

Dear Parents/Guardians

School Dog

I am writing to let you know that Donington Cowley Endowed Primary School has decided to take on a school dog. Arlo is a mixed breed dog and has a very mild temperament. He will make regular visits to the school and at the start of each academic year, there will be lessons around the visiting dog and parents will be given an opportunity to speak with the Head Teacher with regards to Arlo.

We have undertaken a significant amount of research, have visited other schools who have a school dog established, and we believe having Arlo working and helping in the school environment will achieve the following:

- Improve academic achievement
- Increase literacy skills
- Calming behaviours and positive attachments
- Increase social skills and self-esteem
- Increase confidence
- Teach responsibility and respect to all life
- Help prevent truancy and improve attendance
- Motivate children who are often less attentive



Arlo lives with myself, Mrs Foston, and my family and will be introduced to the school environment and students gradually. He has regular visits to the vets for his flea and worming treatment and vaccinations. He will also be regularly groomed and is fully insured. His vaccination programme records will be kept as part of the school's dog risk assessment and both Arlo and his handlers are undertaking certified PAWS Therapy Dog Training for Schools before he comes in. If you would like to read more about PAWS and the training they will be providing, please visit [Therapy dogs | PAWS : People and Animal Wellbeing Services \(pawswellbeing.com\)](http://www.pawswellbeing.com)

Arlo's main place of residence will be in my office but will also visit the Senior Leadership Teams office for much needed chill time! Arlo will normally be kept on a lead and harness when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under full control and supervision of an adult. A copy of the School Dog policy will be on the school website and there is a full risk assessment, which will be reviewed regularly. If at any point it comes to light that Arlo does not actively enjoy life in the school environment, then he will no longer attend.

It is accepted that interacting with animals is not appropriate for all children but that for some it has the potential to provide many positive benefits. Any parent/carer who does not wish for their child to interact with Arlo is invited to contact me to inform me of their wishes. Please also ensure your child's medical record is up-to-date and the school has been made aware of any allergies.

Permission for your child to have some contact with the school dog will be presumed if no written communication is received by Friday 7th July 2023.

We hope students will gain a great deal of enjoyment from having a school dog and that Arlo becomes an established part of life at Donington Cowley Endowed Primary School. Parents can follow Arlo's training and development on Facebook via our school page.

Yours sincerely

Sophie Foston

Sophie Foston
Headteacher

SCHOOL DOG FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

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

The legal owner of the dog is Mrs Foston and her family. She bears the costs associated with owning the dog.

Will the dog be a distraction?

When in school Arlo will be based in Mrs Foston's office. He will have access to quiet space and in the SLT office for some 'chill' time! Arlo will always be accompanied by an adult and will never be on his own with a pupil.

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 successfully have a school dog and a reputable dog trainer has been used.

Who is responsible for training?

Mrs Foston, as the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for its training.

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

In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks in the village. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed.

How will the dog's welfare be considered?

Arlo will be well looked after. He lives with Mrs Foston and her family. Mrs Foston will bring Arlo into school regularly once he gets used to visiting us. Arlo is fully vaccinated, will visit the vet regularly for all the necessary injections, as well as regular check-ups. He will also be regularly groomed and is fully insured. If Arlo is unwell for any reason, he will stay at home. He will be walked, fed and hydrated during the day. He will have access to a quiet area in Mrs Foston's where he will be able to have 'quiet time'.

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. (See Risk Assessment).

It is completely understandable that there will be some concerns about possible allergic reactions to a school dog. Arlo will be subjected to a very thorough cleanliness and grooming regime. Arlo will only work with children who have voluntarily expressed an interest to do so and after discussion with the school as to whether it would be a beneficial intervention. Permission would be sought in advance to any contact. Arlo will be based in the Headteacher and SLT offices.

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

Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with him 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.

Some children may have had upsetting or traumatic experiences and therefore be fearful of dogs (or indeed other animals). Arlo will only come into contact with children whose parents have given their permission. Experience and research have shown that, with proper guidance, handling and time, children can learn to overcome their fear of animals and gain a greater appreciation for them.