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Dear Parents and Carers

As many of you are aware, Walter is our school dog. He is a French Bulldog and is 3 years old. Walter belongs to Mrs Emsley and lives with her and her family.

'Frenchies' are a breed of dog that are known for their affection and love of people; this gives them the right temperament to be a school dog. Walter comes to school a few times a week with Mrs Emsley.

What are the benefits of a school dog?
Evidence indicates that benefits include:

- Cognitive – companionship with a dog stimulates memory, problem-solving and game-playing
- Social – a dog provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, encourages responsibility, wellbeing, and focused interaction with others
- Emotional – a school dog improves self-esteem, acceptance from others and lifts mood, often provoking laughter, and fun. Dogs can also teach compassion and respect for other living things as well as relieving anxiety
- Physical – interaction with a furry friend reduces blood pressure, provides tactile stimulation, assists with pain management, gives motivation to move, walk and stimulates the senses
- Environmental – a dog in a school increases the sense of a family environment, with all of the above benefits continuing long after the school day is over.
- Reading – reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop literacy skills and build confidence, through both the calming effect the dog's presence has on children as well as the fact that a dog will listen to children read without being judgemental or critical. This comforting environment helps to nurture children's enthusiasm for reading and provides them with the confidence to read aloud.

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 benefit from a healthy and positive relationship and have regular contact with a dog.

A letter to seek your permission regarding contact with Walter is attached. Please also see the FAQs attached below. If you have any more questions regarding this, please contact Mrs Emsley.

A member of the bdat family

School Dog:
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?
A. The legal owner of the dog will be Mrs5 Emsley who will care for the dog out of school hours and will bear the costs associated with it; the school budget will remain unaffected.

Q Is the dog from a reputable breeder?
A. Yes. We have researched breeders and have chosen a reputable breeder.

Q Will the dog be a distraction?
A. The dog will be kept in the office area. We will be careful to ensure that time spent with the school dog is shared among the children. We will also ensure that children who are not involved in regular, direct contact with the dog are still able to participate in a number of ways, should they wish to do so.

Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?
A. 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 and Risk Assessment available to view on the website.

Q Who is responsible for training?
A. The nominated member of staff will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for its training. Appropriate professional training will be obtained if necessary.

Q. How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?
A. In the interest of health and hygiene, our school dog will be toileted in selected areas of the school site. Faeces is always immediately removed, therefore there will be no chance of the children coming into contact with it. 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. Walter will be extremely well looked after. He will live with Mrs Emsley and her family. Walter will be kept in the office area and will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. Whilst Walter is in school, he will remain in the office area (Headteacher's Office), where he can relax during the day. Walter will visit the vet regularly for all his injections as well as regular check-ups. If Walter is unwell for any reason, he will stay at home with a dog/babysitter! He will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have unlimited access to water. We will work closely with other professionals to ensure that his welfare is always carefully considered.

Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?
A. 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. He will also only be allowed in situations with pupils who voluntarily wish to work with him. Your permission will of course be sought in advance of Walter having access to, and working with, your child in school.

Q My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?
A. Walter will be carefully managed and supervised, and children do not need to have regular, close contact with him 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. Experience and research have shown that, with proper guidance and handling, children can learn to overcome their fear of animals and grow in respect and appreciation for them.

Q What if the dog becomes over excited and knocks my child over?
A. The dog will always be in the care of a responsible adult. Children will not be left unsupervised with the dog. We will have a risk assessment in place to deal with any situations that arise.