Headteacher: Miss Kellie Egleton BA(Ed.) Hons., NPQH, FCCT
Coast Road, Hopton-On-Sea, Great Yarmouth, NR31 9BT
Tel: 01502 730489 Email: office@hopton.norfolk.sch.uk Web: www.hopton.norfolk.sch.uk

Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust

Friday 13th September 2024

We're Getting a School Dog!

Dear Parents and Carers,



I am delighted to share that we have welcomed a school dog who will be joining us in school on a daily basis to work with our pupils.

After careful consideration, we have chosen a cockapoo named Lola who is 5 years old. We have chosen this breed for the following reasons:

- The breed does not moult – their coat is non-allergenic, meaning there is a reduced risk of allergic reactions.
- The breed is known to be child-friendly, lively, gentle mannered and affectionate, yet sensitive.
- The breed is known to be highly intelligent and respond excellently to training.

Lola has successfully completed her training, to ensure that she is well-trained for being around children. We wish to reassure parents that we have undertaken a significant amount of research into purchasing a school dog and believe the positive effects of such demonstrably outweigh any negatives. Some of the many benefits of having a school dog include the following:

- **Cognitive development** – building a companionship with a dog helps children stimulate their memory, problem-solving and game-playing skills. Having a school dog is known to increase enthusiasm for, and enjoyment of animals, which motivates children to think and learn.
- **Social skills** – dogs provide a mutual topic for conversation with others, and encourage responsibility, wellbeing and focussed interaction with others.
- **Emotional skills** – dogs improve self-esteem, acceptance from others and are known for improving moods. Dogs can also help children develop compassion and respect for other living things and can reduce children's anxiety. Building respect can improve children's relationships with each other, parents and teachers and shows them how to nurture and care for another living thing. If any children are suffering from bereavement or are particularly sad, dogs can provide children with comfort and friendship.
- **Physical development** – interaction with dogs is known to reduce blood pressure, provide tactile stimulation, assist with pain management and give motivation for children to move and walk.
- **Reading** – school dogs are known to help children with their reading and literacy skills, through their calming presence and ability to listen to children read without being judgemental or critical. Children can build their confidence to read aloud to others through having a school dog.
- **School community** – having a school dog builds the sense of a family environment and togetherness.



During the day, Lola will be kept in the headteacher's office – returning to the headteacher's home once the school day is over. A suitable bed, food, water and cleaning supplies will be held for Lola, and she is toilet-trained. I must stress that pupils will not be expected to clean up any dog mess, and we will ensure that the school grounds are kept clean at all times.

Whenever Lola is being walked around the school, she will have a short lead to ensure she is controlled at all times.

Pupils will be able to visit Lola during break and lunch times in the headteacher's office or around the school grounds. Lola will visit pupils in their classrooms, particularly for children to read to her.
Pupils will be able to walk Lola around the school playground/field. At all times, whether in classrooms or being walked by a pupil, an adult will supervise the activity.

I would like to reassure you that pupils will only be able to come into contact with Lola if parental permission has been received.

We understand that many parents will have concerns regarding bringing a school dog onto the premises, and I would like to use this letter to provide some reassurance to parents. We have undertaken a full risk assessment to ensure that any hazards can be adequately controlled – we have published this risk assessment on the school website for you to view should you wish to access it. Below, I have listed some concerns which I believe parents may have.

My child is allergic to dogs and I don't want them to have an allergic reaction

As previously mentioned, we have chosen a cockapoo breed, which has a non-allergenic coat and does not moult, meaning there is a significantly reduced risk of an allergic reaction. If, however, you would still prefer your child not to come into contact with Lola, we will accommodate your request and ensure that arrangements are in place.

We have undertaken a thorough risk assessment, which details the hygiene practices that will be in place – such as cleaning of hands and the environment before and after coming into contact with Lola.

More information is detailed in our risk assessment which is available for you to download.

Will the dog be properly cared for?

Lola will be subject to a rigorous grooming process to prevent the risk of infection or disease. Lola will be kept in the headteacher's office during the day and will have adequate supply of food and water. You can find more information on these arrangements in our risk assessment.

My child is scared of dogs

We understand that some children may be fearful of dogs. Cockapoos are known for being extremely child-friendly and Lola will provide the opportunity for children to overcome their fears, with their parents' permission. The training that Lola has undertaken will ensure that she is well behaved, gentle and calm around children. If parents would prefer for their child not to come into contact with Lola, we will accommodate your request and ensure alternative arrangements are in place.

Is the dog well-behaved?

As previously mentioned, Lola has undertaken training to ensure she is well-behaved at all times. She will be kept on a short lead whenever walking around school.

Please complete the attached permission slip, outlining whether your child is able to come into contact with Lola or not. I would like to reassure you that a written list will be held of all children for whom permission has been received – this will be distributed to all staff members and only these children will be permitted to be around or touch Lola. Please return the slip to your child's class teacher by **Friday 20th September 2024.**

We hope you will join us in welcoming Lola to our school and embrace all she has to offer to our community. I hope to have provided reassurance to any concerns you may have via this letter; however, if you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,

Kellie Egleton

Headteacher

Lola the School Dog - Permission slip

Please complete the following permission slip and return to your child's class teacher. Should you wish to amend your permission, please contact the school immediately in writing.

Name of pupil:	Class:
My child has a fear of dogs, but I am happy for them to be slowly introduced to the dog.	
I would **not** like my child to be around, or touch Lola	
I am happy for my child to be around and touch the dog.	

I, _____ (name of parent) have fully read and understood the conditions of this letter. I agree that I have provided the correct consent above and will inform the school in writing if my permission changes at any stage.

Signature of parent:_____ Date: _____

