



Epping Upland C.of E. Primary School

School Dog Policy for Bracken, our Fox Red Labrador

Introduction

The benefits that a dog can bring to a school are immense and this has been proven in Epping Upland having had Frank work with us for many years. Children can benefit educationally and emotionally. They can increase their understanding of responsibility and develop improved empathy and nurture skills through contact with a dog. Additionally, they can gain a great sense of enjoyment from simply interacting with a dog.

Research shows that dogs can:

- Improve academic attainment
- Improve literacy skills, most particularly reading skills
- calm behaviour
- develop confidence
- improve social skills
- raise self esteem
- teach responsibility and respect for life
- motivate children
- reduce absence
- improve resilience

This Policy only refers to Bracken. No other dog is allowed on the school site unless expressly invited by the Governors or the Headteacher.

Our School Dog

Our school dog is a Fox Red Labrador called Bracken. Her Kennel Club name is Cottmarsh Highly Blessed.

- Bracken is the School Dog for Epping Upland C.of E. Primary School and will commonly be known as such.
- Her parents are both pure bred Fox Red Labradors. The Sire Kennel Club name is Kensteen Denebola of Cottmarsh but she is know as Ash and the Dam Kennel Club name is Cottmarsh Lone Warrior but is known as Storm.
- Much research was undertaken into the dog and breed before Bracken was purchased. The breeder is renowned for the breeding of some fantastic well natured sociable dogs, that make good well behaved pets and working dogs. The breeder is a 5 star highest rating

Kennel Club breeder, and both the Sire and Dam have been health checked to the highest standard before producing the 8 puppies they reared.

- Bracken comes with a Five generation pedigree certificate.
- Bracken is owned by Mr Simon Parrish and Mrs Alison Parrish. Mr and Mrs Parrish will house and feed Bracken and be responsible for her upkeep outside of school working hours. They will accept all responsibility for her when she is not in school. She will grow up on the farm enjoying lots of freedom around the fields. When not at school she will be seen riding on the combine and tractors as well as resting in the office on wet days.
- Bracken will always be appropriately clean and groomed when coming into school.
- Mr and Mrs Parrish will be responsible for training Bracken to the highest standard so that she behaves appropriately, safely and according to her surroundings.
- Bracken is only allowed in school under the express invitation of the Headteacher.
- During the school day, Mrs Alison Parrish has overall responsibility for Bracken. However, Mrs Sarah Hurwood (Headteacher), Mrs Karen Smith (Wellbeing Mentor) and Mrs Cathy Newland (Deputy Headteacher) will also be named as the responsible adults to ensure the welfare of the dog and safety of the children and adults.
- During the school day, Bracken will be required to carry out certain duties, tasks and activities that the Headteacher considers to be appropriate for the wellbeing and mental health of the pupils. At all times, Bracken's welfare will be paramount. Rest periods for Bracken will be regular and built in throughout the school day.
- The School will provide a suitable rest space for Bracken as deemed appropriate by Mrs Parrish.
- If Bracken is unwell, she will not be allowed into school.
- If Bracken requires maternity leave, the school will respect all recommended absence requirements.

A Contract has been established between Epping Upland C.of E. Primary School and Mrs and Mrs Parrish to ensure that the best interests of Bracken and the best interest of our pupils are maintained at all times.

Bracken is appropriately and relevantly insured. She has all up to date Vaccinations, and has been wormed and flea treated.

Bracken will:

- Only be on the school site when invited by the Headteacher
- Always be with an appropriate adult. No child will **ever** be left unattended with Bracken
- Be appropriately and suitably trained to ensure the highest standards of behaviour
- Always be clean and suitably groomed
- Work with children as individuals and as a small groups
- May be present in a class lesson if considered relevant and appropriate
- When appropriate attend Assembly
- When appropriate attend school events
- Be included in all evacuation procedures

The School will:

- Carry out all necessary risk assessments
- Provide Bracken with a rest space removed from access by children. This designated space will be in the staff garden outside the staff room, where she will have shelter and space that is secure so that she cannot escape.
- Make sure Bracken is always with an appropriate adult
- Make sure children are **never** left unattended with Bracken, without an adult
- Make sure that when Bracken is working and with children she is on her lead
- Respect any dog allergies that some people may have
- Gain written parental permission for children to work with Bracken. No child will work with Bracken unless permission has expressly been given.
- Train the children to understand and know how they must behave with Bracken, reminding them to always remain calm near her, not make sudden movements and to not look directly into her eyes. Children will be told not to put their face near Bracken and to always approach her standing up. They will be taught that they should only stroke her on her body, chest and back – not her face or top of her head.
- Make sure children do not eat in front of Bracken
- Make sure children are gentle with her and do not play roughly with her
- Make sure that children do not disturb her whilst she is resting, eating or sleeping.
- Make sure that children **always** wash their hands after being in contact with Bracken
- Make sure she is walked down 'The Lane' outside the front of school or elsewhere outside of the school grounds with the intention that this is where she will relieve herself. Any unintended dog foul that appears in school grounds will be cleared and cleaned away immediately.
- Ensure that all visitors are informed about Bracken and our school protocols
- Remove Bracken to her rest place at any point that she shows distress or anxiety

School Dog Frequently Asked Questions

Who is the legal owner of the dog?

The legal owners of Bracken are Mr and Mrs Parrish who will support the costs associated with owning her; the school budget will fund Public Liability Insurance and any specialist training.

Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

Yes, Bracken was specifically chosen for her breed which was also determined by the quality of her breeding and her breeder. She has a pure bloodline.

Will the dog be a distraction?

Undoubtedly, in the first couple of weeks, but after everyone has got used to having her around, she will just become a 'part' of us. Our intent is to avoid any disruption so that Bracken 'blends' in to the routine of our normal school day. Bracken will have long rest breaks away from the children, where they are unable to access her.

Have necessary risks been adequately considered?

Yes, we have very carefully considered having a dog in school and have researched this considerably, through reading many documents, talking to other schools and visiting other schools. It is not a decision that has been taken lightly or quickly. Risk assessments have been signed off by Governors.

Who is responsible for the training of Bracken?

Mr and Mrs Parrish are responsible for her training. If the school decides at any point to further develop her training into specialised therapy training, then Mrs Parrish will undergo this with Bracken which will be funded by the school.

How will Bracken be toileted?

The health and hygiene of having a school dog has been considered very intently and is of paramount importance. Bracken will be toileted when taken out for short walks. Any foul will be cleared away immediately only by adults, leaving no traces. If required, disinfectant will be used.

How will the dog's welfare be considered?

Bracken will have her welfare considered at all times by all the adults in school, but with specific attention from Mrs Parrish. Bracken will have regular rest breaks incorporated into her day where she is left to rest in her kennel and away from children. Her wellbeing will be considered at all times - and most specifically in decisions that will require her involvement.

How will dog allergies be managed?

Children do not need to touch Bracken. In school we already manage a number of allergies and managing a dog allergy will be no different to managing these. Individual needs will be met and we will happily discuss with parents should additional control measures need to be put in place for individual children. Bracken will be groomed appropriately to minimise moulting. Children will always wash their hands after having been in contact with Bracken.

What happens if my child is frightened of dogs?

Access to Bracken will be very carefully managed and supervised. Children do not have to have contact with Bracken should they feel uncomfortable doing so. Research does however show that having a school dog can help to reduce anxieties and worries around dogs. Where children are fearful, we will, with the permission of their parent, work with them to try to alleviate their fear and help them to manage this.

This Policy was ratified by Governors in June 2019

Date of Review – June 2021 or sooner if thought necessary.