

## **Important Information regarding Our School Dog - Cooper**

Dear Parents/Carers

I am so excited to be able to tell you about a new member of the Dee Point Primary School team who joined us towards the end of last term. His name is Cooper and he is a Cockerpoo which is a cross between a Cocker Spaniel and a Poodle.

Cooper will be specially trained to work with children. Over the last few months, we have undertaken a significant amount of research and are aware of many benefits to having a school dog, including:

- 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- encouraging expression and participation in more withdrawn children;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 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 children build confidence in reading. Please see separate article link below.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/how-dogs-could-make-children-better-readers-a7645616.html>

Cooper has already had several sessions with a specialist trainer and behaviourist in preparation for him coming into school. Mr Ortega has also attended a number of training sessions so far. Autism Dogs CIC is a charity, training and providing accredited assistance dogs to people with physical disabilities and children with autism.

Our school dog will also undertake training 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.

Cooper 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. While the dog's main place of residence will be in the school office and the Learning

mentor office, which is secure and separate from the classrooms, children will be able to interact with the dog under strict supervision at certain times of the week as long as parental permission has been given. 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, Cooper will be kept on a short lead and will always be with an adult. 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. autism assistance dogs). Cockerpoos are by nature gentle and friendly creatures. Cooper came from a reputable breeder. Several dogs from this breeder have already become school or therapy dogs. Cooper was carefully picked, with much guidance from the breeder, for his temperament and his coat. He has a curly, very low shedding coat which makes him much less likely to affect those with allergies. Both his parents were also seen and Mr Ortega has certificates to show they had all the relevant health checks.

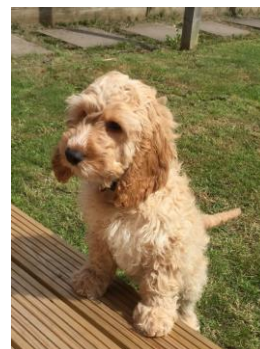
Attached are a series of frequently asked questions which I hope will answer any queries you may have, but do come and ask Mr Ortega if you have any other concerns or questions. The "Dog in School" policy will be available on the website shortly. We hope the children will gain a great deal of enjoyment from having their school dog and that he, very quickly, becomes an established part of life at Dee Point.

Please return the slip below to the office. In order to meet strict GDPR regulations, the return slip must be returned as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,



Dave Williams  
(Headteacher)



## Frequently Asked Questions

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

A. The legal owner of the dog is Mr Ortega who will care for the dog out of school hours and will bear the costs associated with it; the school will pay for any additional costs that may incur as a result of the dog being in school (for example, additional insurance and high level of training).

### ***Q Is the dog from a reputable breeder?***

A. Yes. We have done much research and have chosen a reputable breeder.

### ***Q Will the dog be a distraction?***

A. The dog will be kept in the Main Office and the Learning Mentors Office. These areas are separate from the classrooms/ playground area to ensure he only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision. We will be careful to ensure that time spent with the school dog is shared among the

children fairly. We will also ensure that children who do not have permission for direct contact with the dog are still able to participate in a number of ways, should they wish to do so.

***Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?***

A. 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. There is a School Dog Policy, available to view on the Website.

***Q Who is responsible for training?***

A. Mr Ortega will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for his training. Appropriate professional training will be obtained and the dog will work towards a PAT PRO (Pets As Therapy) assessment when he reaches an appropriate age.

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

A. In the interest of health and hygiene Cooper will be toileted in an area of the school site where children have no access. Thus there will be no chance of the children coming into contact with faeces. While he is in training any accidents that happen will be cleaned immediately and in an appropriate and hygienic way. Any children in close vicinity to the dog will be removed while thorough cleaning takes place.

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

A. The dog will be exercised/walked at lunchtime; parents will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to be able to walk with a member of staff and the dog during that time. This will also be used as a behaviour reward. The dog will be kept in the Main Office and will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have unlimited access to water. We will work closely with other professionals to ensure the dog's welfare is always carefully considered.

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

A. The breed of dog has been chosen for its hypoallergenic properties, however, children will not need to touch the dog which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions however small. 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?***

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

***Q My child must not be licked by the dog because of our religious beliefs. How will the school manage this?***

A. Cooper will be trained not to lick. However, while he is still a puppy and being trained, we will try hard to ensure that the children do not come into contact with saliva, but if they do, we will contact parents of children for whom this will be an issue, as soon as possible to let them know that their child will need to wash before praying.

**Please return to school as soon as possible Permission Form for Cooper the school  
Therapy Dog**

Name of child/family ..... Class/es .....

Please tick as appropriate:

- I am happy for my child to be involved with all aspects of caring for the school dog, including supervised lunchtime walks.
- My child is a little nervous of dogs but I am happy for him/her to be involved in all aspects of caring for the school dog, including supervised lunchtime walks.
- 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.
- Please contact me if my child is licked by the dog.
- I do not give permission for my child to come into direct contact with the dog

Any other issues/comments relating to your child coming into contact with Cooper

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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_