

Exeter Children's Federation

Headteacher: Ms Elise Redman

25th April 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you all had a good Easter break and that the return to school today has gone smoothly. I was most impressed with the positivity of all returning this morning.

Today has been my first full day at Wynstream and it has been an absolute pleasure getting to know the children, staff and some parents. I feel very fortunate to be working with such a dedicated team of staff and it has been lovely getting to know some of your children today.



Over the next term, I am very much looking forward to working with you and getting to know you all.

From later on this week, I will be joined by a Portuguese water dog called Pepper, a therapy dog in training who has been working at Christow Primary for the last five terms. She will be in school most days and she will be training with Bale's Buddies, a charity based in Newton Abbot twice a week for the next term and intensively at home with my family. <https://www.bales-buddies.co.uk/>

When she joined school, she was only four months old and she is now nearly two-years-old. She will have the chance to work with all those who want to meet her. We will prioritise giving this opportunity to Year 6 children so that they get to work with her before leaving Wynstream at the end of the summer term.

Please see the attached frequently asked questions relating to therapy dogs. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. **Before**

any child can interact with the dog, parents will need to give consent. No child (or adult) will have to interact with the dog at any time.

Please complete the attached consent form if you wish your child to work with the dog.

I look forward to seeing you at the gate in the mornings and after school.

On Friday 29th April, we would like to invite all parents into school for a cream tea. This will give me a chance to meet with you and if you have any questions that you want to raise with me in person then please feel free to do so.

Best wishes,

Elise Redman
Headteacher

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Website: www.wynstreamprimary.org.uk

Letter of consent regarding School Dog

Please complete and return a.s.a.p.

Name of Child

Class

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Please tick as appropriate:

- ☐ I am happy for my child to be involved with all aspects of caring for the school dog, including supervised lunchtime walks.
- ☐ My child is a little nervous of dogs, but I am happy for him/her to be involve with all aspects of caring for the school dog, including supervised lunchtime walks.
- ☐ My child is fearful of dogs, but in time, I would like them to work with the dog to develop their confidence with and understanding dogs.
- ☐ My child has an allergy which means they must not come into contact with the dog.
- ☐ I do not give permission for my child to come into direct contact with the dog.

Signed..... Parent/Carer

Name..... Date.....

Frequently asked questions

"The quickest and biggest hit that we can make to improve mental health in our schools and to make them feel safe for children, is to have at least one dog in every single school in the country," said Sir Anthony Seldon.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-47655600>

"For the kids it can be really uplifting, particularly those that have different ways of expressing themselves and coming out of themselves - and the dog or the pets can really help." Damien Hinds (Education secretary)

Is Wynstream Primary School suitable for a dog?

Yes, the school has been checked by a trainer of therapy dogs and has been deemed to be perfect for a school dog. Governors and PFI have been consulted and are happy for a dog to be in school.

Who will care for the dog in school?

The dog will need people to handle and support it in school, a number of staff have agreed to take this on. A dog will never be left alone with students. The dog will also get regular (twice weekly) training from professionals so that by September it will be a trained therapy dog.

Won't some children be scared of the dog?

Some children may be scared, this is part of the reason to get a dog; to help children to become more confident. No child, or adult, will have to go near the dog. Also, children will be taught how to understand dog behaviour and how to behave near an animal.

Who wants the dog?

The head, governors, senior leaders, teaching staff and support staff are all supportive. Cleaning and maintenance staff have also been consulted and are happy for the dog to be in school. We hope that the vast majority of parents and children will be keen for the dog to join the school. There will be some children and adults who do not like dogs; they will not need to have any interaction with the dog.

Where will the dog be toileted?

The dog will be toileted off-site and the adult responsible will clean up after it.

Could the dog cause illnesses?

The dog is a 'hypoallergenic' breed so most people with allergies will not be affected. The dog has all the proper care in terms of inoculations and anti flea treatments. Children will be taught to always wash their hands after any contact with the dog.

Will the dog get tired, especially when it is young?

There will be a quiet, child-free space for the dog to rest for significant periods during the school day. There will be a structured and planned timetable for the dog. This will be planned and adapted by professional trainers. The dog's wellbeing should never be compromised.

Will the dog go everywhere in the school?

Some areas of school that are unsuitable for a dog; it will not go to these spaces.

How will the dog be paid for?

The school understands the costs associated with the dog and who will be responsible for them. The cost will not come out of school funds.

What about insurance?

The school will make appropriate insurance arrangements to cover the dog and its activities in school. The insurance for the dog's health will be covered by its owner.

What about the risks involved?

As ever the school will have a detailed risk assessment, although this will be dynamic and change as and when needed.

What if the dog is sick?

There will be a back-up plan in place to care for the dog when it cannot attend school (eg if she is unwell).

What will the dog do all day?

To begin with the dog will be on a minimal timetable as it will still be being trained; some of this training will take place in school. In the future, the dog will be in the school playground to greet the children, it may be in class when children are reading, it may support individual children if there is a need, it may be outside for some playtimes, PE sessions and outdoor learning sessions. It may join after-school club and breakfast club, although not when snacks are being eaten.

Who will look after it during the holidays and at weekends?

The owner of the dog will look after it, in this case the head.

Will the dog distract from the education of my child?

No, the dog will be there as a therapy dog. When the dog first arrives it is likely to cause much excitement but we are a school and all staff are focussed on children's learning. The dog will be there to support this.

Will the dog bite my child?

The dog is an animal and all animals (even children) can bite. However, no therapy dog (trained by Bale's buddies) has ever bitten a child. Yet. We hope, and will ensure through careful, considered planning, that we will not be the first.

Further information and reading:

<https://www.bales-buddies.co.uk/>

Chetwynd Community Academy

<https://www.tts-group.co.uk/blog/2018/01/16/dog-school-barking-mad-paws-thought.html>

<https://www.dogshelpingkids.co.uk/SCHOOL-DOG-FACTSHEET-APRIL2017.pdf>

DHK article https://dogshelpingkids.co.uk/HeadTeacherMay2019_FernieandNik.pdf