



St Sebastian's R.C. Primary School
Douglas Green
Salford M6 6ET

Headteacher Mrs C.Doyle
Phone 0161 921 1625

Email stsebastians.rcprimaryschool@salford.gov.uk

Monday 17 April 2023

School Dog

Dear parents/carers,

I am writing to let you know of some exciting news for St Sebastian's RC Primary School. During the summer term we will be getting our new school dog, called Bertie, who will be a regular attendee at St Sebastian's RC Primary School. Bertie is a 16-week old Cockapoo.

Cockapoos are a breed of dog that are known for their mild temperament and he has a hypo-allergenic coat. Bertie is my dog and will be only coming into school for short sessions initially. I will obviously be caring for Bertie out of school; I will be taking full responsibility, but other staff will be taking him for sessions.

In an assembly we will discuss with the children the rules and expectations about having a school dog but we will also talk about many of the benefits too. We have undertaken a significant amount of research and are aware of many benefits to having a school dog including.

- a calming effect on pupils;
- improved behaviour and concentration, reduced stress and improved 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 work undertaken with the most vulnerable children;
- helping children build confidence in reading;
- improving attendance;
- further promote our 'Well Being' agenda for pupils.

During the day, Bertie will be kept in the headteacher's office with me – returning to my home once the school day is over. A suitable bed, food, water and cleaning supplies will be held for Bertie, and through training, he will be sufficiently toilet-trained. I must stress that pupils will not be expected to clean up any dog mess, and we will ensure that the school grounds are kept clean at all times.

Whenever Bertie is being walked around the school, he will have a short lead to ensure he is controlled at all times. Pupils will be able to visit Bertie during some break and lunch times in the

headteacher's office. Once his training is complete, Bertie will visit pupils in their classrooms, particularly for children to read to him. Once Bertie is more settled, older pupils will be able to walk Bertie around the school playground – we have carefully considered pupils' ages and believe older pupils will be able to adequately control Bertie. Younger pupils will not be able to walk Bertie – 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 some children may be fearful of dogs. Cockapoos are known for being extremely child-friendly and Bertie will provide the opportunity for children to overcome their fears. The training that Bertie will undergo will ensure that he is well-behaved, gentle and calm around children. If parents would prefer for their child not to come into contact with Bertie, we will accommodate your request and ensure alternative arrangements are in place.

We will publish pictures of our school dog, Bertie, on our Facebook page so that everyone can enjoy his development and our weekly newsletter will provide regular updates.

We hope the children will gain a great deal of enjoyment from having their school dog and that he becomes an established part of life at St Sebastian's RC Primary School. However, should you have any queries or questions on the matter then please do not hesitate to contact the school. In the meantime, please see the FAQs attached.

Mrs Doyle
Headteacher

Permission slip for working with school dog

Please tick as appropriate:

- o I am happy for my child to be involved with all aspects of caring for the school dog, including supervised walks at break time.
- o My child is a little nervous of dogs but I am happy for him/her to be involved in all aspects of caring for the school dog, including supervised walks at break time.
- o My child is fearful of dogs but, in time, I would like them to work with the dog to develop their confidence with and understanding of dogs.
- o I do not give permission for my child to come into direct contact with the dog.

Child's name:.....

Class:

Signed:.....Print name:.....

Date:.....



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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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

A. The legal owner of the dog will be Mrs Doyle who will care for the dog out of school hours and will bear the costs associated with it; the school budget will remain unaffected.

Q Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

A. Yes. We have researched breeders and have chosen a reputable breeder

Q Will the dog be a distraction?

A. The dog will be kept in an 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, 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 sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog. There is also a School Dog Policy available to view on the Website.

Q Who is responsible for training?

A. The nominated member of staff will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for its training. Appropriate professional training will be obtained.

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 in a sectioned off area of the school site where children have no access. Thus there will be no chance of the children coming into contact with faeces. Our policy of no dogs in the playground is still applicable as 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 dog's welfare be considered?

A. As the puppy grows he will be walked mornings and lunchtime by school staff who lives locally. The dog will be kept in an Office area and will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have unlimited access to water. We will work closely with other professionals to ensure the dog's welfare is always carefully considered.

Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?

A. We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for children and adults that are allergic to dogs. The breed of dog has also been chosen for its hypoallergenic properties. Individual needs will always be met and we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies.

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

A. Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have regular, close contact with it unless permission for this has been given. 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.