

# Puppy School Annual Report 2023



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# Review of the year

By Gwen Bailey, Founder & Director of Puppy School

## Twenty Years of Puppy School

Over 100,000 puppies

Puppy School celebrated 20 years of puppy training this year! During that time, over 100,000 puppies and their owners have all been on the receiving end of beautifully positive training advice and coaching which, we hope, one day, will create the new norm for how puppies everywhere are trained.

- Delia Graham ran the first official class in Peggs Green, Leicestershire 20 years ago in February 2003
- June 2003, Celia Callan, Warminster and Salisbury, Wiltshire, celebrated 20 years as a Puppy School tutor
- July 2003, Margaret Turner, Cornwall, and briefly in Ireland, celebrated 20 years as a Puppy School tutor
- October 2023, Claire Luscombe, Torquay, Devon, celebrated 20 years of amazing classes

I'm beyond proud of the quality of incredible puppy tutors in our Puppy School family, some of whom have been with us for such a long time, but also of those newer to Puppy School who continue to join our ranks. Between us, we are an amazing resource of behaviour and training knowledge and experience, and we are poised to make more use of this than ever in the years to come.

### Brand new website

One of our major achievements this year has been the development of a brand new website for Puppy School. The old one was created on a shoestring and did us proud for the past 20 years but we were well overdue for a change and to present a more professional image that reflects the excellent work we all do. With a great design, professional photographs and links that allow bookings direct from the website, the new site that went live on 1st December provides a shining showcase of our wonderful classes, our ethos, and what we are all about.

### Improved training programme

We trialled a new 'video coaching' approach to training our new tutors this year. Our trainees submitted video logs of training techniques needed for puppy classes to their Regional Managers for evaluation. Coaching was given as needed and this resulted in much faster learning of all necessary abilities and techniques. It

was such a success that we will be continuing it in the future, and we now have a truly amazing and comprehensive training programme for new trainees which comprises:

- A 2-day face-to-face introductory weekend
- 25 hours of live online lessons (evenings) on a vast range of subjects
- Video coaching to learn essential skills and techniques
- A 3-day practical course working hands-on with real puppies and their owners
- A course of home study comprised of practical exercises and observations

This year, 13 people joined us and trained under the new programme, some of whom are ready to begin classes early in the new year.

## Challenging times

Where are all the puppies?

This year saw its challenges in terms of puppy numbers coming through our classes. A combination of a difficult economic climate coupled with the 'bust' that followed the pandemic 'boom' of puppies purchased meant that numbers were down across the UK and it was a difficult time for puppy trainers everywhere. Hopefully, numbers will return to normal next year as the economy grows and the puppy purchasing levels return to normal.

### Marketing initiative

This year we laid the foundations for a new marketing structure for the future of Puppy School. With good new designers found and used to improve many aspects of our image, from certificates to our logos, with the new website up and running, and a brilliant marketing consultant found and recruited, we are ready to embark on a new marketing programme that will help with the promoting of individual classes as well as raising the profile and awareness of Puppy School amongst puppy owners everywhere. In addition, we have put together an incredibly talented 'Behaviour and Training Project' team to help move along some of the work on new courses and other ventures that will improve what we do. After a quiet year this year, we hope to rise like a phoenix next year and let people know what an incredible organisation we really are.

# Key Puppy School Statistics

## Total numbers

At the end of 2023, Puppy School now comprises of 70 full tutors and 40 associate tutors teaching Puppy School, Older Puppy School, Puppy University and SuperPup courses. We have 12 resting tutors/associates (those not currently active, either on maternity leave or taking a break). We have 16 provisional tutors and 10 provisional associates currently working on their correspondence course.

## New tutors and associates

We had new 7 tutors and 6 new associate tutors train with us during 2023 and we already have seen new applicants waiting to undertake their tutor training course in 2024.

Congratulations to those who managed to complete their correspondence course this year and best of luck to those who are in progress of completing their training. A big, warm Puppy School welcome to:

Charlie Houghton; Alison Foster; Elizabeth Villabona; Gemma March-Whalley; Keri Walker; Hannah Buckley; Yvonne Plenderleith; Claire Macey; Emily Rutherford; Eloise Bennett; Nicola Cashmore; Nicola Brown; Julie Davies

## Puppy numbers

Despite the continuous knock-on effect of the pandemic and the problems in the economy brought on by world events, the number of puppies going through our Puppy School classes in 2023 has been surprisingly high overall with nearly 6,000 puppies completing our classes this year. This brings the total number of puppies which have passed through the hands of Puppy School tutors to 106, 124 during the 20 years we have been running. Helping over 100,000 pups and their owners towards more positive training is an amazing achievement that we are all really proud to be part of.

## Puppy Centuries

A large number of our tutors trained over 100 puppies this year.

Huge congratulations to:

Alice Crick, Catherine Tomlinson, Carole Carruth, Caroline Duder, Cheryl Holden, Claire Luscombe, Claire Mcknespiey, Delia Graham, Eleanor McCall, Emma Barber, Imogen Haley, Jacki Clifford, Karen Boyce, Sandie Dallow, Tammy Dwight, Vicki Watts

## Puppy School Top Tutors 2023

Within our wonderful hub of hard-working tutors at Puppy School, there are five tutors who stand out for training the most puppies/owners in 2023. They are:

 **Louise and Neal Otter** at Surrey and South London Dog Training registered 321 puppies this year

 **Frankie Lees** at Puppy School Plymouth registered 231 puppies this year

 **Louise Williamson** at South Coast Dog Training School registered 206 puppies this year

 **Kelly Kane** at Puppy School Lancaster, Morecombe & Garstang registered 180 puppies this year

 **Amanda Childs** at Happy Buddies Dog Training, Dog Walking & Pet Care Services registered 177 puppies this year

# Puppy School tutor training course

By Sarah Smith, Operations Manager

## Well-developed course

The Puppy School tutor training course has evolved over the years to become more of a training journey that we all take together. We now have many experienced tutors involved in the training and our genuine care about what each trainee experiences and learns is what makes this training amazing.

Thinking back to my own training many years ago, nearly a decade, this course now looks very different. The nerves of trainee tutors and the pressure to want to do well are still the same, however, the hands-on experience and opportunities to learn, refine and develop own techniques, are something I wish I had all those years ago. Having trainees work with their Regional Managers for video coaching of techniques has also helped to forge strong bonds between them (as identified by our RM feedback survey) which is so valuable for cohesive working as the trainee becomes a fully fledged tutor or associate tutor.

When looking at how to earn the Puppy School certificate, daunting is a word often used, when they see all that they have to do. However, on completion, trainees say they feel empowered, that all of the teaching was invaluable and that they feel really ready to start their classes. Each trainee's journey will be unique to them so each one takes something different from it, genuine 'gems of

information' that they can utilise moving forwards. It's lovely to hear them come up with a few additional ones we can use in our own classes. This year's included 'let their nervous system go on holiday' when describing the 'settle' exercise (originally from Catherine Tomlinson and said in pressure of the class situation by associate trainee Liz Villabona) and 'dogs can smell a teaspoon of scent in a swimming pool' to describe the amazing power of a dog's nose (originally from Alexandra Horowitz brought to us when teaching a class by trainee Nicci Brown).

## Practise with puppies

A firm favourite with the trainees (and course teachers) are the practical days where we bring in owners and their puppies from local classes and local Facebook ads. This is where trainees can practise and get real hands-on experience. This Autumn, we had over 26 puppies attend the three practical days and what an amazing mixture of breeds, including a rather wonderful Dachshund who came complete with coat and four matching boots to complete his assemble!

Many owners attended more than one session and one very kindly bought chocolate to say thank you. Those who came as a result of the Facebook advert asked about getting in touch with their local Puppy School trainer for further training. The overwhelming comments from owners who attended these sessions



were the professionalism and ability of the trainees. For me, one lovely moment of the practical course was the introduction of 'Boris' (a ferret-shaped dog toy used to simulate a puppy), a small, flat looking puppy who lacked a bit of enthusiasm. However, he made for lots of light relief and reduced us all to laughter.

It's no mean feat to ensure that each training course runs smoothly and there are now many who contribute to its success, including the trainees, teachers (online and face-to-face), Regional Managers, Operations Administration and local tutors who help to source owners and their puppies. All of this combined effort certainly proves that Puppy School really is a family, working together.



### From the trainee perspective

“When I arrived at the first weekend of the puppy school training cohort I was so nervous, but I need not have been because everyone, including the tutors, were so welcoming and friendly.

Both training dates were very well organized and the effort that was made to arrange for puppies to come in for us to work with was amazing. I went into the training days doubting myself and my abilities and left feeling confident and having learnt so much from the tutors.

The course covered everything you need to run puppy classes from insurance and advertising, to puppy health and behaviour, and of course the training techniques themselves. I would highly recommend this course to anyone who is interested in starting a rewarding career working with dogs.”

*Gemma March-Whalley  
Trainee Associate tutor, Lancaster*



### A confidence booster

“Overall, taking part in the Puppy School training journey during the 2023 autumn intake has been one of the most beneficial experiences I have taken part in.

A mixture of theory lessons and practical practise of the skills you learn throughout the course, help to develop the key skills needed to become a puppy trainer. Its a course that covers all aspects to help make you feel confident in your abilities to meet a dream of being a successful, well educated puppy school tutor, to progress on an ongoing journey of supporting many owners and puppies in the future.

With a supportive team, who provide a warm welcome and family feel, I wouldn't hesitate to recommend the course to anyone with the dream of becoming a Puppy School tutor themselves.”

*Eloise Bennett  
Trainee Tutor, Billingshurst*



# 2023 Highlights from Puppy School

## Launch of new Puppy School website

It may have taken nearly a year to create but we now have a brand new functional and professional website with a direct booking system and a hidden log in for tutors.

## The Puppy Club

New resource for owners

Incorporated into the new website is a passworded section just for owners who book onto our courses. Split into two sections:

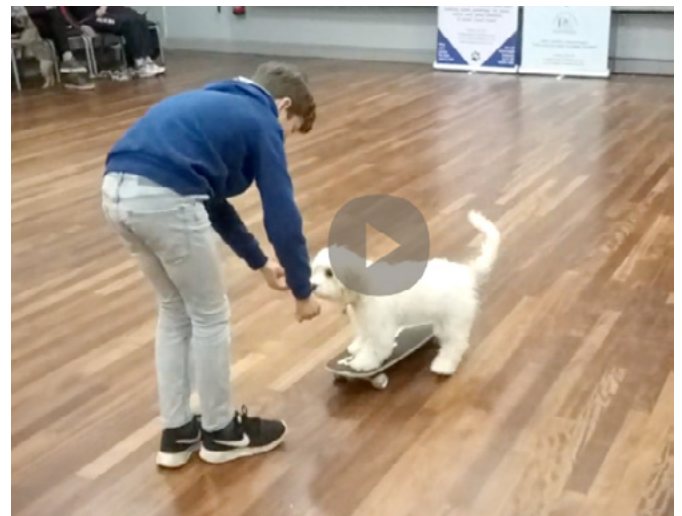
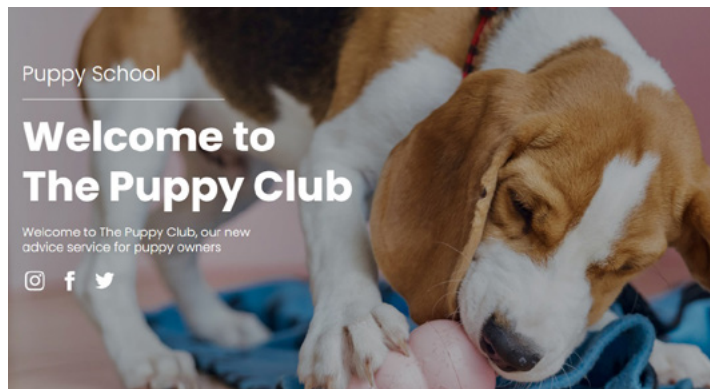
- the Good Puppy Pages cover a broad range of useful information to help owners raise their puppy with positivity and;
- the Week-by-Week section gives great advice for owners to look at after each class, allowing them to read up on anything covered in class as well as watch videos of all techniques in case they missed anything or need further clarification.

## New Puppy School Manual

This year saw the consolidation of the introduction of 'puppy greetings' to the Puppy School syllabus that began in October 2022. We updated the Puppy School Manual in the light of this and added a new design that mirrors that of the new website. Our sponsors, Natures Menu, will begin sending out the new manual in January 2024.

## 2023 video competition

We ran a competition to find puppy training videos to help with our new marketing campaign, with the offer of a free place at our upcoming conference. We had some lovely entries, but the winner, by a mile, was Amanda Childs with her video of the skateboarding puppy. The video entries will be used for social media posts and adverts to showcase the results that can be achieved with positive training.





## Our Very Special Long-Standing Tutors

### Celebrating 20 years of Puppy School

In late January this year, we went up to Leicestershire to surprise Delia at the end of her class to celebrate 20 years of puppy training and present her with balloons and her special award. Twenty years of Puppy School training classes, helping over 2,400 puppies and their families is a massive achievement. Delia also helped out with training new tutors for many years too, passing

on her extensive experience to those new to Puppy School.

Three other long-standing tutors also completed 20 years of Puppy School classes this year – Celia Callan, Margaret Turner and Claire Luscombe.

What an outstanding contribution to the world of positive puppy training. Congratulations all of you, we are so proud to have you as part of Puppy School.



## New positions at Puppy School

### Training and Behaviour Projects team

We have lots of ideas for more ways to reach new puppy owners than we ever have time to do. Next year, this is set to change as we have formed an incredible team of tutors who will spend a few days a week working on the projects that could make such a difference to more puppy's lives.

The team consists of Nicole Harris, Claire Luscombe, Ellie Morton and Gwen Bailey. We have high hopes for new work, in the form of additional courses, developing the advice pages of the website to help owners with very young puppies that will soon be old enough to attend Puppy School, and a host of other similar projects that will benefit both puppies and the Puppy School family of tutors and associates.

# 20 years of puppy training

By Gwen Bailey, Founder & Director of Puppy School

## The bad old days

When I got the first puppy I owned as an adult, about 30 years ago, dog training in the UK consisted mostly of fairly forceful people who thought you needed to dominate your dog and keep it in its place if it was to 'obey' you. Training was thought too damaging for very young puppies and so they weren't allowed in training classes until at least 6 months of age.

My experience of taking Winnie, my precious 6 month old Rhodesian Ridgeback puppy, to a local class ended with me walking out early when they told me that the way to get her to lay down on command was to force her head down by standing on the lead close to her collar. I knew there had to be a better way so I took her home to find an alternative way to train.

## A need for change

As a young behaviourist working with rescue dogs, I could see there was a really big need to reach puppy owners early on to prevent them wanting to give their dogs up to rescue during adolescence and so, eventually, I started to run positive puppy training classes for owners myself. To research this, I visited a large number of other trainers in the local area and what I saw was very sad for the puppies involved. It did convince me, however, that despite having such a limited knowledge at that time, I could almost certainly do better than that.

At first, since my main motivation was to keep dogs in homes, I was more interested in teaching how to raise a puppy well. However, I quickly realised that owners didn't come to classes to listen to long explanations interspersed by a little bit of training. They wanted action and they came to class to learn skills and techniques that could help with everyday life. So, instead, I wrote what I wanted them to know into a variety of leaflets which later became the basis of *The Perfect Puppy* book, and I worked on making my classes more active.

Eventually a successful formula evolved that consisted of explaining why they needed to train something, showing them how to do it, encouraging them to practice while coaching them into getting it right, and giving them a good reason to practice this at home. This was so successful that it is still the foundation of how we train in Puppy School today.

Over the years that I ran puppy classes, I was constantly changing and re-evaluating how I did things. I tried longer and shorter courses, changes to what was included, and different ways of running them, until I had a good system. It was then that I decided to start training others to run the classes so I could reach more puppies and Puppy School was born.

## The positive revolution

When we started, there were very few positive trainers and it was easy for our new puppy tutors to establish themselves. Gradually over the intervening years though, as behaviour work became more positive and more and more education on how to train in a positive way became available, it has become more difficult to find an area without a good puppy class in it. While making things more difficult for Puppy School, it is great news for puppies.

These days it has become the norm to train puppies early with positive methods. There are still a few people out there teaching with poor technique or outdated methods but good puppy classes are not rare like they used to be. The tide has turned and puppy owners can now easily find a class where their puppy will be kindly treated and they will not be humiliated or ridiculed if they don't get it right first time. It is a truly amazing turn around in just 20 years and I'm very pleased that we have been just a small part of that transformation.



## Puppy School changes

Over the years, the syllabus has changed very little, but important improvements have been made and the way we teach has altered significantly.

The importance of playing with your puppy and how to do it well are now emphasised, and play with other puppies has been replaced by a much less stressful (for all) puppy greetings. 'Off' has transformed into 'Gentle' and we've changed the way we teach puppies to greet people.

The mat sniffing exercise is now an essential part of our classes, and holding and lifting pups onto tables has been replaced with a safer and less startling walk onto a platform. Our classes have changed for the better and our clients now get amazing advice, teaching and coaching from our very well-trained tutors.



## Puppy Greetings

by Gwen Bailey

In October last year (2022) we began changing over from sessions where selected puppies were allowed to play together to a special method of controlled greetings that we found worked much better. This year we completed the change over and now all Puppy School classes run the much better system of puppy greetings instead.

We had been concerned for a long time that allowing puppies to play together in classes was less than ideal. With a maximum of 8 puppies in class, finding compatible puppies was often difficult. Some were too shy, too boisterous, and age/size differences often made it too difficult to run useful sessions. Some tutors didn't have the experience or confidence to run these sessions, and we never felt we could give new trainees enough tuition for them to run these sessions successfully. In addition, puppies playing on slippery floors and in a fairly barren environment for such a short amount of time was not the best way for them to learn to enjoy each other's company.

So we came up with a system of allowing

puppies to greet each other in a controlled way instead. After watching a webinar by Chirag Patel, we thought about how we could slow things down and still give puppies the socialisation with others that they needed. We formed a small task force with experienced tutors Louise Taylor and Claire Luscombe and we gradually evolved the great system we are now using.

Louise Taylor came up with a brilliant way of helping owners understand why the 3 second greeting is so effective, and came up with the system of counting out loud so owners could really get into the habit of fast turning. She also developed the 'turning away' exercise that we teach on week 1 which is so useful for owners to learn.

Puppy School now has a very effective way of helping owners to learn how to introduce their puppy to others without causing harm or concern. It allows them to really socialise their puppy and avoid all the problems that can happen when a puppy is rushed into encounters they are not ready for.

Benefits of the puppy greetings system include:

- Puppies learn to be calm around others rather than becoming aroused and immediately wanting to play
- The system works for shy puppies too and they begin to feel safe when they realise others will turn away from them or they are turned away before they start to get scared
- The system is easy to teach to trainees and they can begin this exercise as soon as they begin classes without doing any harm
- Owners learn to gently turn their puppies rather than pulling them away and we notice them using this technique for other purposes which helps prevent puppy frustration
- Owners learn a great system for introducing their puppies to others outside of class and begin to understand how delicate their puppy's developing psyche is, and how it makes sense to take things slowly

# Dates for your diary



**1 March- 8 May  
2024**

Behaviour 4 course  
webinars available



**1 Sept - 2 Nov  
2024**

Behaviour 5 course  
webinars available



**9 March - 29 May  
2024**

Spring Tutor Training  
Course (9/10 March -  
in-person introductory  
weekend, 12 Mar - 21 May  
- online lessons, 27 - 29  
May - In-person practical  
course



**7 Sept - 27 Nov  
2024**

Autumn Tutor Training  
Course  
7/8 Sept - In-person intro  
wk/end, 10 Sept - 19 Nov  
- online lessons, 25-27  
Nov - In-person practical  
course



**1 May  
2024**

Q&A/Case studies for  
Behaviour 4 Online



**25 - 26 October  
2024**

In-person Case Studies  
Course for Behaviour 5



**21 - 23 June  
2024**

Puppy School  
Conference

## Puppy School Plans for 2024

One of our main goals this year is to work on developing and implementing a central marketing strategy to bring Puppy School to the attention of more puppy owners as well as the veterinary profession and the public in general. We have found a brilliant marketing consultant and, with her help, we hope to bring Puppy School to the forefront in years to come.

In addition, our new Behaviour Projects Team will begin working on the new developments that will take Puppy School into the future. They will focus on increasing our tutor experience by providing more resources and developing a more comprehensive package for owners that will assist them from the day they collect their puppy through to adolescence.

The Puppy School Conference with its amazing line up of speakers will run in June next year and will be open, for the first time, to practitioner members of the Animal Behaviour and Training Council. It is all set to be an incredible get together for the Puppy School family, and we hope to make some interesting new friends along the way.



## Getting feedback

Class feedback for every Puppy School class is now collected electronically. The booking system automatically sends out a questionnaire to clients via email at the end of each class and responses are available for both tutors and Regional Manager to see. Not every client responds, but most responses are favourable.

Any less-than-favourable feedback is monitored and learnt from if necessary. Although many tutors worry about getting a negative review, it may simply be more dependent on what is happening in that person's life at the time, rather than a true reflection of the classes. It is important to keep these in perspective.

We have had some truly lovely photographs and fantastic positive responses through. People have more time to consider what they will write than at the end of the class when they are getting ready to leave and so tend to write longer and more considered recommendations of tutors and their classes. Each month, the best of the responses and photographs will be added to the Testimonial section of the new website. These will be chosen at random to appear at the bottom of every page of the website, and will build slowly over time, giving an amazing catalogue of positive feedback.

## Exciting times ahead ....

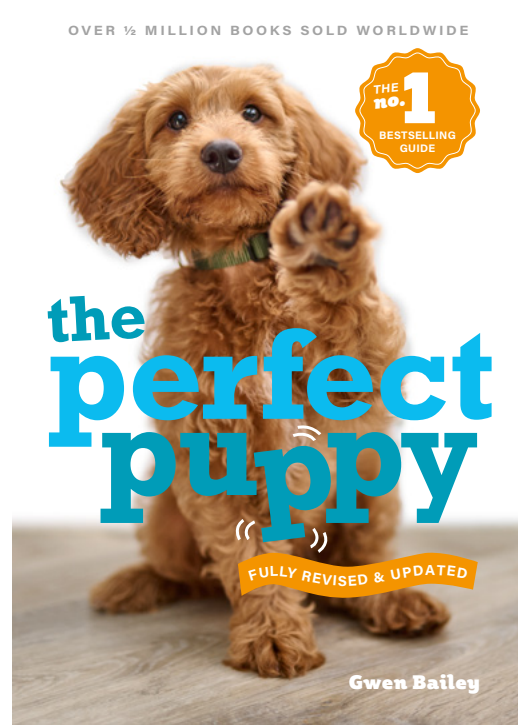
by Chrissie Pargeter and Eleanor McCall - Regional Manager Team Leaders

This is our first full year in the role of Regional Manager Team Leaders and it's fair to say that it has been very busy and rewarding! Our conversations have been wide ranging from class prices and puppy numbers to wellbeing of tutors and self-care. Alongside our own Regional Manager areas, we have been supporting tutors in regions across the UK with no direct RM and covering absences such as maternity leave.

Key projects that we have been involved in include changes to the recruitment process for new tutors and supporting conversations about the new video coaching and tutor training programme; as well as changes to the syllabus for puppy greetings.

A key part of the Regional Manager role is to support information flow about plans and progress for Puppy School as an organisation to each of our tutors and this has been a big focus this year. We have improved processes for cover arrangements between tutors, territory changes and supporting less positive class evaluations. We have also talked about puppy numbers and supporting our tutors with the ups and downs of business ownership.

Over the coming year we have exciting plans for a team building event for the Regional Manager Team and working together as an RM team to collate a suite of CPD opportunities for use across regions. We have asked for lots of information from each of the tutors over the year and would like to personally thank everyone for feeding this information back into discussions – this really helps us to keep moving Puppy School forward.



# My 2023

*By Gwen Bailey-Rea, Founder & Director of Puppy School*

My year started with an invitation to write the 3rd edition of *The Perfect Puppy*, a book that is now nearly 30 years old and has sold more than half a million copies around the world. I revised it once before but, this time, I worked hard to make sure it is as up to date as it can possibly be, thinking that this might be the last time I have the opportunity to do so. We had a small photoshoot for some new photos for the book in the Autumn and, on the final day with the last puppy, I was under pressure to teach him a 'wave'. Their alternative was a rather stiff library photo. It took two sessions, about 8 minutes, a good photographer and a willing puppy, but we finally got the photo we needed. The book will be published in August 2024 and I hope it will reach as many puppy owners as the first and second editions did.

The other big project this year has been setting up and writing the new Puppy School website. I wanted to make sure every page was correct and everything was in the right place. Although I've achieved that, it took much, much more time than I had imagined. Now it is all sorted, I couldn't be happier with it, so it was worth all that time and energy.

I also updated a redesigned Puppy School Manual to match the design of the new website, and this was a good chance to make sure all the recent updates to our class notes and syllabus were included, particularly the puppy greetings information.

I've been considering what will happen to Puppy School when I need to retire, although I can't imagine

ever retiring fully. However, I do need to make provisions should something happen to me, so I started with the tutor training course and we now have a whole team of teachers from within Puppy School whose expertise is so much more than mine could ever be. I am hoping to do something similar with all the new projects I have wanted to do for years but never got around to. To this end, I have recruited a small team of excellent behaviourists/puppy trainers from within Puppy School and I'm looking forward to working with the team to get these projects done.

It's been a busy year for me personally as well, starting with skiing in America at the beginning of the year which was an amazing experience, and a summer full of four baby alpacas, many of which seemed to arrive when husband Dan, with all his obstetrics training with humans, was away for the day in clinic, leaving only me to help with the delivery. Luckily, with the help of FaceTime so Dan could see what was happening and give advice where needed, all were safely delivered.

Our two vizslas, Otto and Lilli, are in the prime of their adult life now and are very easy to look after. Inky, our old cat is now 16 and doing very well on his raw food diet and Mia continues to prefer tinned food with the odd addition of mouse if I'm not fast enough with their rescue.

# My 2023

*By Sarah Smith, Puppy School's Operations Manager*

2023 has been very much a year of celebrations, including new changes along the way. At Puppy School HQ the Operations Team expanded this year to welcome both Kelly and Leesa, as well as welcoming back Alice who returned after maternity leave. Being a part of such a hard-working and enthusiastic team is fantastic as we all work towards making Puppy School the best it can be moving forwards. Especially after marking it's 20th anniversary year.

My responsibilities continue to build upon the day-to-day running of things, as well as organising and managing larger scale events, like next year's exciting conference guest speaker line up. As always, I am thankful to the team for all of their hard work behind the scenes.

This year has seen exciting projects for Puppy School. Helping with the new manual and website pages have been lovely highlights, as well as being secret squirrel to surprise Delia as she celebrated 20 years and finally managing to document the whole of the trainee tutor process and revamping it to ensure a quality experience for everyone involved (trainees, Regional Managers, teachers, everyone). It certainly was a beast that needed taming and reflects the professional dedication that is Puppy School.

Family life remains a steady constant with Adam and the fur kids. Nanuk celebrated his 10th birthday,

although we are reminded that he is not as spritely as the puppy who changed our lives and took us both down the Puppy School path. We also took some time for just us and had a holiday of a lifetime (our first for a few years). Hawaii has always been on my bucket list and certainly didn't disappoint. Beautiful beaches, stunning sea and green turtles were just some of the memorable moments.

My other main focus has been making sure that I have some quality time training with my own dogs, something I am guilty of not always being able to do. Milo and I absolutely love Mantrailing since starting in March (he's a natural) and are working on our progression badges, whilst Nala is working towards her APDT Good Companion Awards (she's achieved foundation and improver levels so far) and Nia has had a taste for Gundog training (although this is still very much a work in progress!)

My Puppy School and follow-on courses continue to progress and adapt. Since starting nearly 8 years ago, we have expanded to include more venues and have loved the variety of breeds coming into class. We had our first Irish Wolfhound this year and were smitten! I also passed my APDT assessment and am now proud to be a registered member.





# My 2023

*By Alice Crick, Puppy School's Operations Assistant*

2023 marks my seventh-year at Puppy School HQ and my tenth-year teaching as a Puppy School tutor. Wow, where did that time go? How young I was when I first started! Feeling somewhat nostalgic as at the end of 2022, life changed forever for myself and my partner as we welcomed our little girl Charlotte to the world and we couldn't be happier! Charlotte turns one at the end of December this year and to say I've thoroughly enjoyed my first year as her mum is an understatement- I've absolutely loved it! She's the sweetest, happiest and loveliest little girl and I can't wait to take her along to the next conference to meet the Puppy School family.

Our little dog Evie is of course still a much-loved part of our family and hasn't been overlooked with the arrival of our new baby. As Charlotte's 'big sister', she has made us so proud with all the changes that this year has brought her. From dealing with the sleep disturbance (and deprivation!) to dealing with the newborn cries to just being by Charlotte's side as she learnt to crawl and then take her first steps - Evie has taken each new adjustment in our household in her

stride. She makes Charlotte laugh each day during her crazy antics and it makes my heart so happy to see them interact so well together. I was so grateful to have a four-legged friend with me throughout all struggles that naturally come with such huge life adjustments. Our solitary dog walks together soothed my soul and I have my little Evie to thank for keeping me company and being by my side during my first year of motherhood.

Huge thank you to Kelly Nicholson for covering whilst I was on maternity, so pleased we are working together Kelly. It's now all systems go with helping with the 2024 Conference and getting up to speed on all the changes and exciting new projects Puppy School has going on! Thank you also to Eleanor McCall for looking after the regional Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire team so well in my absence, I am so pleased to be back as Regional Manager for these regions and look forward to many great CPD events and fun activities with everyone in the future.



# My 2023

*By Kelly Nicholson, Puppy School's Accounts Manager and Operations Assistant*

2023 started with getting to grips with my new accounting role whilst also starting to cover the operations side without Alice's guiding hand. There was a lot to go through and review but having worked in book keeping and accounts for nearly 30 years (can't believe it has been that long!) I was able to use my knowledge to make improvements to the accounting function and reporting.

A recent major change is the upgrade of the accounting software, going from Sage to Quickbooks, which is up-to-date and has a lot of time saving features. This is going to help improve the overall efficiency of the finance reporting so Gwen can make budgeting decisions with more in-depth information, which is a major plus for Puppy School. It will also help to automate some of the accounting functions too, like invoicing, and cut down on the admin involved. Just got to get it fully up and running which should be complete within a couple of weeks.

The new and fabulous website includes a brand-new shop, and I was tasked with adding the shop items to it. A couple of changes were also made to pack sizes of the posters, post cards and leaflets so they can be bought in smaller quantities. The process of adding and amending products is so much easier and user friendly which should make things easier when needing to update information or add new items. Lots of work for the ABTC this year. Along with the normal gathering of the subscription fees and the

members audit we had our 3-yearly membership review. I started the process off by reviewing all the information sent over and putting together an action plan on what was needed. There were a lot of questions to go through on our assessment process etc. but with only a few adjustments to some of our forms and assessment questions and the writing of a couple of new policies we passed.

On a sad personal note, my super-sweet cat, Harry, was killed on the road in July. I miss his squeaky meow and his love of chewing my nail file when doing my nails. Funny the things you miss most. He also liked to accompany Bailey and me on part of our walks. He was a funny character and had a great life of freedom and love.

On a happier note we are still enjoying our life near the sea and the dogs are thriving, so is Harry's brother Henry, who after initially being lost without his brother is doing well.

I have been working a lot on my CPD this year and hope to start a degree in applied animal behaviour in the New Year.

Looking forward to continuing my roles at Puppy School HQ and supporting the amazing management team to take us all forward into 2024!



# My 2023

*Jenny White, Social Media Manager*

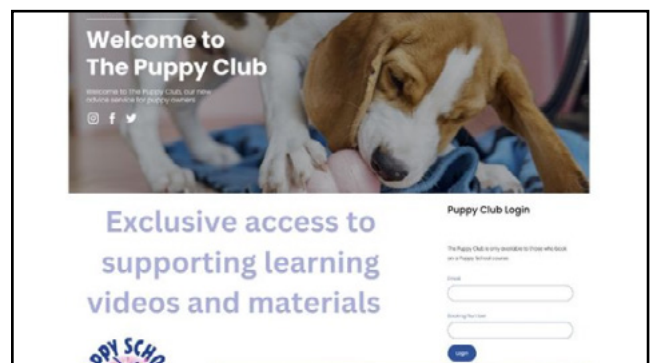
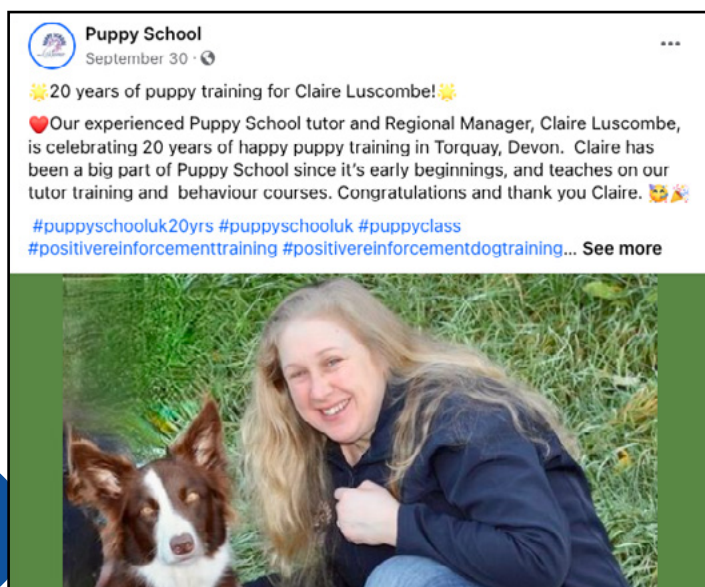
The year started with busy preparations to celebrate Puppy School in its 20th Anniversary, firstly posting Delia's class surprise and producing a video celebration to share onto our social media platforms.

I have continued to enjoy being part of the behind the scenes Puppy School team producing and building upon a range of different social media posts throughout the year. In particular I have enjoyed creating and designing posts with the professional photo shoot photos, continuing to publicly celebrate Tutors in their 20th year of running classes and furthermore gaining information and producing posts for International Assistance Dog week. I have enjoyed producing designs that are able to be shared by tutors and enjoyed by our followers.

On a personal note, we have been very busy as a family this year embarking on a major building project, trying to do as much work and removal as

possible before the builders started. We have now had to temporarily move out and find alternative living arrangements whilst part of the building takes place and largely due to the additional time that is now needed for managing our project in the coming year, I came to the decision that handing over the role of Social Media Manager was in mine and Puppy Schools best interests. I am however looking forward to supporting and sharing the future posts that are produced and am excited to see the new future developments that Puppy School has planned take place.

I look forward to the coming year ahead with all that it will bring both personally with our building project and in a professional capacity as I hope to continue to develop my knowledge and skills and to therefore transfer this into new courses that will also benefit future puppy families.





# My 2023

**By Leesa Robinson-Palmer, Fulfilment Manager**

*Leesa took over the task of sending out goods to tutors from the store in Bourton-on-the-Water when Kelly took over the role of Accounts Manager and saved us from having to move all our rosettes and Puppy School uniform to Kent. We soon discovered that she was great at admin to and really efficient too, so now we rely on her to order stock, keep things organised for us and so much more. Leesa has been a great addition to the Puppy School admin team.*

“I can’t quite believe that I’ve been part of the Puppy School team for just over a year, it’s flown by and I’ve been made to feel so welcome. Along with the fulfilment side of things, I have been tasked with some of the most enjoyable projects which has seen me sifting through adorable photographs, arranging flowers and awards for tutors and product research. This year, with brilliant help from Kelly, I also look after our info@ email address and process treat orders

which has given me the opportunity to interact even more.

I’m a bit OCD, I love to keep a home organised, clean, and tidy and so a few years ago I decided to start my own housekeeping business which is still my 9 to 5 today, although I’m now employed by one of my then clients. I spend my days in some of the most beautiful countryside surrounded by horses, dogs, and a couple of goats.

Home life continues to hover somewhere between full, and hectic! With three boys (two sons 12 and 13 and a grandson who’s 9) no day is a quiet one and to say I’m kept on my toes doesn’t really come close. However, we have managed to get away a couple of times this year exploring England’s southern coast. We’ve seen some stunning sights and made a few memories along the way.”



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