

We are very excited to introduce you to a new member of staff who we have welcomed to Alder Brook Primary School. Hugo was born on 07th April 2023. He is a 10 month old Black Labrador who is going to accompany me into school and is set to become an integral part of our school community. He has been trained at home and we would like the children to help train him in school too. Below we have set out the benefits of a school dog, and tried to address concerns you may have. He will spend much of his time in my classroom Oak Tree and be an integral part of KS1 and the wider school.

Hugo's likes:

Children – I have two pets called Freya and Emmy they live with me.

Cuddles

Water – I love to swim

Food – I love to eat!

Balls

Sticks

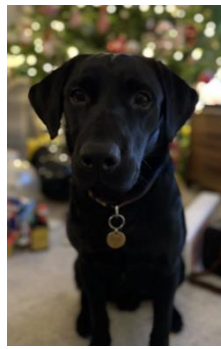
Sleep

Being outside

Christmas

Dislikes:

Sprouts



What are the benefits of having a school dog?

Evidence indicates that benefits include:

- Cognitive – companionship with a dog stimulates memory, problem-solving and game-playing
- Social – a dog provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, encourages responsibility, wellbeing and focused interaction with others
- Emotional – a school dog improves self-esteem, acceptance from others and lifts mood, often provoking laughter and fun. Dogs can also teach compassion and respect for other living things as well as relieving anxiety.
- Physical – interaction with a furry friend reduces blood pressure, provides tactile stimulation, assists with pain management, gives motivation to move, walk and stimulates the senses
- Environmental – a dog in a school increases the sense of a family environment, with all of the above benefits continuing long after the school day is over.

Reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop literacy skills and build confidence, through both the calming effect the dog's presence has on children as well as

the fact that a dog will listen to children read without being judgemental or critical. This comforting environment helps to nurture children's enthusiasm for reading and provides them with the confidence to read aloud.

Some concerns you might have:

Will Hugo be properly cared for?

Hugo will be extremely well looked after. He will live with my family and I, and when in school will stay in my classroom which will be a safe, child free, quiet space for him to. This is where Hugo will spend all of his time initially. In time, and only when Hugo is ready, he will work in other classes but will always be accompanied by myself or a designated handler. He will access training classes and additional training will be sort as when required to ensure that he is well-behaved. Hugo visits the vet regularly for all of his injections as well as for regular check-ups. If Hugo is unwell for any reason he will stay at home with a babysitter.

My child is scared of dogs

Some children may have had upsetting experiences and thus have a fear of dogs (or another animal). Hugo will only be in contact with children whose parents have given their permission. However, Hugo's training will help him to be calm and gentle around children; he is already showing signs of a very loving and gentle nature and is around children in our family home. Experience and research have shown that, with proper guidance and handling, children can learn to overcome their fear of animals and grow in respect and appreciation for them.

Rigorous research has been carried out to ensure we have selected the most suitable breed of dog for our school, pupils and staff. We have chosen a Black Labrador, to accompany our Red Fox Labrador in KS2 – Ruud. They are intelligent breeds and are easy to train. They are renowned for being happy, fun-loving characters that are a pleasure to be around. They thrive on human company, are excellent around children and are highly adaptable.

Please let a member of staff know if your child is allergic to dogs and/or you would prefer your child not to have contact with Hugo.

Yours sincerely

Nicki Bentley
Lead Teacher KS1
Alder Brook Primary School