

Featured Felines: Miscellany 17 – Cats in Schools 1

(page checked February 2025)

Cilla, Bobby & Aloysius the Outwoods cats

Ziggy of Drury, Flintshire

Tombi of Izmir, Turkey; Uykucu and Karamel, also of Turkey

See also the story of [Room 8](#), famous Californian school cat
and of Simba & Bubba, other American school cats, [Featuring / Miscellany 18](#).

Cilla the Outwoods Cat (2022)

School 'caretaker' and personal assistant

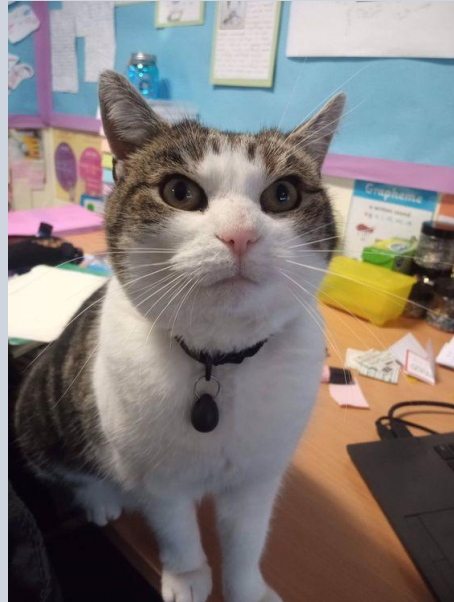


Outwoods Primary School is situated in Atherstone, Warwickshire, England. There was a resident cat called **Cilla**, who was described as 'personal assistant to the head teacher and caretaker'. She snoozed in the library, listened to children reading and 'generally acted as though she owned the place'. She was also chief cushion-tester, and reckoned she'd tried every one in the school. It seems that Cilla was actually born in Spain and was brought to Britain by her family, but then either they couldn't or didn't want to keep her – it isn't clear which, or how she ended up at the school, but she became very much part of life there since she was formally taken on in 2018.

Since September 2021 Cilla gained an assistant in the shape of **Bobby**, a young kitten, to whom 'the school gave a home because he really needed one'. At first he was staying around the office area, until he got to know his way around; he was very inquisitive. Eventually, though, his presence seemed to upset Cilla, and so Bobby found a permanent home with the headmistress. She said she'd formerly been a 'dog person', but now Bobby was 'the light of her life'!

Cilla was active on [Twitter](#) (use Edge: page still active early 2025 with memories of Cilla), but

didn't seem to have a Facebook page. Nice YouTube video [here](#) (2022: around 6 minutes).



Bobby

[Our School Pets](#) (undated) | [BBC News](#)

It was very sad to read in late November 2024 that Cilla had died; not long after she'd won the 'Connected Cat' category of Cats Protection's 'cat of the year' awards. It isn't clear what happened – she was said to have had a 'sudden illness'. and the only reason given on her Twitter account was that she 'had a growth that couldn't be removed'. She was sorely missed at the school, and I missed reading of her daily adventures. A memorial bench and chair have been installed, and there will be a living willow sculpture of a cat in the school grounds, where she used to love to wander . See [this link](#).



By spring 2025 two artefacts In Cilla's memory, handcrafted in Wales, were installed at the school: a 'storytelling bench' and chair, both with Cilla's likeness on them. Apparently the children were thrilled with them and were queuing up to try them out!



Update: In July 2025 it was announced that a new cat had joined the school – or, as they put it, 'The cat distribution system has sent us a new bundle of floof!' At nearly two years old, **Aloysius O'Hare** had apparently been a stray at another (unnamed) school before being taken to Herefordshire Cat Centre. The centre contacted Outwoods, knowing they might be interested in acquiring a successor to the much loved Cilla, and so it proved. Aloysius, with his 'huge paws', has settled in well and is already loved. [BBC News](#) (Sept. 2025)



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Ziggy of Flintshire (2022)

School visitor and 'photo bomber'



Emma Roberts of Flintshire was in peals of laughter when her two young daughters handed over a packet of photos that had been taken at their school – because included were pictures of their pet cat **Ziggy**, who'd sneaked in on the photo-shoot for some shots of his own! The cat visits

Drury Primary School, near Buckley in Flintshire, almost daily, attending assemblies, sleeping in the head's office and frequenting the playground. At the start-of-year photo-shoot in September 2022 he noticed an empty chair, jumped onto it and posed for a couple of shots before moving away.

Four-year-old Ziggy started visiting the school, which is a 10-minute walk from his home, in 2019. Headmaster Mark Bitcliffe said it was impossible to keep him away, so they just accepted him instead. He praised Ziggy's attendance record, and said his presence helps children who don't have their own pets to learn how to act towards them. He said he was 'one of the nicest cats he'd come across'.

When he first arrived at the family home in 2019 Emma said Ziggy came close to being sent back, as he was a terror, pulling her daughters' hair and generally causing chaos in the house. but he settled down, and during the coronavirus lockdown he became quite quiet and reserved, perhaps missing all his friends at the school. Now his impromptu photo will have pride of place on the mantelpiece, and was probably going to appear on the school's staff noticeboard as well.



[The Leader](#) | [BBC News](#) | [Daily Post](#) (all Sept. 2022)

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Tombi of Izmir, Turkey (2022)

School cat



No one knew where the handsome ginger cat came from, but he turned up in the gardens of a

primary school (not named) in Izmir, Turkey one day in 2022, and unlike most stray cats was friendly and liked attention from the children. After a few weeks he seemed to have decided it was time to make an entry into the school itself, so he chose to go into a classroom of 8- and 9-year-olds. The children liked him, and little by little he became almost a full class member. Far from being a distraction, teacher Ozlem Pinar Ivascu says he is a positive influence, making the children more focused and eager for lessons to begin. He is called **Tombi**. The children help to care for him, and the classroom gives him a safe place to sleep and hang out. Ozlem took him to the vet to be neutered and to have a health check.



Then, as happens all too often in these situations, someone complained. One of the parents said Tombi presented a health risk; the administration felt it had to ask Ozlem to remove the cat. The children were very upset. Tombi was found a home, but was miserable and stopped eating. After three days Ozlem herself took him home, but he was still unhappy; meanwhile the children sent him letters and drawings. She decided to share his story on social media – where it very quickly spread. The television channels picked up Tombi's story, and he received a lot of support – including that of Ozlem's director, and even Izmir's Director of Education. Eventually the complaining parent withdrew the complaint and said the cat should return to the classroom; school officials agreed, and 33 youngsters were delighted!

Tombi's story, now much better-known because of the publicity and TV coverage, may even have led to other Turkish schools adopting cats of their own (*see following story*).



[Welove Cats and Kittens](#) (Aug. 2023)

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Two more Turkish school cats (2023)

Uykucu ('Sleeper')



Turkish people in general are fond of their cats, so it was no surprise that when a group of children from Karaoglu Primary School in Sehzadeler, western Turkey, came across a stray cat near their school in 2022, they asked their teacher and the school principal for help and whether perhaps they could adopt the cat. It was agreed that they could, and so **Uykucu**, as she was named (meaning 'Sleeper') became school mascot. A local vet provided her with vaccinations.

Now Uykucu loves being with the children, often choosing a student's desk to snooze on during class, or else finding a sunny spot in the classroom to sunbathe. When it's cold she likes to sleep by a radiator – and at break-time she'll play with the children. Her presence has made them more eager to go to school and, as the principal says, 'Learning to .develop a love for animals is part of the students' education.'



Uykucu has definitely fallen on her paws – and, says principal Murat Arpaci, now there are 161 pupils instead of 160!

Karamel



Meanwhile, at another primary school in Bursa, a city in north-western Turkey, a cat called **Karamel** – because of her tortoiseshell colouring – has found shelter. She wanders around the classrooms, and snoozes wherever it suits her, mostly on top of students' books.

These schools believe that there are many advantages to having the cats around. Taking care of a cat teaches responsibility, how to be patient and how to look after another living being. It teaches empathy, how to be mindful of others' needs, and helps to give them social skills. All these are valuable lessons for their later lives. In addition, the children are thought to be less likely to develop allergies and asthma, and they can learn how to manage their emotions through their interactions with the cat.

Karamel even gained her own [report card](#)! (Jan. 2022)



[Animal Channel](#) (Nov. 2022) | [YouTube](#) (short video about both cats)



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