

East Hunsbury Primary School

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February 2018

Dear Parents / Carers

Welcome Pickles!

I am writing to inform you that East Hunsbury Primary School has taken the decision to welcome a school assistance dog into the school community. With the support of staff and governors the primary purpose of a school dog is to support, motivate and engage pupils in either the Specialist Unit or Mainstream School.

Pickles is a Cockapoo. We carefully selected this breed as these dogs are of medium size, have a gentle and sensitive nature but highly intelligent making them easier to train. Another consideration was the Cockapoo coat which is more fleece like than fur and is better for allergy sufferers.

Pickles actually belongs to Sarah Halsall in the Specialist Unit and Sarah initially will introduce Pickles to the Special Unit environment and then eventually the Mainstream too. The children in our SU are already familiar with PAT dogs visiting the school for pet therapy sessions. Pickles will live at home with Sarah and only come into school part-time.

The intended pet therapy / school dog interventions will include:

- Working on social skills.
- Providing a calm presence with pupils who may display anxieties.
- Providing an incentive for pupils who meet individual goals in behaviour, social skills and academic achievement.
- Providing companionship and mindfulness activities to pupils in need of stress relief.
- Providing a non-judgemental listener for children who are less confident readers.

There is a broad range of research that supports trained dogs in educational settings. The benefits of dogs in schools include increased oxytocin (bonding) and dopamine (happiness), while lowering cortisol (stress).

At all times our staff will implement the rules that support pupils around the assistance dog. This includes:

- The dog will always be on a leash.
- The dog will always be with a competent adult.
- Pupils who have allergies or are afraid of dogs will not be asked to interact with Pickles.
- There will be a clearly defined area outside for soiling which Sarah will attend to.
- Sarah will ensure all inoculations are up to date.

Headteacher: Mrs R Arundel



Whilst we are at a very early stage in this process of introduction, it would be helpful to know whether we have any children who are allergic to dogs' hair or who have a particular phobia concerning dogs, so consideration can be given to everyone's needs. The risk assessment will be available on our website shortly and will give you some indications of the amount of thought that has gone into this pilot programme.

I would be very grateful therefore if you could complete the slip below if your child has any relevant allergies or phobias, or if for any reason you prefer them not to have contact with Pickles and return to the school office. Please note not all children with permission slips will have direct contact with Pickles as we will initially identify those children who would benefit most from pet therapy.

If you have any questions, feedback or concerns regarding Pickles joining our school community as a school assistance dog please don't hesitate to contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

Rita Arundel
Head teacher

"Pickles"



RE: SCHOOL ASSISTANCE DOG "PICKLES"
(Please tick appropriate choice)

Name of Child: _____ Class: _____

I would like my child to have supervised sessions / access to the school assistance dog, Pickles.

I would not like my child to have supervised sessions / access to the school assistance dog, Pickles.

Signed: _____
(Parent / Carer)

Date: _____