

12 February 2025

Dear Parent(s)/Carer(s)

Many students at the school will remember the times when Sadie, the school dog, used to come to school with Mrs McDougall. The decision to have a school dog was based on significant research and was supported by the school's Governing Body.

The benefits of having Sadie onsite were multiple and the positive impact on young people was clear. Following changes in her management role, bringing Sadie is no longer a practical option for Mrs McDougall.

We are now in the fortunate position of being able to reinstate a school dog. Ozzy is a 3-year old male Cavapoo (considered to be a hypoallergenic breed). Ozzy has already been assessed by a certified dog trainer for his temperament and suitability to work with young people and has been working in another educational setting for over two and a half years.



The many benefits of having a school dog include:

- A calming effect on students, especially those who need emotional or behavioural regulation.
- A greater sense of enjoyment of the school environment leading to improved attendance.
- Supporting the engagement of reluctant readers, thus building confidence.
- Helping foster positive mental health. Indeed, a recent study has identified that a few minutes stroking a dog can lead to the release of "feel-good" hormones in humans.

Ozzy will be based with his owner, Ms. Prosser in D Block during break and lunch time. During lesson time he will predominantly be based in Curriculum Support.

At The Bewdley School, we have previously worked with a fully accredited dog trainer, and we will continue to have them work with us, as required. All students will have assemblies on how to interact safely and appropriately with Ozzy on the school site.

Any parent(s)/carer(s) who do not wish their son/daughter to interact with the school dog for any reason should email Mrs Oliver ([lol@bewdley.worcs.sch.uk](mailto:lol@bewdley.worcs.sch.uk)). Permission for your son/daughter to have some contact will be presumed if no written communication to Mrs Oliver is received by Monday 24 February.

Sincerely

The Bewdley School

## **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 Ms Prosser; she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support insurance, and staff and dog training costs where appropriate.

### **Q: Will the dog be from a reputable breeder?**

A: Yes. Ozzy was from a home where both parents were seen and was specifically chosen for his temperament.

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

A: Ozzy will be kept in the science department staff room and will also have access to an outside area that is separate to students. The staff room is separate from the classrooms / playground to ensure he only comes into contact with students who are happy to have contact, under strict supervision. He will also have a space to spend time in classrooms, the library, curriculum support and in the sixth form area where students can interact safely. Ozzy will also attend meetings with staff.

### **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 Ozzy in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog.

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

A: In the interest of health and hygiene, Ozzy will have an area on the school site that has no access to students – this will be his own outside area. The staff in charge him 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: Ozzy will be walked regularly and given free time outside. He will have his own space in the science department where he will not be disturbed by students. We will continue to review his training over a period of time and will have access to food and unlimited water. We will work carefully to ensure Ozzy's welfare is always considered and remove him from the school environment if we don't feel he is happy.

### **Q: How will this be managed where students 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. The breed of dog is considered to be hypoallergenic so this issue is much reduced.

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

A: Access to Ozzy will be carefully managed and supervised and students do not need to have close contact with him if this has been expressed by parents. We hope to work closely with parents of students 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 Ozzy 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.

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