



School Lane, Yateley, Hampshire, GU46 6NN

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Headteacher: Miss J Redman

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UNITE – INSPIRE - EXCEL

Friday 31st January 2020

Dear Parents,

You may be aware that there is a growing movement in many schools to reintroduce the concept of school pets as a way of teaching all children responsibility and providing a source of pleasure and learning. Of particular interest is the move towards 'Reading Dogs' (that we have successfully implemented over the last couple of years) and 'Therapy Dogs'. The former is based on research which shows that many children who find reading practice difficult are more willing and able to read to the audience of an animal than they are to a human! Therapy dogs are similarly being used as a source of comfort and relaxation for children and adults who may need 'someone to talk to', or just someone who will accept them and offer comfort or a calming influence in their lives. There is much evidence that children who struggle with managing their own emotions also gain a great deal from spending time with a pet.

With these ideas in mind, the governors have agreed to us having a dog in school. Over the past year, Mrs Wilson and I have been researching and speaking to other schools about the benefits of having a dog in school. We have visited schools and witnessed the effect that dogs were having on the whole school community. As such, I have purchased a miniature, short-haired dachshund puppy. From after half term, the puppy will be coming into school, having been introduced to the school environment over the half term. His home will be the school offices. He will be attending puppy training and will hopefully progress to therapy training as he gets a little older. We will gradually introduce him to the children who will learn how to care for and behave around dogs.

Obviously, bringing any animal into school is not something to be approached lightly, both for the animal's sake and all of the people around it. As well as visiting other schools, we have spoken to several other schools that have a well-established school dog, considered the practicalities, from risk assessments and insurance to training, toileting and allergies.

We have shared the news about the puppy in assembly today. It is our aim that children across the school will have the opportunity to get to know and spend time with our dog in due course, however, in order for his introduction to be as successful as possible, this is a long process. We also want to involve the children in having the opportunity to make name suggestions (you are very welcome to put your thinking caps on too!); there is a suggestion box in Reception for any ideas.

It would be helpful to know whether we have any children who have allergies to dogs' hair or who have a particular phobia concerning dogs. Your children's interaction with our school dog will be entirely optional. If your child does not want to spend any time with our dog, he or she will not have to. I can assure you that our dog will not be around the school off the lead and will only have access to restricted areas.

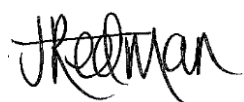
We are very mindful that introducing a dog to a school setting should not be a distraction to the children's learning and that it should enhance our school ethos and the experiences we offer, therefore the children will have opportunities to see him during break and lunchtimes and not during learning time.

Please **only** complete and return the attached form to school by **Thursday 13th February** if any of the statements apply to your child.

We are looking forward to welcoming our newest team member to Westfields after the half term but as always, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any specific questions.

Thank you for your continued support.

Kind regards,



Miss Jo Redman
Headteacher



Westfields Junior School Dog

Name of Child: _____ Class _____

Please tick the appropriate statement and **ONLY return if applicable:**

My child is allergic to dogs and I would prefer them not to be in contact with the school dog. ☐

My child is allergic to dogs, I am happy for them to be in the same room but not touch the dog. ☐

My child has a fear of dogs and I would prefer them not to meet the dog. ☐

My child has a fear of dogs and I would like them to slowly be introduced to the dog in time to overcome their fear. ☐

Signed: Date: