



West Monkton Church of England School

A place for growing together and learning to fly.

Executive Headteacher Helen Newstead Chair of the LSC Tom Moore

Friday 27th February 2026

School Dog - Betsy

Dear Parents and Carers,

Re: Introduction of School Dog – Betsy

We are delighted to share some exciting news about a new addition to our school community.

Across the country, many schools have welcomed dogs into their settings because of the wide-ranging benefits they bring to children's education and wellbeing. Interacting with a dog can support pupils emotionally, encourage empathy and nurturing behaviours, increase confidence, and contribute to positive mental health. Children also simply enjoy spending time with a dog, and the relationships they build can be incredibly meaningful.

At West Monkton Primary School, we place great importance on children's wellbeing alongside their academic, spiritual, moral and social development. We believe that having a school dog will be a unique and enriching way to support our pupils in all these areas.

Introducing Betsy

We are pleased to introduce *Betsy*, our school dog. Betsy is a gentle and caring Golden Retriever who lives with our Pastoral Lead, Vic Bimson, and her family. She has an excellent temperament and has already shown herself to be calm, friendly and well-suited to a school environment. Betsy has full third-party liability insurance allowing her to be on site, and she receives regular veterinary check-ups, worming and flea treatments, and diet reviews to ensure she remains healthy.



Roles and Responsibilities

- The Governing Body has ensured that a full policy is in place for having a dog in school.
- The Headteacher, Mrs Helen Newstead, oversees the implementation of this policy.
- All staff, as well as pupils, are expected to follow the agreed procedures.
- Our Health & Safety Officer provides ongoing advice and guidance relating to the dog's presence.

Risk Assessment and Safety Procedures

A comprehensive risk assessment has been undertaken and will be reviewed regularly. Key safety measures include:

- Betsy will be kept on a lead when moving around school.
- Children will only meet her under adult supervision.
- No child will ever be left alone with the dog.
- Betsy will not be in the playground during busy periods unless part of a planned activity.
- She will not enter the kitchen or areas where food is being prepared, served or eaten.
- A quiet, low-stimulus rest space will always be available for her.

Interaction with Children

We fully respect that not all children may feel comfortable around a dog. Parents and carers may choose to withhold consent for direct contact, and this will be honoured.

Consent can be given via the Arbor dashboard – Student profile. In the medical section in Arbor please update any allergies that your child has, specifically relating to dogs. To ensure that this important information is not missed, it would be helpful to make the office aware that your child/ren have a specific dog allergy.

Children will learn how to:

- Approach Betsy calmly and appropriately
- Ask for permission before stroking her
- Recognise when Betsy needs space
- Understand that she must not be fed without staff approval
- Follow hygiene routines such as handwashing after contact

Clear signage will also be displayed in school to inform staff, pupils and visitors of Betsy's presence.

It is important to note that we encourage parents/carers to educate their children on interactions with other dogs, specifically around drop off and collection times. Please ensure that you and your children remain vigilant as not all dogs have Betsy's temperament.

Welfare of the Dog

Betsy's wellbeing is of utmost importance. She will have a balanced timetable of interaction and rest and will never be placed in stressful or unsuitable situations. If she shows any signs of discomfort or stress, she will be removed from busy environments immediately.

Health, Hygiene and Emergencies

Handwashing facilities and sanitiser will be available after contact with Betsy. We will maintain up-to-date records of any allergies or phobias. Any incident involving the dog, however minor, will be managed through our first-aid procedures, recorded, and parents informed on the same day. Betsy may be taken off site temporarily if needed while any incident is reviewed.

Monitoring and Review

The School Dog Policy will be reviewed annually by the Senior Leadership Team, and we welcome feedback from parents, staff and pupils. Our aim is always to ensure a safe, positive and enriching experience for everyone.

Is There a Risk?

As with any activity in school, there are risks to consider. However, our detailed risk assessment outlines clear measures to minimise these, ensuring that Betsy's presence is as safe and beneficial as possible.

We look forward to the many positive experiences Betsy will bring to our school community. If you have any questions or wish to discuss consent for your child, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards,

Mrs E Barton

Designated Safeguarding Lead & Deputy Headteacher