



Dear Parents/Carers,

This letter is intended to inform you about the benefits of having a school therapy dog and the teaching and learning opportunities it will bring, along with some of the safety considerations we have taken. If you have any questions I am happy to talk with you.

The value of pet therapy is widely accepted as a powerful aid to communication and motivation. Research has shown that companion dogs can improve the wellbeing of children and adults, reducing anxiety levels by making the school environment happier and a more enjoyable place to be. Children can benefit educationally and emotionally; a dog can motivate and encourage their participation, increase their understanding of responsibility, develop empathy and nurturing skills and improve their behaviour and self-esteem. Children cannot fail in any way in their relationship with a dog; they do not judge or condemn and offer unconditional affection. Children have the opportunity to learn the principles of good pet ownership and be taught how to handle dogs safely and responsibly; there is much enjoyment to take from interaction with a dog.

### **Benefits of having a School Therapy Dog**

Some of the benefits of having a school dog include:

- ✓ a calming effect on pupils, particularly those with behavioural or learning difficulties
- ✓ encouraging expression and participation in quieter children
- ✓ teaching children to nurture and respect life
- ✓ motivating children to think and to learn, as most children have a high level of natural interest in, enthusiasm for and enjoyment of animals
- ✓ fostering a sense of responsibility

### **Day to day management**

**The dog will:**

- not be allowed in school if unwell
- be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or when on a walk
- be under the full control and supervision of an adult at all times
- be highly trained.
- have had all injections prior to joining SBPS and will have regular flea and worm treatments

## The children

will NOT have sole responsibility for, or be left alone with, the dog. They will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog every time they meet:

- ✓ always remain calm around the dog
- ✓ do not make sudden movements
- ✓ do be gentle
- ✓ do not stare into the dog's eyes as this could be interpreted as a threat
- ✓ do not put your face near the dog
- ✓ always approach the dog standing up
- ✓ do not disturb the dog when it is eating or sleeping
- ✓ do not eat close to the dog and never feed the dog
- ✓ they must not play roughly with the dog
- ✓ the dog should not be stroked until she is sitting or lying down
- ✓ the adult in charge of the dog must ensure she is not surrounded by a large number of people which may make her anxious and stressed
- ✓ the dog should only be stroked on her body, chest, back and not by her face or top of head

They will learn about how dogs express their feelings through their body language and to always ask an unfamiliar dog's owner before approaching it when out and about.

We can work with those children who have a fear of dogs to enable them to be more comfortable with a well-trained and calm dog. If children have allergies, we can talk about how this can be managed.

In January you will be asked some questions around your child working with our school dog, Lottie. You will also be asked questions around consent. Your responses will be collected via Arbor.

Kindest Regards,

Mrs V Atkinson  
Headteacher

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