



Lanchester E.P. (Cont.) Primary School & Nursery

A Caring Community Where All Can Flourish



*'Through God's love, we are the rich soil
where roots grow and seeds flourish.'*

Luke 8:4-15



Tuesday 13th February 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to inform you that due to the overwhelming success of having Chelsea, our Assistance Dog, working with so many children in school every week, the governing body has agreed that a school therapy dog will be a great addition to the children in our school. This will be in addition to Chelsea continuing to come into school. Hopefully, this letter will give you all the information you need 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.

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 our school 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 they are sitting or lying down
- ✓ the adult in charge of the dog must ensure they are not surrounded by a large number of people which may make the dog anxious and stressed
- ✓ the dog should only be stroked on its body, chest, back and not by its face or top of head

The children will also 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.

The training will begin on Wednesday 14th February with Woody, who is my Labrador. He is 3 years old and I have included some photographs below of him. The training is very intensive and will take place over a number of weeks. It will be well into the summer term before the training is finished and then there is an assessment to take place. The training is as much for me, the owner, as well as Woody, the dog. Please note that children will not be in contact with the dog during training. Following the assessment, we will send out further communication for consent for your child to work with a therapy dog.

If you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Best Wishes,

Jane Davis

Mrs Jane Davis
(Head Teacher)

