



St Peter & St Paul Carbrooke Church of England Primary Academy

Headteacher: Mrs Hannah Wheeler

Church Street, Carbrooke, Thetford, Norfolk IP25 6SW

Tel: 01953 881537 Email: office@st-peter-st-paul.norfolk.sch.uk Web: www.carbrookeschool.co.uk

Wednesday 10th October 2018

Dear Parents,

I am writing to inform you that we have added a new member to our school community. We have welcomed a school dog who will be within the school on a daily basis to work with our pupils.

Willow, who is an English Springer Spaniel, has been visiting school during her puppy year and we would like to formally have her on our school team.

- 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.



You may be aware that we had two school rabbits last year – however Caramel passed away very suddenly at the beginning of September and Pickle has now gone back to Rosy's house to have the company of the sisters from the rabbit litter. We all felt that having Pickle on her own at school was unfair, and that she needed to have others to play with.

Willow has been in training for the last year, to ensure that she is well-trained for being around children. We wish to reassure parents that we have undertaken a significant amount of research into recruiting 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.



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- **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, Willow will be kept in the headteacher's office – returning to the headteacher's home once the school day is over. A suitable bed, food, water and cleaning supplies will be held for Willow, and she is sufficiently toilet-trained. 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.

Pupils will be able to visit Willow during break and lunch times in the headteacher's office or around the school grounds. Once her training is complete, Willow will visit pupils in their classrooms, particularly for children to read to her.



Pupils will be able to walk Willow around the school playground/field. At all times an adult will supervise the activity.

I would like to reassure you that pupils will only come into contact with Willow through their own choice. Even those who have reservations about dogs have chosen to meet her in the calm, controlled environment of school.

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.

Yours Sincerely,

Mrs H Wheeler
Headteacher