



Friday 4 November 2022

Therapy Dogs at Warden House

Dear Parents and Carers

I am writing to let you know about an exciting new initiative that we will be taking part in at Warden House. Our new Nurture TA Mr March is the owner of four fully trained and accredited therapy dogs. As part of his role, he has kindly offered their services (one dog at a time!) to support pupils at Warden House. Please read below the rationale behind using therapy dogs in school, and to find out more about the benefits that they can bring in supporting children's confidence and wellbeing. Mr March is an ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers) accredited dog trainer and chief instructor. All four dogs have been trained to a high standard and have previous experience of working as Therapy Dogs in schools.

Rationale behind hosting a therapy dog in school

There is an increasing body of research to support the benefit of a dog in school. In schools across the country, Therapy Dogs are being used more and more to provide comfort and reassurance to children with anxiety and self-confidence issues.

Increasingly in schools, it is becoming recognised that children's emotional wellbeing is at the root of positive behaviour and success with socialising as well as in the classroom. A dog can support children who are anxious about school and could be the reason that they want to come in every morning.

Caring for an animal can help children to learn about responsibility and can help children to learn how to treat animals safely and with compassion. Dogs are great fun to have around and can bring a caring, family atmosphere to a school.

Preparations for having a School Dog

Having a dog in school is a big step and the arrangement needs to work for all groups in our school community. Research has been made looking at guidance and risk assessments from other local schools with a regular visiting dog.

Practical thought has been given to where the therapy dogs will be able to go to the toilet this will be well away from anywhere the children will access. This will be a dedicated area behind the activity area.

In order to ensure that the dog would be beneficial to the children's learning and wellbeing (and not be a distraction!), we will plan carefully when and where the children will interact with the dog. If teachers wish one of the dogs to visit classrooms or the library this will be carefully managed and children fully aware of how to behave.

Each class will be given guidance for the children to learn how they need to behave with the therapy dogs when they are in school. This will take the form of an initial launch assembly, which will take place this Monday 7 November.

If any child is allergic to dog hair we make sure that they don't come into contact with the dog (or have restricted contact) if parents request it. Likewise, if a child has a phobia of dogs we will keep the dog away from them, or we can offer opportunities for the child to be slowly introduced to the dog, to reduce their fear.

Parents are invited to contact Nurture TA Mr. March via the school office if either of these cases apply so that we can make the necessary arrangements.

In the event of a fire or other emergency, the therapy dogs will be evacuated as with adults and children by the responsible adult.

Our therapy dogs:

<p style="text-align: center;">Hugo (Black Cockapoo)</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Charlie (Cream Cockapoo)</p> 
<p style="text-align: center;">Bollinger (English Springer Spaniel)</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Daisy (Black Cocker Spaniel)</p> 



The therapy dogs all have regular check-ups at the vet and has updated vaccinations, flea and worming treatment. The therapy dog will be based in Butterfly Classroom when in school and will have access to a bed, water and toys. They will have regular breaks from children and be able to happily relax in this room. The therapy dogs will only be in school one at a time, and will not be in school every day. Also, they will not be in school if unwell. If they become unwell whilst in school, they will be taken home or collected and will not interact with the children.

Guidelines to interaction with the School Dog

Parents/ carers are informed that there is a school dog and can request that their children do not have contact with the dogs.

There will always be a responsible adult in charge of the dog during interactions with children.

Children and adults are required to adhere to the following;

- ***Always approach the school dog calmly and slowly***
- ***Never run up to the dog***
- ***One child at a time to interact with the therapy dogs if meeting them around the school.***
- ***Offer the back of your hand for the dog to sniff when meeting the dog***
- ***All interactions must remain calm with the authorised adult in control at all times***
- ***Children must wash their hands before eating if they have been stroking the dog.***

Frequently Asked Questions

Will all four dogs be in school at once?

No. Only one therapy dog will be in school at any one time.

What will the school dog do on a day to day basis?

On the days that a dog is in school, they will be based in our nurture classroom, Butterfly Class. They may visit different classes or groups if organised. A dog will often accompany Mr March when he delivers messages or works in other classes around school and children will be able to greet them.

How do I know that my child will be safe around the dog?

A risk assessment and policy will be in place and will be available on the school website. Children will only have contact with the dog when supervised by an adult. When moving around the school, the dog will always be on the lead. Children will be taught how to interact safely with the therapy dogs in an assembly with reminders given in class.

Will my child pick up infections from the dog?

The dog will be fully vaccinated, treated regularly for worms and fleas and will be kept away from the school if it is ill. Children will be required to wash their hands before eating if they have been handling the dog. There will be a dedicated dog toilet area away from areas that children access and no child will be asked to pick up dog mess.



What if my child is allergic to dogs or afraid of them?

Parents can request that their child has no contact, or restricted access to the dog in these situations. Please speak to Mr March via the school office to discuss any concerns.

Does this mean that I can now bring my dog(s) onto school grounds?

Unfortunately not. The use of therapy dogs is carefully controlled and all dogs have been thoroughly trained and vetted. For safety reasons, parents and carers must not bring their own pets onto school grounds (unless assistance dogs).

Thank you in advance for your support with this matter.

Yours faithfully

Mr Rob Hackett
Headteacher