

27 March 2024

Dear parent/carer(s),

RE: School dog

We are very excited to let you know that, after the Easter holidays, we will be introducing a school dog to St Christophers Academy. As a school, we feel that now is the right time to introduce a school dog. The recent police dog visit was a resounding success and, following on from this, in our student idea box, almost 2/3 of the ideas were children asking for a class pet! Whilst we won't be getting class pets, I would like the children to see the school dog as their school pet. A great deal of consideration has gone into this and, before making this decision, I visited and worked with multiple other schools that have dogs. This has supported me in knowing how we will operate this at St Christophers. Please see the FAQ page at the end of the letter for more information.

Dogs are proven to have an incredible impact within schools, some of the benefits include:

- *Cognitive development* – building a companionship with a dog helps children stimulate memory, problem-solving and game-playing skills; a school dog is known to increase enthusiasm and motivate children to think and learn.
- *Social skills* – dogs encourage conversation with others, responsibility, wellbeing and interaction with others.
- *Emotional skills* – dogs improve self-esteem, acceptance from others and are known for improving moods. Dogs can also help children develop compassion and respect for other living things and can reduce children's anxiety. Building respect can improve children's relationships with each other, parents and teachers and shows them how to nurture and care for another living thing. If any children are suffering from bereavement or are particularly sad, dogs can provide children with comfort and friendship. School dogs particularly support children with learning or behavioural difficulties.
- *Physical development* – interaction with dogs is known to reduce blood pressure, provide tactile stimulation, assist with pain management and give motivation for children to move and walk.
- *Reading* – school dogs are known to help children with their reading and literacy skills, through their calming presence and ability to listen to children read without being judgemental or critical. Children can build their confidence to read aloud to others through having a school dog.
- *School community* – having a school dog builds the sense of a family environment and togetherness

Introducing Torran - or, that's Mr Torran to the children!



Torran is a very happy and friendly dog. I hope you will agree that welcoming Torran will be a positive addition to our school family. If you have any concerns or questions regarding this then please do contact me.

Have a wonderful Easter break.

Yours sincerely,

Miss Hayes

www.stchristophersacademy.org

About Me!



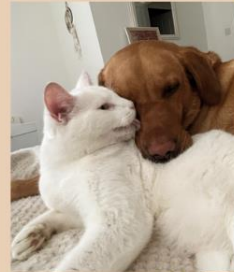
Hello, my name is Torran.

I am a fox red labrador retriever.

I will be 5 on the 3rd April

My name is Irish and means 'chief'.

I am very good at learning tricks, my mum says I am a clever boy!



I love:
food,
cuddly toys,
long naps,
my mum,
cuddles,
playing fetch,
muddy puddles,
making friends

My brother Atticus the catticus is my best friend

I can't wait to meet you!

Love Torran x



School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: Who is the legal owner of Torran and who pays for his costs?

A: The legal owner of Torran is Miss Hayes; she will bear the costs associated with owning Torran.

Q: Is the dog from a reputable breeder? Is he well trained?

A: Torran is a pedigree and both his parents were family pets. He is very well trained. Torran meets all training requirements to be in a school environment and in the new academic year we plan for him to qualify as a therapy dog.

Q: Where will Torran be during the day and what will he do?

A: Torran will mostly stay in Miss Hayes' office and the admin team's offices. He may join Miss Hayes on a learning walk (on lead) at different points during the day. Any time children spend with Torran will be organised and planned in advanced, this may include: reading a book to Torran, performing a talent to Torran (singing, playing an instrument, etc), reading work to Torran, coming for well-being time (to talk to Torran, have a cuddle, groom him and show care etc). If 1:1 time is had, parent/carers will know about this and will be an agreed part of the child's plan.

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: How will this be managed where children have allergies or a fear of dogs?

A: Students will not need to touch Torran, 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. 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 is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?

A: Access to Torran 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: How will hygiene be managed?

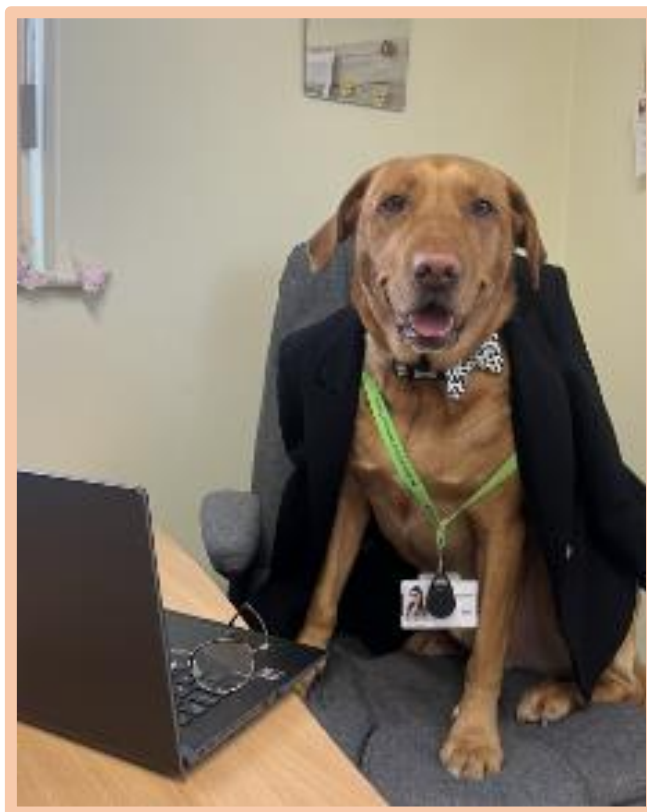
A: In the interest of health and hygiene the school dog will be toileted where children have no access, most likely off-site. Torran is very well toilet trained so no accidents are likely. There will be no chance of the children coming into contact with faeces. Torran has regular baths and is a very clean dog; he is fully vaccinated and takes regular medication to prevent fleas etc. Children and staff will wash their hands/ have access to hand sanitiser after interactions with Torran.

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

A: Torran goes on daily walks with Miss Hayes and this will continue. Torran is a very happy dog, very easy going and incredibly lazy. Torran is very sociable, he will enjoy getting to spend time with adults and children as much as they enjoy spending it with him. He will have a comfortable place to sleep, unlimited access to water and his belongings. Torran will be kept in the office area and will only have planned and supervised contact with children and adults.

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**Mr Torran looks forward to starting his new role,
he is already taking it very seriously!**



SCA

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