

Garden Fields J.M.I School

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Growing Hearts and Minds

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9th June 2023

Dear Parents/Carers,

We are writing to let you know of some exciting news for Garden Fields Primary School. In June we will be getting our new school dog, called Doodle, who will be a regular attender at Garden Fields Primary School. Doodle is a 13 week old Cotton Noodle (Coton De Tulear cross Miniature Poodle).

Cotton Noodles are a breed of dog that are known for their mild temperament and she has a hypo-allergenic coat. Doodle is my dog and will be only coming into school for short sessions initially. I will obviously be caring for Doodle out of school; I will be taking full responsibility, but other staff will be taking her for sessions.

In an assembly we will discuss with the children the rules and expectations about having a school dog but we will also talk about many of the benefits too. We have undertaken a significant amount of research and are aware of many benefits to having a school dog including:

Benefits:

- a calming effect on pupils;
- improved behaviour and concentration, reduced stress and improved self-esteem;
- encouraging expression, participation and confidence for all children;
- fostering a sense of responsibility;
- motivating pupils to think and to learn, as most children have a high level of natural interest in, enthusiasm for and enjoyment of animals;
- encouraging respect and thereby improving pupils' relationships with each other, parents, carers and teachers;
- teaching children to nurture and respect life;
- helping work undertaken with the most vulnerable children;
- helping children build confidence in reading;
- improving attendance;
- further promote our 'Well Being' agenda for pupils.

Dogs are increasingly being used in schools with great success and some of you may have seen in the media that they are now being used in some hospitals as the emotional health benefits they bring are just so vast.

The dog's main place of residence in school will be a secure office area. As Doodle is still only young she will slowly be introduced to the school community and we will begin by introducing her to small



numbers of children, starting with children in Year Six. If your child is going to work in regular, close contact with Doodle we will request permission from parents to do so. For the remainder of this school year and over the next school year all children will have the opportunity to interact with our school dog as she begins to visit more classrooms and moves around the school more. Whilst moving around the school, Doodle will be kept on a short lead and will always be with an adult.

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 Doodle.

We have chosen a Cotton Noodle as an appropriate breed of dog for the school. The breed has been carefully selected because of its ideal temperament. The breed is known for being fun-loving, playful dog that is smart, sweet-natured and very responsive. They are very social dogs who love everyone and thrive with people around.

We will publish pictures of our school dog, Doodle so that everyone can enjoy her development and our weekly newsletter will provide regular updates.

It is important that we understand your wishes around your child's contact with Doodle. Please complete this short questionnaire (one per child please) - <https://forms.gle/Pc38ZiyLLvDHFpjG6> - by Friday 16th June 2023. Thank you.

We hope the children will gain a great deal of enjoyment from having their school dog and that she becomes an established part of life at Garden Fields Primary School. However, should you have any queries or questions on the matter then please do not hesitate to contact the school. In the meantime, please see the FAQs attached.

Ms Palmer
Headteacher

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 Ms Palmer 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 an office area. 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 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. 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.

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.

Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A. As the puppy grows she will be walked mornings and lunchtime by school staff. The dog will be kept in an Office area and will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. The dog 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 the dog's 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. The breed of dog has also been chosen for its hypoallergenic properties. 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 regular, 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.

