

Ref:MCO/ALA/SchoolTherapyDog

12 May 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

RE School Therapy Dog

I am writing to you today to introduce to you a new member of team CoPA – Roxie.



Roxie is a 2 year old Staffordshire Bull Terrier X Dog de Bordeaux, she will form part of literacy interventions, walk talk therapy and will be working with young people who struggle to regulate their emotions and self-esteem.

There is a wealth of evidence to suggest that children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills, through contact with a suitable, calm dog.

In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with animals. By having a school dog, we want to encourage those children who are vulnerable, or those less confident. Roxie has been carefully assessed by a Dog Behavioural Therapist and is deemed suitable to work within our environment.

We have thought carefully about school life with a dog and how, through careful management and risk assessment, there is a very low risk of harm. Numerous research studies have shown the benefits of dogs in schools. Dogs have been working in schools for many years across the UK with several integrated very successfully in schools within the Trust. Dogs have been commonplace in schools in the USA and Australia for even longer.

Evidence indicates that benefits include:

- Cognitive – companionship with a dog stimulates memory, problem-solving and game-playing.
- Reading to a dog can be very beneficial as dogs give unconditional acceptance and are non-judgemental. Dogs make amazing listeners.
- Social – a dog provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, encourages responsibility, wellbeing and focused interaction with others. Attendance for some pupils has improved because of a school dog.
- Emotional – a school dog improves self-esteem, acceptance from others and lifts mood, often provoking laughter and fun. Dogs can also teach empathy, compassion and respect for other living things as well as relieving anxiety. This has been known to reduce the percentage of violent or aggressive behaviour in school.
- 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 the above benefits continuing long after the school day is over.

Roxie's vaccination record is completely up to date and she is regularly flea'd and wormed. She has been chosen for her mild temperament, friendliness and minimally moulting coat. She is a very affectionate, kind and friendly dog who has attended puppy classes on behaviour and socialisation.

Roxie will not be allowed in school if she is unwell and will be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk. She will always be under the full control and supervision of an adult and is fully trained to. Pupils at the Academy will never have sole responsibility for, or be left alone with Roxie, and will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around Roxie every time they meet her. They will remain calm, be gentle and taught how to approach her. They will not feed her and will learn about how dogs express their feelings through body language. Pupils will never clean up after the dog.

Roxie will always be on a leash when moving around the school property and will always be accompanied by an adult. She is calm, gentle and has a very loving and gentle nature. 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. However, it is understandable that some of you may be concerned about possible allergic reactions to a school dog. Roxie will be subjected to a thorough cleanliness and grooming regime. We will ask parents who are concerned to make the school aware if their child has an allergy.

Any parent who does not wish their child to interact with the school therapy dog needs to complete and return the consent form. This consent is for opting out, so it assumes that, unless you return the form, you are happy for your child to have contact with Roxie.

Yours sincerely,



Marc Comb
Deputy Principal



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A list of Directors is available for inspection at the registered office, Greenwood House, Private Road No 2,

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Please **ONLY** return this form if you **do not** wish your child to have any contact with our school therapy dog.

Roxie will not be unaccompanied with children at any time. She *may* walk around the school with Mr Comb or another adult and she *may* participate in activities with small groups of children. Roxie will not be in any whole class groups, but smaller sessions with a handful of students. If you **do not** want your child to be involved in these groups or other direct contact with Roxie, please complete and return the form to reception.

I **do not** give permission for my child (name/form) _____ to have direct contact with Roxie the school therapy dog because:

- My child is allergic to dog hair.
- My child has a phobia of dogs.
- Another reason

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Signed: _____ Parent/ Carer Date: _____



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