



South Avenue Primary School

South Avenue, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 4SU

Telephone: 01795 477750

Email: headteacher@southavenue.kent.sch.uk

Acting Head of School: Miss Tracy Cadwallader

19th March 2021

Dear Parents, Carers & Guardians,

After many months of research and careful consideration, I am writing to let you know that the school has decided to take on a school dog. Over the last year, schools have experienced periods of disruption and we believe that now more than ever a school dog will bring our school community together. The introduction of our school dog will provide many benefits to our pupils and other members of our school family.

Our school dog will be specially trained to work with children.

Over the last six months or so, we have undertaken a significant amount of research and are aware of many benefits to having a school dog, which includes:

- a calming effect on pupils, particularly those with behavioural or learning difficulties;
- improved behaviour and concentration, reduced stress and improved self-esteem for pupils;
- encouraging expression and participation in more withdrawn children;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, and educational improvements with low achievers;
- helping children build confidence in reading. Please see separate article link below.
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2011/feb/28/dogs-listen-to-childrenreading>

Our school dog will also be used to work with children who have special needs, 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. Our dog will also be available to work with children (and adults) who have had bad experiences with dogs or other animals. With parental permission, over a period of time children who react fearfully to dogs will be supported in approaching, handling and gaining confidence in managing their fear.

Collaboration, Challenge, Community, Courage, Commitment, Creativity

Whilst the dog's main place of residence will be an office area, which is secure and separate from the classrooms, children will be able to interact with the dog under supervision at certain times of the week as long as parents have not opted out of contact with the school dog. The dog will not be given access to other visitors without supervision and mutual consent. Please understand that we will do everything we can to reassure children who are fearful and that under no circumstances will they be forced to meet with the dog. Whilst moving around the school, the dog will be kept on a short lead and will always be with an adult.

Luna-Belle

Our school dog is called Luna-Belle and will live with Miss Bedwin, who picked her up at the start of the Christmas holidays. Luna is now 5 months old and has already started her training to prepare her for life in school. Luna is owned by Miss Bedwin and she will bear all of the costs including the relevant liability and insurance costs which allow Luna to be brought into school. At the end of Term 4, Luna will begin to come into school and for her sake and the sake of the pupils, she will be very slowly introduced to the environment, staff and children.



Luna-Belle is a cavapoo (a cross between a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel and a Poodle). This breed has been chosen as the most appropriate breed for our 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. Cavapoos have been used successfully in many other schools and are by nature gentle and friendly creatures.



Miss Bedwin has met Luna-Belle's mother, father, aunt and grandmother and she is from a reputable and licensed breeder who has provided clear health checks of both her and her parents.

We know the children will gain a great deal of enjoyment from having their own school dog and she will become an essential part of life at South Avenue Primary School.

We will publish pictures of our school dog, as she grows up, on the school website and social media pages.

We understand that it is not possible for all families to have a family dog and, therefore, we hope that this is an opportunity for children to have a 'share' in a dog and gain from this relationship and contact on a regular basis.

We appreciate that some parents may have questions and concerns about the introduction of a school dog and we welcome these and will be happy to meet virtually or over the phone with parents who wish to discuss this further. In the meantime, please see the FAQs attached.

If after reading this letter, our school dog policy & risk assessment and the FAQs below, you do not wish your child to have contact with the school dog then please complete the opt out form attached. If we do not receive an opt out form from a parent/guardian by Friday 26th March 2021, this will be taken as consent that your child may have contact with the school dog.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to be 'T Cadwallader'.

Miss T Cadwallader
Acting Head of School

Please return attached reply slip by 26.03.2021

Child's name: Class: Date of birth:

Please tick as appropriate:

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.

I do not give permission for my child to come into direct contact with the dog.

Additional notes:

Signed:

Print name:

Date: