

# 46 LINGOS IN ONE PRIMARY

A PRIMARY school is teaching pupils in a mind-boggling 46 different languages.

Half of the 500 children – aged from four to 11 – do not have English as their first language.

Lingos range from India's Marathi and Hindi to South Africa's Zulu, Tamil and Sinhala from Sri Lanka plus Spanish, Russian and Thai.

The largest group is Polish, which is spoken by a third of pupils at St Mark's Primary in Shirley, Southampton.

Nationally 15.9 per cent of pupils are non-English speakers.

Headteacher Anne Steele-Arnett said: "I'm very

proud to be head of an international school. The challenges are enormous but the pupils work so hard and we work very closely with their families."

Southampton City Council's Daniel Jeffrey said: "We have seen a big social transformation here and it is reflected in schools like St Mark's."

The languages include: Arabic, Armenian, Bengali, Chechen, Cantonese, Mandarin, Dutch, English, Farsi, Fijian, French, German, Greek, Hindi, Hungarian, Igbo, Italian, Kurdish, Latvian, Malayalam, Marathi, Nepali, Ndebele, Punjabi, Pashto, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Shona, Sinhala, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tamil, Thai, Turkish, Urdu, Vietnamese, Zulu.

Challenge... Head Anne

## Train hits motorbike

YOBS dumped a motorbike on a railway line where it was hit by a commuter train travelling at 50mph.

Cops believe the bike was stolen then put on a bend in front of the Colne to Blackpool service.

Northern Rail said it was "very lucky" passengers were not hurt, adding: "This is very dangerous."

Cops have launched a manhunt into the stunt which delayed the morning rush hour on Friday.

## GRANDS DESIGNS

Brits spend £45,000 doing up homes in their lifetime, including £9,000 on paint, says a study.

Challenge... Head Anne

# THE HORROR PLIGHT OF ANIMALS FOR USE IN SICK FIGHT PREPARATION

HER eyes red with blood and her head a mass of cuts, English bull terrier Della was found shaking outside a nursing home four months ago.

She was close to death after being used as a bait dog to be torn to shreds by animals being trained for the vicious underground and illegal world of dog fighting.

A Sun on Sunday investigation has found that the vile act is on the increase.

And experts warn that this time of year is the best for the sick blood sport, as criminals can easily pick up unwanted dogs, often bought as Christmas presents then sold or given away for free online.

Dog fighting involves setting two animals against one another in a battle to the death – for fun.

In order to get the fighter's blood lust up, criminals get hold of other dogs – of any breed – and use them as bait.

In the barbaric baiting practice, terrified animals have their teeth removed and their legs taped together before being chained up and mutilated by the dogs.

The blood drawn and adrenaline produced in the attacks makes the fighting dogs – usually Staffordshire and English bull terriers or bulldogs – more aggressive.

Many bait dogs die – and even if rescued, frequently have to be put down.

Dognapping has increased to fuel the needs of the fighting dogs' owners, with latest figures showing an estimated 3,500 dog thefts in 2012, 17 per cent up on 2011.

Liz Haslam has saved the lives of a number of bait dogs, including Della, five, at her BedsforBullies rescue home in Thetford, Norfolk.

Liz said: "Della was once a loved family pet. You can tell because she's had extensive ear surgery costing about £1,500.

"But she was found outside a care home earlier this year and had obviously been used as a bait dog.

"So either the owner had given her away because they could no longer afford her or she was snatched.

"When we found her she was a mess, with her eyes all bloody and cuts all over her face. She is now partially sighted and can't hear."

Another of Liz's rescue dogs is an English bull terrier dumped in a coal shed two years ago.

The dog warden who found the motionless body of Dotty, three, thought he had already died – but the dog started to wag his tail.

Dotty had septicemia and was so emaciated that he was given just 48 hours to live.

Liz said: "His leg was bitten down to the bone and he had marks on his back where boiling oil had been poured on him.

"He has a scar on his ribcage from a fight wound that had been stitched with fishing wire – probably at the side of the ring.

"He had marks on his back that indicate he may have been hung while dogs attacked him.

"His leg was so badly infected the vet said he thought he may lose it. But we nursed him and saved it.

"He suffered brain damage and has to take anti-depressants.

"I just want to give him a happy life." Dog expert Ryan O'Meara

By ROB WEEKES

said there had been a resurgence in the use of bait dogs, blaming US rappers for "glamorising" the practice and raising its popularity.

He said: "The fact that dogs are quite commonly stolen and used as bait for fighting is established.

"There is a new generation of British youngsters involved in dog fighting and that means people are always on the lookout for bait dogs. This is mainly thanks to American rap culture, which glamorised fighting dogs.

"It has never been easier to get them. On the internet you can find thousands of dogs."

Ryan, publisher of K9 Magazine, also said this time of year was the worst for dog kidnappings.

He added: "People panic-buy puppies as gifts for their kids at the last minute, without realising it is a commitment. Come January, many are already looking to get rid of them as quickly as possible."

Dog fighting has been illegal in Britain since 1835. Those convicted face a maximum jail sentence of 51 weeks and fines of up to £20,000.

A spokesman for the RSPCA said: "Since 2000, the popularity of dog fighting appears to have been on the rise in the UK, following a lull in the Nineties.

"Tackling dog fighting is a top priority."

Recent successful prosecutions include Javed Jahangir and Sajid Mahmood, from Chesham, Bucks, who were jailed for 20 weeks and banned from keeping animals for life after an RSPCA and Thames Valley Police probe.

Their houses were raided, a scarred dog seized and images of dogfights were found.

"There are evil people out there"

In August last year 30 dogs were seized and one person was arrested during a series of raids in north Wales as part of Operation Morpheus – set up to tackle dog fighting.

The RSPCA says it is doing all it can to smash dog rings.

Ian Briggs, chief inspector of the RSPCA's special operations division, said: "In the past year we have had cases in London, Birmingham and Leeds.

"It tends to rear its ugly head in the same places.

"At the moment there are different categories of dog fighting – historical, organised dog fighting and status dog fighting by youths. It never goes away."

Campaigners have called for vigilance from owners who leave their dogs outside shops and for a ban on pets being given away online.

Both eBay and Facebook have banned animal adverts but classifieds site Gumtree has not.

A spokesman from charity Dogs Trust said: "Sadly, some dogs sold online face an uncertain future and risk being traded by unscrupulous buyers.

"We have strict operating procedures to help ensure the suitability and safety of both potential adopters and the dog they rehome – that is not done online."

And Liz believes people should think carefully about how people treat their dogs.

She said: "Dog fighting and baiting needs to be stopped.

"I hope people see Della's picture and think twice about giving a dog away free or tying them up outside a shop.

"There are some very evil people out there."

Additional reporting: RACHEL SPENCER

## 5 ways to keep your dog safe

EXPERTS Sarah Graham, of the Dogs Trust, and Sam Roberts, from the Blue Cross Animal Charity, give this advice on keeping dogs safe.

1. Be vigilant when leaving your dog in the garden and never tie them up outside shops.
2. Having your dog neutered and microchipped will make your pet less attractive to thieves.
3. Don't leave your dog alone in a car, even for a few minutes. Thieves can easily break in and steal your precious pet.
4. Make sure your dog always wears a collar and ID tag with your name and address on it and take photos of yourself with it, to help you prove ownership if needed.
5. Vary your times of walks and routes. Some dogs are targeted and snatched during walks.



HAPPY ENDING... Rescuer Liz with Dotty, left, and Della

Thugs trawl internet, snap up unwanted Christmas presents and steal pets for...

# BAIT DOGS



## DOG FIGHTING: THE FACTS

- Two dogs of equal size and weight are placed in a circular confined area, with one dog mauling the other until it is either incapacitated or dead.
- Most active fighting dogs are dead by the age of four. Dog fighters have numerous websites with memorial pages to dogs who have died in fights.
- In training, dogs are fed raw meat and have their weight measured constantly, just like professional boxers.
- So called elite dogs such as pure breed American Pit Bull Terriers sell for as much as £1,600.
- Fights usually take place in secret locations such as warehouses and farm buildings.
- Treadmills are used to improve dogs' stamina and they are starved for days to heighten preying instincts.

# Ouch

How can I get my finances in shape this year?

Ask MA.



Now's a good time to take a fresh look at your finances. The Money Advice Service website has a useful range of tools and advice, including the Money stretcher tool, to help you make your money go further.

The Money Advice Service is free, impartial and set up by government.

moneyadvice.org.uk