

About – Our Staff Team (Mabel the dog)

We are excited to introduce Mabel who will be working with children at school this year.

What are the benefits of having a school dog?

Numerous research studies have shown the benefits of therapy dogs in schools. Therapy dogs have been working in schools for the past 5 years across the UK.

Evidence indicates that benefits include:

Cognitive – companionship with a dog stimulates memory, problem-solving and game-playing. It improves reading comprehension and confidence.

Social – a dog provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, encourages responsibility, wellbeing and focused interaction with others

Emotional – a school dog improves self-esteem, acceptance from others and lifts mood, often provoking laughter and fun. Dogs can also teach compassion and respect for other living things as well as relieving anxiety.

Physical – interaction with a furry friend reduces blood pressure, provides tactile stimulation, assists with pain management, gives motivation to move, walk and stimulates the senses

Environmental – a dog in a school increases the sense of a family environment, with all of the above benefits continuing long after the school day is over.

How it will work in our school?

Our school dog, Mabel, will be timetabled for class visits (where appropriate) and working with either groups or individual children e.g. for reading. Our core purpose is to:

Teach children to nurture and respect life.

Teach children responsibility. Having to remember to feed, provide water and show support for a dog can give children a sense of importance and satisfaction. The relationship that develops can be life-changing for a child and a great support system as they themselves continue to grow and develop.

Teach children patience.

Teach children compassion. Just like humans, dogs feel emotion and pain.

Teach children about socialisation. Like most of us, dogs are social animals, who enjoy and need attention and affection. By learning how to interact with a dog, children can learn how to better socialise with other children. If they can learn the social cues of a dog, then interacting with humans who can talk will be a walk in the park (pun intended!).

Help children who suffer bereavement or who are upset in any way and in need of calm, comfort and space before being able to tell an adult what has upset them.

Create a calming atmosphere for children with additional needs.

Improve behaviour and concentration, thus reducing stress and improved self-esteem.

Dogs are fun and non-judgemental. Lastly, but certainly not least, dogs are a lot of fun. They greet you with a wagging tail every day and can cheer you up even on your worst day!

Many people have studied dogs in attempts to decipher their behaviour, and the theories abound. However, you just have to witness the interactions between dogs and children to realise the potential for greatness. Dogs can sense when children are upset, they can sense when a diabetic child's sugar is low, and they can help children with severe physical disabilities find happiness in life. A dog can enrich a child's life. After all, dogs are basically four-legged children who never grow up!

Some concerns you might have:

My child is allergic to dogs

It is understandable that some of you may be concerned about possible allergic reactions to a school dog. We have looked at the breed of dog so that they are as hypoallergenic as possible. Mabel is a breed which fits this description. Mabel will be subjected to the most thorough cleanliness and grooming regime. She will only be allowed in situations with children who voluntarily wish to work with her. Your permission will of course be sought in advance of Mabel having access to, and working with, your child in school.

Will the dog be properly cared for?

Mabel, will be extremely well looked after. She will live with Mrs Barker-Doe and her family and will come to school most days but will stay safely in her office, which is secure and away from individual classrooms. We will ensure that Mabel maintains a good relationship with all staff who handle her. She has undergone training to obey commands so will be well-behaved. She will visit the vet regularly for all her injections as well as regular check-ups. If she is unwell for any reason she will stay at home with a babysitter!

My child is scared of dogs

Some children may have had upsetting experiences and thus have a fear of dogs (or another animal). Mabel will only be in contact with children whose parents have given their permission. Experience and research have shown that, with proper guidance and handling, children can learn to overcome their fear of animals and grow in respect and appreciation for them.

Therefore, I would like to introduce Mabel who is a Cavapoo: cross between a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel and a Toy Poodle.