experience since having chickens and guinea pigs in schools. 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. Parents will be given a form to sign if they are happy for their child to have contact with Luna.

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

A. Access to Luna will be carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have regular, close contact with her, unless parental permission for this has been given. We hope to work closely with parents of children who may be fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this in a safe and caring environment.