

Bitterley C of E Primary School Academy 2-11



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Tuesday 28th September 2021

Dear Parents,

Our school dog will be joining us soon!

Our school dog should start visiting school next week. We are very excited but not quite as excited as the children. Mabel will be joining us on a weekly basis and in time will be working with the children. She will be visiting us with Mrs Lewis our Executive Head Teacher

Mabel is well-trained for being around children and she has been around young children from the day she was born. Some of the many benefits of having a school dog include the following:

- **Cognitive development** - building a companionship with a dog helps children stimulate their memory, problem-solving and game-playing skills. Having a school dog is known to increase enthusiasm for, and enjoyment of animals, which motivates children to think and learn.
- **Social skills** - dogs provide a mutual topic for conversation with others, and encourage responsibility, wellbeing and focussed interaction with others.
- **Emotional skills** - dogs improve self-esteem, acceptance from others and are known for improving moods. Dogs can also help children develop compassion and respect for other living things and can reduce children's anxiety. Building respect can improve children's relationships with each other, parents and teachers and shows them how to nurture and care for another living thing. If any children are suffering from bereavement or are particularly sad, dogs can provide children with comfort and friendship.

- **Physical development** - interaction with dogs is known to reduce blood pressure, provide tactile stimulation, assist with pain management and give motivation for children to move and walk.
- **Reading** - school dogs are known to help children with their reading and literacy skills, through their calming presence and ability to listen to children read without being judgemental or critical. Children can build their confidence to read aloud to others through having a school dog.
- **Transition into school**- sometimes children find the separation from parents difficult, the dog can provide a soothing distraction and source of comfort and happiness, which can make that separation easier over time
- **School community** - having a school dog builds the sense of a family environment and togetherness.

During the day, Mabel will be kept in Mr Halsteads' office - returning home with Mrs Lewis once the school day is over. A suitable bed, food, water and cleaning supplies will be held for Mabel, and we will ensure that the school grounds are kept clean at all times. Pupils will not be able to access the area designated for Mabel to use.

Whenever Mabel is being walked around the school, she will have a short lead to ensure she is controlled at all times.

Pupils will be able to visit Mabel during break and lunch times in the office or nurture area. Mabel will visit pupils in their classrooms, particularly for children to read to her.

In time, pupils in Years 5 and 6 will be able to walk Mabel around the school playground - we have carefully considered pupils' ages and believe older pupils will be able to adequately control Mabel. Any pupils not in these years will not be able to walk Mabel - this is to ensure their safety. At all times, whether in classrooms or being walked by a pupil, an adult will supervise the activity.

We understand that many parents will have concerns regarding bringing a school dog onto the premises, and we would like to use this letter to provide some reassurance to parents. We have undertaken a full risk assessment to ensure that any hazards can be adequately controlled.

My child is allergic to dogs and I don't want them to touch the dog

If your child is allergic to dogs and you haven't already told us about it, you may wish to discuss this with your class teacher and may not want your child to interact with Mabel.

What hygiene measures will my child need to take?

We have undertaken a thorough risk assessment, which details the hygiene practices that will be in place - such as cleaning of hands and the environment before and after coming into contact with Mabel.

Will the dog be properly cared for?

Mabel will be subject to a rigorous grooming process to prevent the risk of infection or disease. She will be up to date with her injections and will have regular check -ups with the vet to ensure she is school ready. Mabel will be kept in Mr Halsteads' office during the day and will have adequate supply of food and water. Her welfare is very important to us.

My child is scared of dogs

We understand that some children may be fearful of dogs. Mabel is already very child friendly and will provide the opportunity for children to overcome their fears, with their parents' permission. The training that Mabel has had ensures that Mabel is well-behaved, gentle and calm around children. If parents would prefer for their child not to come into contact with Mabel, we will accommodate your request and ensure alternative arrangements are in place.

Is the dog well-behaved?

As previously mentioned, Mabel has had training to ensure she is well-behaved at all times. She will be kept on a short leash whenever walking around school.

Please complete the attached permission slip, outlining whether your child is able to come into contact with Mabel or not. We would like to reassure you that a written list will be held of all children for whom permission has been received - this will be

distributed to all staff members and only these children will be permitted to be around or touch Mabel. Please return the slip to the school office by Friday 1st October.

We hope you will join us in welcoming Mabel to our school and embrace all she has to offer to our community. We hope that you will enjoy meeting and spending time with Mabel as well!

Kind regards,

Mr M Halstead
Head of School

School Dog Permission slip

Please complete the following permission slip, providing a tick next to the condition which reflects your consent. Your consent will be valid until October 2022. Should you wish to amend your permission, please contact the school immediately.

Name of pupil:	Class name:
My child is allergic to dogs and I would not like my child to be around, or touch, the dog.	
My child is allergic to dogs, but I am happy for them to be around the dog, as long as my child does not touch the dog.	
My child has a fear of dogs and I would not like my child to be around, or touch, the dog.	
My child has a fear of dogs, but I am happy for them to be slowly introduced to the dog.	
I would not like my child to be around, or touch, the dog for reasons other than those outlined above.	
I am happy for my child to be around and touch the dog.	

I, _____ (name of parent) have fully read and understood the conditions of this letter. I agree that I have provided the correct consent above and will inform the school in writing if my permission changes at any stage.

Signature of parent: _____

Date: _____

