



Head

Rupert Moreton, BA, MA, M.Ed

Think for yourself, act for others

24 April 2019

Dear Parent/Carer,

'Pet therapy' is widely accepted as benefitting children's well-being and communication skills. Studies have shown that the presence of companion animals can improve the well-being of children and lower the rate of anxiety simply by making the environment happier, more enjoyable and less forbidding. Dogs are increasingly being used in schools with great success and some of you may have seen in the media that they are now being used in some hospitals as the emotional health benefits they bring are so vast.

Cheney School have made the decision to introduce a dog to the school from September 2019. The puppy will belong to Miss Jackson, Head of Music and Miss Jackson will be the main point of contact for any dog questions. The puppy will grow up in the school environment becoming fully accustomed to the routines of the day and supportive of students within the school.

The benefits of having a school dog include:

- a calming effect on pupils;
- improved behaviour and concentration, reduced stress and improved self-esteem;
- encouraging expression, participation and confidence for all 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;
- helping children build confidence in reading;
- improving attendance.

Prior to purchasing the puppy, Miss Jackson will be visiting the home of the dog's parent/s to ensure that the temperament of the parent/s is suitable for interaction with children. The puppy will live with Miss Jackson in her home and be introduced to the school environment and students gradually. The puppy will be thoroughly checked for any illnesses and Miss Jackson will be responsible for its vaccination programme with all records kept as part of the school dog's risk assessment.

The dog's main place of residence will be an office area in the Music department, which is secure and separate from the classrooms with access to an outside space away from students. The school dog will begin to spend time in the school library, in the sixth form area and with pastoral staff. Whilst moving around the school, the dog will be kept on a short lead and will always be with a member of staff.

You will be able to see the school dog policy on the school website and there is also a full risk assessment, which will be reviewed regularly.

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 their child to interact with the dog is invited to write to Miss Jackson, via email or letter, to inform her 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 – you can do this [via our online parent portal here](#). In the meantime, please see the FAQs attached.



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Rupert Moreton, BA, MA, M.Ed

Cheney School

Cheney Lane, Headington
Oxford OX3 7QH

T: 01865 765726 F: 01865 767399
E: office@cheney.oxon.sch.uk
W: www.cheney.oxon.sch.uk



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**Permission for your child to have some contact with the school dog will be presumed if no written communication to Miss Jackson is received by Friday 10 May 2019.
Contact email address: Lja@cheney.oxon.sch.uk**

We hope students will gain a great deal of enjoyment from having a school dog and that he/she becomes an established part of life at Cheney School.

Kindest Regards,

Louise Marsh
Deputy Head of Cheney School





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School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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

A: The legal owner of the dog will be Miss Jackson; she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support insurance and staff training costs where appropriate.

Q: Will the dog be from a reputable breeder?

A: Yes. The dog will be from a home where one or both parents will be seen and will be specifically chosen for its temperament.

Q: Will the dog be a distraction?

A: The dog will be kept in the music office area and will also have access to an outside area that is separate to students. The office is separate from the classrooms / playground to ensure it only comes into contact with students who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision. The dog will also have a space to spend time in classrooms, the library and in the sixth form area where children can interact safely. The dog will also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation, following consultation with staff beforehand.

Q: Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

A: Yes, a full risk assessment is in place, which will be reviewed regularly. We have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog.

Q: Who is responsible for training?

A: Miss Jackson will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for its initial training. If the school decide to seek further training (for example, reading therapy training, etc) then the school will responsible for this specific training.

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

A: In the interest of health and hygiene, our school dog will have an area on the school site that has no access to students – this will be the dog's own outside area. The staff in charge of the dog will ensure that this is cleared away appropriately. If the school dog 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.

Q: How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A: The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. The dog will have its own space in the music department where it will not be disturbed by students. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have unlimited access to food and water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered and remove the dog from the school environment if we don't feel it is happy.

Q: How will this be managed where children have allergies?

A: Students will not need to touch the dog, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for students 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. Any students with allergies to dogs will be built into the risk assessment as they are made known to the school.

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

A: Access to the dog will be carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with it if this has been expressed by parents. 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.

Q: Will other school dogs be allowed in school?

A: Allowing a dog onto the school site can only be approved by the Headteacher and for educational purposes. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis.