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Headteacher: Mrs Barbara Brown

Dear Parents,

In January we are getting a new member of our school family – a school dog! She is a beautiful 10 week old Goldendoodle chosen for her friendly temperament and non-shedding hair.

We have carried out a great deal of research and found that there are many benefits educationally and emotionally in having a school dog. Children can develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with pets as well as experiencing great enjoyment from interactions with dogs and puppies.



Research has shown that **reasons to have a school dog** include;

- **Improved behaviour** where children showed more confidence and responsibility, parents reported that children seemed more interested in school as a result of having a dog in school.
- **Attendance** has improved as children can be encouraged back into school using caring for the dog as an incentive.
- **Social Development** schools are using dogs to help students build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility and boundaries. Students use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness and empower students.
- **As a reward:** Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the students. Those students who have performed incredibly well during the week or those who have made progress in a certain subject, or those who have achieved tasks set for them, may be rewarded with spending time during lunch or break to interact with these dogs. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities students will be allowed to undertake. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem.
- **Support** Dogs can work with students on a one to one basis and will especially help those students who have been bullied, abused, going through upsetting/difficult times or even scared/phobic of dogs. The dog will bring much joy and help to all the students they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the students they are spending time with. Students who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog
- **Reading** programmes with dogs are doing wonders for some students. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even adults are likely to be less scared to read to a dog. "It might be less stressful for a child to read aloud to a dog than to a teacher or a peer. After all, a dog won't judge or correct you." Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud. With the presence of a "calm and well-trained dog," students enjoy social support and peer interaction.
- **Bullying** can be a problem in all schools with students anxious about school for fear of taunting and abuse. But in some schools dogs are making a difference in the fight against bullies. Researchers report that students can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel. It was found that violent behaviour in participating schools declined by 55%, and general aggression went down 62%.

## A Note from the children of our School Council

### **Why we would like to have a school dog**

We would like to have a school dog to bring extra excitement into school. We think that a dog would help us to become more responsible and show us how to look after a pet. We would like a school dog to be our school mascot. We think that having a dog in school would make us more determined to finish our work so that we can see the dog as a treat. We could have rewards for getting house points or learning points to spend time with the dog. We think a dog might cheer you up if you are feeling sad. We would like to learn how to train a dog and help develop our confidence and skills with animals. We think that taking the dog for a walk will help us to be good at being a 'Green School' and a 'Healthy School' because the dog will keep us fit and healthy too. We think that some people who aren't used to dogs would get the opportunity to spend time with a dog and they would become part of our school family.

### **Worries about having a school dog**

We know that some children might be scared of a dog in case it bites or licks people, or people might have had a bad experience with a dog before. We know that an adult will always be with the dog and that no one will have to spend any time with the dog if they didn't want to. We hope that a school dog will help everyone to overcome their worries and fears. We know that the children will have to be calm and sensible around the dog so that the dog doesn't get frightened too.

We don't want the dog to disturb classes when they are working, so we want the dog to be well trained, we want to help the dog to be trained.

We want hygiene to be really strict. We would always have to wash our hands properly after we have touched the dog and the dog wouldn't be allowed to lick anyone's faces. We would have to make sure that the dog went to the toilet away from where we play outside.

We feel the type of dog that we get is very important and that it comes from a reputable breeder. We do not want a small dog or one that barks a lot, but we do want one that is friendly and cuddly.

The dog would attend school most days and come home with me. She would generally stay in my office in a pen and as she gets older and she has been trained, she may spend time in some classrooms and in the library. She will always be under adult supervision and on a lead.

I understand that some families may have concerns about having a dog in school and would like to reassure everyone that we have a Dog Policy and full risk assessments available for anyone who would like to get further information. I am also available to discuss this and talk to you about how it will work in school.

**No one** will be forced to spend time with the dog if they do not want to and all parents have the right to request that their child does not have contact with the dog.

Yours Sincerely

Mrs B. Brown

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**PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN TO SCHOOL**

I understand that the school dog will be present in school;

I am happy for my child to come into contact with the school dog

I do not want my child to come into direct contact with the dog

My child has allergies and should only have limited contact with the dog

Name of child \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_