



Whittingham, Alnwick, Northumberland NE66 4UP

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December 20th 2019 Website: www.whittinghamprimaryschool.co.uk

Dear Parent/Legal Guardian,

'Pet therapy' is widely accepted as benefitting children's well-being and communication skills. Studies have shown that the presence of companion animals can improve the well-being of children and lower the rate of anxiety simply by making the environment happier, more enjoyable and less forbidding. Dogs are increasingly being used in schools with great success and some of you may have seen in the media that they are now being used in some hospitals as the emotional health benefits they bring are so vast. Following discussions with the Governing Body and the Charity - 'Dog's Trust' Whittingham C of E Primary School is looking to introduce a dog on a weekly basis to the school from the start of Spring Term. The puppy is our family pet and there will be no costs incurred by school. I will be the main point of contact for any dog questions. The puppy will initially have regular visits to assess the personality and suitability of the puppy before possibly being introduced fully in February 2020. This will enable the puppy to grow up in the school environment, becoming fully accustomed to the routines of the day and supportive of students within the school prior to a final decision being made.

The benefits of having a school dog include:

- a calming effect on pupils;
- improved behaviour and concentration, reduced stress and improved self-esteem;
- encouraging expression, participation and confidence for all children;
- fostering a sense of responsibility;
- motivating pupils to think and to learn, as most children have a high level of natural interest in, enthusiasm for and enjoyment of animals;
- encouraging respect and thereby improving pupils' relationships with each other, parents and teachers;
- teaching children to nurture and respect life;
- helping work undertaken with the most vulnerable children;
- helping children build confidence in reading;
- improving attendance

Headteacher: Mrs Belinda Athey



Prior to purchasing the puppy, Mrs Athey visited the home of the dog's parent to ensure that the temperament of the parent was suitable for interaction with children. The puppy will live with Mrs Athey in her home and be introduced to the school environment and students gradually. The puppy will be thoroughly checked for any illnesses and Mrs Athey will be responsible for its vaccination programme with all records kept as part of the school dog's risk assessment.

The dog's main place of residence will be the office area, which is secure and separate from the classrooms with access to an outside space away from students. The school dog will begin to spend time in the school environment. Whilst moving around the school, the dog will be kept on a short lead and will always be with a member of staff.

Once the pilot period finishes in February you will be able to see the school dog policy on the school website. In the meantime there is a full risk assessment, which will be reviewed regularly with the Governing Body.

It is accepted that interacting with animals is not appropriate for all children but that for some it has the potential to provide many positive benefits.

Any parent /Legal Guardian who does not wish their child to interact with the dog is invited to write to me, via email or letter, to inform me of your wishes. Please also ensure your child's medical record is up-to-date and the school has been made aware of any allergies.

Permission for your child to have some contact with the school dog will be presumed if no written communication to Mrs Athey is received by Monday 6th January 2020.

We hope students will gain a great deal of enjoyment from having a school dog and that she becomes an established part of life at our wonderful school.

Kind Regards,

Belinda Athey
Headteacher

