

The benefits of a school dog

School dogs have been proven to help develop pupils reading skills, improve behaviour, attendance and academic confidence, as well as increasing pupil understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills. At Penketh High School we have a school dog to support our staff team in bringing all of these benefits to our students. PHS's school dog will be trained as a therapy dog via the organisation Therapy Dog Training UK.

Jessie Our School Dog



Jessie is a black Labrador. She is two years old and lives with the Bewes Family. Jessie is a loving dog who enjoys playing with everyone she meets! Her favourite place to visit is the beach, she loves to run into the sea, and her most treasured possession is her ball. Jessie lives with two cats, and she enjoys their company, she is regularly found cuddled up asleep with them!

Questions and Answers

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

A The legal owner of the dog will be Mr and Mrs Bewes. They will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support specialist equipment, liability insurance and staff training costs.

Q Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

A Yes. The dog is from a home where both parents were seen and has been specifically chosen for its temperament.

Q Will the dog be a distraction to pupils learning?

A The dog will be kept in the safeguarding office area. The dog will only spend time in classrooms at specific planned sessions where pupils can interact safely and outside of lesson times, and therefore the dog will not be a distraction to pupils during lessons.

The dog will also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation, following consultation with staff beforehand.

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.

Q Who is responsible for training?

A Mrs Bewes is the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for her training. Appropriate professional training will be obtained, and the dog will work towards being trained as a school dog using the Therapy Dog Training UK course.

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 when taken out for short walks outside the school by staff members. The dog will not be allowed in the main playground during busy times including break time, lunch time and lesson changeover.

Q What if my child is scared of dogs? Will they be forced to be in the same room as the Dog?

A The dog will be kept in the safeguarding office area. The office is separate from the classrooms / playground area which will ensure the school dog only comes into contact with pupils who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision of a trained member of staff.

A pupil will not be forced to be in contact with dog at any time against their wishes. 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.

Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. 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 reward / therapeutic intervention

The dog will be kept in the safeguarding office area with its legal owner, Mrs Bewes and will only have supervised contact with pupils and visitors. The dog has been carefully trained over a period of time and will have appropriate access to food and water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered.

First and foremost, Jessie is a family dog who belongs to and lives with the Bewes family. As such she is well cared for and has many happy experiences outside of the school environment. Jessie's temperament indicates that she will enjoy spending time within the school environment, however if this was to change then Jessie's needs would be placed first and she would no longer visit Penketh High School.

Jessie will not be full time in school, Jessie will be present at ad hoc times according to Mrs Bewes' schedule.

Q How will this be managed where pupils have allergies?

A Pupils will not need to touch the dog or be in the same room as the dog at any point which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for pupils 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.

The school dog was specifically chosen for being a breed known for sociable dispositions, she will be given a high quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.