

We are getting school dogs!

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to inform you that we will soon be adding some new members to our school community. As of December 2021, we will be welcoming our school dogs who will be within the school to work with our pupils.

After careful consideration, we have chosen cocker spaniels named Monty and George. Monty is 6 years old and George is 2. We have chosen this breed for the following reasons:



- **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.**

Both dogs are owned by Mr Henderson and are very well trained. However, like any skill, we will ensure this training is on-going. We wish to reassure parents that we have undertaken a significant amount of research into introducing 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, Monty and George will be kept in Mr Henderson's office – returning to his home once the school day is over. A suitable bed, food, water and cleaning supplies will be held for both dogs. 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 Monty and George are being walked around the school, they will be controlled at all times by Mr Henderson.

Pupils will be able to visit the dogs during break and lunch times. As time progresses, Monty and George will visit pupils in their classrooms, particularly for children to read to them.

All pupils will be able to walk Monty and George around the school playground as Mr Henderson will always be closely supervising this activity.

I would like to reassure you that pupils will only be able to come into close contact with Monty and George if parental permission has been received. All children will of course see the dogs around school, but under closer supervision by Mr Henderson.

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

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 George and Monty.

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

Will the dogs be properly cared for?

Monty and George both belong to Mr Henderson and will be kept in his office during the day and will have an 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. Cocker spaniels are known for being extremely child-friendly and Monty and George will provide the opportunity for children to overcome their fears, with their parents' permission. Both dogs are well-trained and will be well-behaved, gentle and calm around children. If parents would prefer for their child not to come into contact with our dogs, we will accommodate your request and ensure alternative arrangements are in place.

Are the dogs well-behaved?

As previously mentioned, George and Monty are well-trained and will continue to be to ensure they are well-behaved at all times. They will be kept on a short lead whenever walking around school.

Please complete this [Google Form](#) outlining whether your child is able to come into contact with Monty and George, 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 Monty and George.

We hope you will join us in welcoming Monty and George to our school and embrace all they have 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 come and speak to me about it further.

Kind regards,

Mr Henderson

Deputy Headteacher.