

School Dog Policy

The Purpose of Introducing a School Dog

Having a school dog offers numerous educational and emotional benefits for both children and staff. It helps foster a greater understanding of responsibility, cultivates empathy, and develops nurturing skills—all through positive interactions with a suitable dog, such as Indie. Additionally, both children and adults often find great joy in spending time with a dog.

Benefits of Having a School Dog

Pupil Wellbeing

- Children can empathise with animals in ways that might be challenging with other adults, supporting their emotional health and wellbeing.
- Spending time with a dog can boost self-esteem and lift overall mood.
- Dogs teach compassion and respect for living beings, while also helping to reduce anxiety.
- Enhances behaviour and concentration.
- Known to increase dopamine and serotonin levels, which improve happiness levels.

Social

- A dog serves as a positive shared topic for conversation.
- Promotes a sense of responsibility.
- Enhances well-being and increases social interaction.
- Aids in the development of collaborative play.
- Instructs children on how to nurture and respect animals.

Academic

- Having a school dog can boost memory and problem-solving skills.
- Research shows that school dogs can enhance pupils' attendance as they are keen to interact and see the dog.
- Inspires children to engage more in thinking and learning, as many children naturally possess a strong interest in, enthusiasm for, and enjoyment of animals.
- Reading to dogs has been shown to assist children in developing literacy skills and building confidence, thanks to the calming influence of the dog's presence and the non-judgmental nature of dogs listening to children read. This supportive atmosphere fosters children's love for reading and gives them the assurance to read aloud.

It is recognised that interacting with a school dog may not be suitable for every child, particularly those with allergies or a fear of dogs. Additionally, we acknowledge that some parents may prefer their child to avoid interaction with the school dog.

Parents are encouraged to speak to the Class Teacher/ School Office to indicate their preference for their child not to engage with the school dog.

Parents will also be informed and asked for consent regarding any children who will have planned interactions with the school dog.

School Policy

At both East Harptree Primary School and Ubley Primary School, we will consistently prioritise the safety of our pupils, staff, and animals by:

- Always considering the needs of pupils as a top priority - ensuring that our pupils' physical safety and emotional wellbeing are at the forefront when engaging with the school dog.
- Managing any risks related to the school dog through a comprehensive risk assessment that outlines control measures implemented to mitigate risks.
- Ensuring that animal welfare is upheld at all times.

Context

- The school dog is owned and cared for by Mrs Guthrie-Knight.
- All expenses related to the care of the school dog will be borne by Mrs Guthrie-Knight.
- Indie is a cockapoo. They possess gentle temperaments and are recognised for being good with children, as well as being sociable and friendly.

Day-to-day Management

The dog will:

- Not be permitted in school if she is unwell.
- Be kept on a lead when transitioning between classrooms or during walks.
- Be under the complete control and supervision of an adult at all times.
- Be housed in the school office with a quiet area for resting.
- Have received all vaccinations, as well as ongoing flea and worm treatments.

Our pupils will:

- Not be given sole responsibility for, nor be left alone with, the dog.
- Meet the dog in groups of no more than three children, adhering to the 'approach, ask, pet, goodbye' protocol.
- Not bring food into the dog's vicinity.
- Be reminded of appropriate behaviour around the dog each time they encounter Indie:
- Always remain calm.
- Be gentle.
- Avoid putting your face close to the dog's face.
- Do not disturb a dog that is eating or sleeping.

- Always approach the dog while standing up.
- Do not feed the dog.

Pupil and adults will also learn about how dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring of teeth indicates that the dog feels threatened or angry. Flattened ears, tail lowered or between their legs, hiding behind their owner, whining or growling are signs that the dog is frightened or nervous. If the dog is displaying any of these signs, they should immediately be removed from that particular situation or environment.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The School Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in School.

- The Head Teacher is responsible for implementing this policy.
- Teachers, staff, pupils, parents and visitors are required to abide by this policy.
- The children will be supported in learning about dogs and how best to behave around our dog. This will include highlighting that not all dogs are well-trained and that caution must be used around unknown dogs outside school.

Meet our school dog

Meet Indie!

- Indie belongs to Mrs Guthrie-Knight and her family. This adorable cockapoo also serves as a Pets As Therapy (PAT) dog.
- Both of Indie's parents were cockapoos known for their wonderful temperament. Cockapoos are incredibly friendly, loving, and social dogs that tend to get along with nearly everyone they encounter. They particularly enjoy the company of people, especially children. Their intelligence and ability to be trained make them manageable in most school environments.
- Indie was born on 16th January 2023 and became a part of Mrs Guthrie-Knight's family when she was just 8 weeks old. Now at 2 years old, she spends countless hours playing ball with Amalia and Georgina, Mrs Guthrie-Knight's children. Additionally, she enjoys exploring the Wrigton fields, where she meets new people and dogs. She is always friendly to everyone!
- Indie is capable of following various commands such as sit, down, no, stay, and back. When you call out, 'Indie, come,' she will happily come to you.

Frequently Asked Questions

We hope that the FAQs below will help to answer some of your questions and that you will join us in welcoming Indie to East Harptree Primary School and Ubley Primary School and embrace all that she can offer both schools.

The school has a 'no dogs' policy

Our school does have a 'no dogs' policy, and dogs are not allowed anywhere on the school site. However, there is a risk assessment in place for Indie, and the school has a policy specifically for her. Indie will be on a lead and under control at all times when moving around the school property. She will always be accompanied by an adult who knows her well, and children's time with her will be carefully monitored and supervised.

What will the school dog do on a day-to-day basis?

Indie will be supporting a variety of Children during her time at East Harptree Primary School and Ubley Primary School. She will specifically work with some of our children who have additional needs, where research has shown that interactions with a dog can have a very positive effect. Indie will sit and listen to children read.

Safety around the dog

Children will only have contact with the dog with a supervised adult. Indie will generally be in one room. When moving around the school, she will be under strict control or on a lead.

What about the children who have allergies around a dog?

Indie is a Cockapoo, which is a low-moulting breed. Parents and staff will be asked to inform the school if their child is allergic, and if so, we will work with the family to ensure that the child doesn't have contact with Indie if this is their wish.

What about the children/ staff who have a fear of dogs?

Parents will have the option to 'opt out' of their child having any 1:1 interaction with Indie.

It may be that your child has a phobia, but over time would like to have some interaction. If so, we can be aware and work with parents/children to build up their confidence so that they feel safe.

Health and well-being of the dog

Indie has received all vaccinations and has routine worming and flea treatments, is groomed and cared for by her family. Pet insurance is in place to ensure she receives immediate medical attention.

Hygiene

There will be a designated area for the dog to toilet if necessary, which will be away from the children. The staff in charge of Indie will ensure that this is cleared away appropriately. If Indie 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. If children have stroked the dog, they will be taught to wash their hands afterwards.

What happens if the dog is ill?

If indie were to be taken ill, she would not attend school and would be cared for at home until she was fit to return to school.

Please do not hesitate to contact the school if you have any questions that have not been covered above.