

STMARY'S MIDDLEWICH

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EXTRA-ORDINARY LETTER

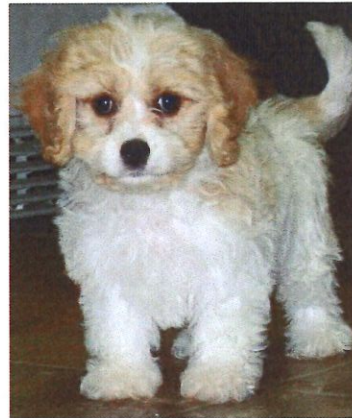
Dear Parent/Carers

RE: School Nurture Dog

I am writing to tell you that the decision, with the support of the school staff and governors, has been made to introduce a school nurture dog in October 2018. I invite you to read the details below and return the slip attached.

The primary purpose of a nurture dog at our school is to motivate, inspire and engage pupils in learning.

Our dog is a cavachon (this is Charlie on the right!) and he belongs to Mrs Shaw. She carefully selected this cross breed because they are small in size, have a gentle, sensitive nature and are easy to train. Another consideration was their hypoallergenic coat as it is more fleece like than fur and is better for allergy sufferers. Charlie will be gradually introduced to the school environment over the coming weeks; he will become familiar with the school building. Charlie loves being around children and enjoyed being in school when he supported topic work in KS1.



A named veterinary practice has thoroughly checked Charlie for any illnesses and he is up to date with his vaccination programme. Charlie's worming and flea treatments are in line with European vet guidelines.

The intention is that our dog will:

- aid social skills within nurture group sessions and speech and language workshops;
- provide a calming presence with pupils in crisis and/or in 1:1 nurture sessions;
- provide motivation for pupils working on gross and fine motor skills;
- participate in small group lessons;
- provide an incentive for pupils to meet individual goals in behaviour, social skills and academic achievement;

- providing companionship and 'mindfulness' activities to pupils in need of stress relief;

(Additional specific tasks will be identified as the dog becomes accustomed to school life.)

There is a broad range of research that supports trained dogs in educational settings. The benefits of dogs in schools include increased oxytocin (bonding) and dopamine (happiness), while lowering cortisol (stress). Benefits from working with a nurture dog include, but are not limited to, having access to a non-judgmental listener, nurturance, increased focus, confidence and decreased levels of stress and anxiety.

Our rules include, but are not limited to:

- when accessing areas within the school our dog will always be with a competent adult;
- pupils will not work with our dog alone;
- pupils who have allergies or are afraid of dogs will be identified and the school nurture dog will not interact with these pupils;
- we will be following recommended measures for clean-up and allergen exposure and reduction.

It would be helpful to know whether we have any children who are allergic to dogs' hair or who have a particular phobia concerning dogs, so consideration can be given to everyone's needs. The risk assessment will be available on our website shortly and will give you some indication of the amount of thought that has gone into this.

I would be very grateful if you could complete the slip below if your child has any relevant allergies or phobias, or if for any reason you would prefer them not to have contact with a somewhat adorable cavachon.

Yours sincerely



Janet McKinlay
Headteacher

Please respond with the following information

I would NOT like my child to have supervised sessions/access to the school nurture dog.

If you wouldn't like your child to have access to our dog, please indicate your reason/s:

Signed: Date: