

School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: Who pays for its costs?

A: The legal owner of the dog will be St. Joseph's School; Mrs O'Kane will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support insurance and staff/pupil training costs where appropriate.

Q: Will the dog be from a reputable breeder?

A: Yes. The dog will be from a home where one or both parents will be seen and will be specifically chosen for its temperament.

Q: Will the dog be a distraction?

A: The dog will be kept in the SLT office area and will also have access to an outside area that is separate to students. The office is separate from the classrooms / playground to ensure it only comes into contact with students who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision. 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, a full risk assessment is in place, which will be reviewed regularly. 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 O'Kane will be responsible for its initial training. If the school decide to seek further training (for example, reading therapy training, etc.) then the school will be responsible for this specific training.

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

A: In the interest of health and hygiene, our school dog will have an area on the school site that has no access to students – this will be the dog's own outside area. The staff in charge of the dog will ensure that this is cleared away appropriately. If the school dog toilets when out on the school site, staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed.

Q: How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A: The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. The dog will have its own space in the offices where it will not be disturbed by students. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have access to food and water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered and remove the dog from the school environment if we don't feel it is happy.

Q: How will this be managed where children have allergies?

A: Students 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 students 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. Any students with allergies to dogs will be built into the risk assessment as they are made known to the school.

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

A: Access to the dog will be carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with it if this has been expressed by parents. 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: Will other dogs be allowed in school?

A: Allowing a dog onto the school site can only be approved by the Headteacher and for educational purposes. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

