

Let me introduce you to Ella, our new school dog



Dear Parents & Carers,

We have a new school dog called Ella, born in 2019, and she is a Labrador. She will become an integral part of school life. She is new to being a school dog but has received much training to ensure she is very well behaved with good doggy manners. She loves children and has the perfect temperament for school life. She will be visiting the school during the next few weeks to get used to all the new sounds and smells. She has met the staff on a few occasions and has met a couple of the children already. She is doing a great job of settling in and is happy and calm. She does on occasion bark which is her way of asking what is going on when she has heard something, as she gets used to the noises in school this will stop.

When she is in school she spends her days in my office and the main school office. When she has settled she will visit classrooms on the lead. Children will be able to visit her to play with her at break and lunchtimes and to help in her training.

Whilst some children are scared of dogs, research has shown that because they see her well behaved, on the lead outside of the offices and are never put in a position of having to touch her or be close, their anxiety reduces. They also will see that their peers are not afraid and this helps them too. All children at school will be taught how to approach dogs and how to respond to unwanted behaviour. They will be taught that they must ask if they wish to pet Ella. This is helpful in training Ella but is also a good life-lesson for the children.

If you or your child is allergic to dogs please do let us know. No child is ever put in a position of having to touch Ella.

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

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Servent

Mrs Servent
Headteacher

Who is Ella's legal owner and who pays for her costs?

The legal owner of the dog is Mrs Servent who will bear the costs associated with her. The school budget will be unaffected.

Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

Yes. We have researched breeders, have chosen a reputable breeder. Ella's litter were living within a home and not kept in kennels during their early weeks. Ella's mother was a gentle, relaxed dog and all this has ensured Ella has had a good start in life.

Will the dog be a distraction?

When Ella is in school she will be based in the headteacher's office. The office is separate from the classrooms/playground area to ensure she only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact under strict supervision. Parental permission for closer, small group contact will be sought.

How will you ensure the dog becomes an asset to the school?

A well behaved dog is a joy to have around a school and brings a sense of calmness and community. This is what Ella will provide. Ella is very used to being around children of all ages and her best friends are our younger Labrador Lottie and our cat Loki.

Ella will be a working dog in school, trained to 'read' with children, sit and cuddle with individuals and sit or lay down in classrooms or offices whilst children and adults work.

Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

Yes. We have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice, including from other schools that successfully have a school dog. The risk assessment has been discussed with and approved by governors.

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

In the interest of health and hygiene Ella is toileted off site and is not allowed outside onto the school grounds.

Will Ella be allowed on the school playground?

Ella will not go onto the school playground or school grass at any time. She will remain within the school building. When she needs to be exercised she will exit via the school carpark gates.

How will the dog's welfare be considered?

Ella is walked before school and in the local area at least once during the school day. Ella has a bed and free access to water in the Head's office. Children can only approach her after asking permission and staff know what signs to look for if Ella is uncomfortable or stressed.

How will this be managed where children have allergies?

As she is a Labrador, Ella does shed but she is regularly groomed to remove and excess hair and dander. However, children will not need to touch her, 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. Please let the office know if you think your child might have an allergy to the school dog.

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

Access to Ella is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with her. 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.

I am frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?

When Ella is in school there will be a notice on my office door to let everyone know she is here. She will remain on her lead at all times when in school. If a parent or staff member has an arranged meeting with the Headteacher we request that you let us know if you are anxious about being in a room with our school dog. Ella is crate trained and will have access to a crate in the main office should she need to use it during the school day. She is very happy resting in her crate.

Will Ella visit the classrooms?

Ella will only visit the classrooms when she is familiar with the school and with an invitation from the class teacher for a specific short period of time. The more common routine will be for individual or small groups of children to come and see her, read with her etc in my office under my supervision.

