

Friday, August 21st 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am delighted to be writing to you to confirm the news that from September we will be welcoming another new member to the TG family – Bertie, who will be with us in school each day.

Bertie is a Sprocker Spaniel and is being trained to work with children in school and will be introduced gradually to the children across the school. We have undertaken a significant amount of research and are aware of many benefits to having a school dog:

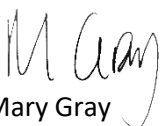
- 🐾 A calming effect on pupils
- 🐾 Improved behaviour and concentration
- 🐾 Encouraging expression, participation and developing self-esteem
- 🐾 Fostering a sense of responsibility
- 🐾 Increasing enthusiasm for and enjoyment of animals which will motivate the children to think and learn
- 🐾 Encouraging respect and thereby improving pupils' relationship with each other, parents, carers and teachers
- 🐾 Teaching children to nurture and respect life
- 🐾 Helping work undertaken with the most vulnerable children and improve educational outcomes
- 🐾 Helping children build confidence in reading
- 🐾 Helping children who suffer bereavement or who are upset in any way and in need of calm, comfort and space before being able to tell an adult what has upset them

For the reassurance of all, Bertie will always be on his lead and with an adult when moving around the school site. His main place of residence will be the Office, which is secure and separate from the classrooms. Children will only be able to interact with Bertie under strict supervision at certain times of the day/week as long as parental permission has been given either by returning the attached slip or emailing admin3066@welearn365.com. Please understand that we will do everything we can to reassure children who are fearful and that under no circumstances will they be forced to meet with Bertie.

We understand that it is not possible for all families to have a family dog and therefore we hope that this is an opportunity for children to build a relationship and in time enjoy contact on a regular basis. We hope the children will gain a great deal of enjoyment from having Bertie at school.

Attached are a series of frequently asked questions which we hope will answer any queries you may have, but please do come and ask us if you have any other concerns or queries regarding the introduction of a school dog into our environment.

Yours sincerely,



Mary Gray

Head



Permission slip for working with school dog

Please tick as appropriate:

- I am happy for my child to be involved with the school dog.
- My child is a little nervous of dogs but I am happy for him/her to be involved with the school dog.
- My child is fearful of dogs but, in time, I would like them to be involved with the school dog to develop their confidence with and understanding of dogs.
- I do not give permission for my child to come into direct contact with the dog.

Child's name:.....

Class:

Signed:.....Print name:.....

Date:.....

Response may also be by email to admin3066@welearn365.com



Frequently Asked Questions

Q Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?

A. The legal owner of the dog will be Miss Britt who will care for the dog out of school hours and will bear the costs associated with it.

Q Will the dog be a distraction?

A. The dog will be kept in the office. The office is separate from the classrooms/playground area to ensure it only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision. We will be careful to ensure that time spent with the school dog is shared among the children fairly. We will also ensure that children who do not have permission for direct contact with the dog are still able to participate in a number of ways (send him a letter, enjoy pictures of Bertie), should they wish to do so.

Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

A. Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog. There will be a School Dog Policy, available to view on the Website before the school dog comes into school.

Q Who is responsible for training?

A. Miss Britt will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for his training. Appropriate professional training will be obtained and the dog will work towards a PAT (Pets As Therapy) assessment.

Q. How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?

A. In the interest of health and hygiene, Bertie will be toileted in one specific area on the school site which children do not access. Thus there will be no chance of the children coming into contact with faeces. Our policy of no dogs in the playground is still applicable as we are unable to put effective control measures in place that guarantee temperament and safety when children come into unsupervised contact with unknown dogs.

Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A. The dog will be walked at lunchtime; parents will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to be able to walk with a member of staff and the dog during that time. The dog will be kept in the office and will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. Bertie will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have unlimited access to water.

Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?

A. Children and adults will not need to touch the dog which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions, however small. We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for children and adults that are allergic to dogs. Individual needs will always be met and we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies.

Q My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?

A. Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with it unless permission for this has been given. We hope to work closely with parents of children who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.

