



Mabel - The School Dog



September 2024

Introducing our school dog – Mabel



I would like to introduce our new school dog, Mabel. As you are aware from previous newsletters this is something the school has been planning for several months. In this leaflet we will outline the reasons for bringing animals into school and how it can benefit the school community.

Across summer 2024 parents, pupils and staff were consulted about the process of introducing a school dog. Extensive research has been carried out into the benefits of animals in school. As a school we have implemented the policies and protocols that are required to ensure whole community safety is at the forefront of this development.

Mabel is currently 14 weeks old, she is a pedigree Labrador retriever. She belongs to my family and is a much-loved family pet who will spend time in school. She will always be with me. She will not be in classrooms until she is ready which currently we think will be when she is 12-24 months of age (September 2025 – July 2026). When she does visit classrooms it will be for short periods only. Mabel will be on site approximately 2-3 days per week.

A dog trainer has engaged with my family to ensure the training we have implemented is suitable to support Mabel being in school. The Local Authority Health and Safety Officer has been consulted regarding the policies. The Governing Body of the school is keen to see our community benefit from having animals in school and will continuously supervise the process. If at any point we feel it is no longer suitable for our school the process will stop and Mabel will not attend school.

Class teachers will speak to you individually about Mabel and gather consent for your child to speak to Mabel in a safe way if they wish to.

Mabel will be arriving in school from Wednesday 4th September:

*If you see me with Mabel in school please remember we welcome conversations with people, she will always be on a harness and short lead. **I would like to politely request that as Mabel is in the early stages of her training that she is not stroked by children and parents.** As we talk to you Mabel will receive small hand fed treats to encourage her positive behaviour.*

Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact school. We look forward to enjoying a new initiative that should benefit our whole school community in so many ways.

Mrs Thomas & Mabel

Benefits of a school dog

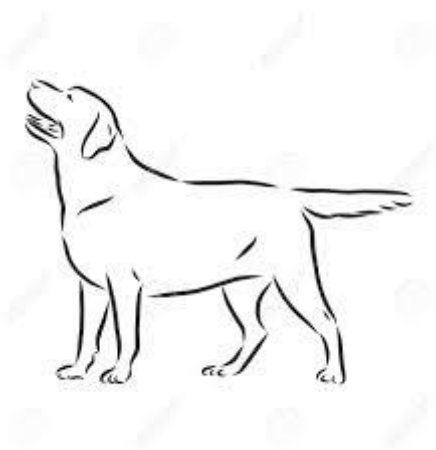
We undertook a significant amount of research and are aware of many benefits to having a school dog such as:

- having a calming effect on pupils, particularly those with behavioural or learning difficulties;
- improved behaviour and concentration, reduced stress and improved self-esteem;
- encouraging expression and participation in more withdrawn children
- fostering a sense of responsibility
- motivating pupils to think and to learn, as 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, and educational improvements with low achievers.
- helping children build confidence in reading. Please see separate article link below.

<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2011/feb/28/dogs-listen-to-children-reading>

<http://www.petsastherapy.org/>

Why a Labrador Retriever breed?



We chose a labrador as the most appropriate breed of dog for the school. The breed has been carefully selected because of its ideal temperament and because it is used widely in the field of therapy and support (e.g. guide dogs). Labradors are also used successfully in other schools. Labradors are by nature gentle and friendly. They are also superb working dogs. We are sure the children will gain a great deal of enjoyment from having their school dog Mabel and that she will become an established part of life at our school.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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

The legal owner of the dog is the nominated member of staff, Mrs Thomas, all costs are met by Mrs Thomas

Q Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

Yes. We researched breeders and chose a reputable breeder. The dog is Kennel Club registered.

Q Will the dog be a distraction?

The dog is kept in the Headteachers office. This area is separate from the classrooms. We will be careful to ensure that time spent with the school dog is shared among the children fairly. Mabel will not be in pupil's lessons this academic year.

Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that have a school dog.

All relevant documents can be found on our school website:

Q Who is responsible for training?

The nominated member of staff will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for its training. We are working with a certified dog trainer – Hayley Rees, <https://www.behavewithhayley.co.uk/>

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

In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog is toileted in an outdoor area of the school site where children have no access. Thus there will be no chance of the children coming into contact with faeces.

Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?

The dog will be walked and allowed out several times each day. She has access to varied toys and activities, she is crate trained and has a crate in Mrs Thomas office to rest and sleep in. Mabel will have access to food and water and training rewards.

Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?

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.

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

Access to Mabel is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact if they prefer not to.

All about Mabel



- Mabel is a golden Labrador retriever.
- She is a pure breed and from working parents.
- Mabel joined Mrs Thomas' family at 9 weeks of age.
- Mabel is fully vaccinated.
- Mabel is fully up to date with flea and worm treatments.
- Mabel is training with a dog trainer:
<https://www.behavewithhayley.co.uk/>
- Mabel is fully crate trained and has a crate in Mrs Thomas' office where she rests – see photo above.
- Mabel predominantly toilets in the rear car park away from the main playground.
- Several times a day Mabel will be taken on walks around school by Mrs Thomas using a harness and short lead.
- If an emergency arises in school that requires Mrs Thomas attention Mabel will be handled by Ms Williams or Mrs Gallagher.



Mabel - aged 11 weeks