Lealands High School
A Specialist Sports College
Aspire Believe Achieve

Lealands High School
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Headteacher: Mr J Burridge *BA (Hons) PGCE, MA, NPQH*

10th July 2019

Dear Parents and Carers,

School Therapy Dog

I am writing to inform you that the decision to use a school therapy dog has been approved by our governors and that the dog, known as Woody, will be joining the school in the new academic year. With the support of all the school staff and governors, the primary purpose of an animal assisted intervention at Lealands is to motivate, inspire and engage pupils in learning.

Woody is a Border Terrier. We have carefully selected the breed as these dogs are of small size, have a gentle and sensitive nature but are highly intelligent making them easy to train. Another consideration was the Border Terrier coat as it is more hardy and wiry than fur which minimises issues for any allergy sufferers. Woody will be gradually introduced to the school environment from September 2019, when he will be 8 months old. Ms Buxton (Assistant SENCO) is Woody's carer and he lives at home with her. The SEN Department and the Learning Support Team will be working together to care for Woody while he is working at the school.

The intended interventions that we will pilot include the following:

- Working on social skills and building positive relationships within nurture group sessions.
- Providing a calming presence with pupils in 1:1 and small group sessions.
- Providing motivation for pupils improving in literacy.

There is a broad range of research that supports therapy 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 therapy 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. Individuals who have worked with a dog report that one of the most valued qualities is the unconditional love and attention it gives to the students with whom it interacts.

At all times our staff will implement rules that support pupils around Woody. He will only attend sessions within the SEN Department and will not be in and around the mainstream school. When Woody is not in the SEN Department, he will be in his base (Assistant SENCO's office) where he will be safe and away from the school environment. Pupils will never work alone with Woody.

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The 'School Therapy Dog Risk Assessment' is available on our website which gives full information regarding the safety of both our pupils and our school dog. If you do have any queries or would like further information, please contact me on 01582 611600.

If your child has allergies or is afraid of dogs, I would be very grateful if you could complete and return the slip below and I will ensure that your child does not come into contact with Woody.

Yours sincerely,

Ms Buxton
Assistant SENCO

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School / Therapy Dog

Name of child: ..... **Reg Group:** .....

I would **not** like my child to have supervised sessions/access to the School Dog, Woody ( )

Reason given: .....

.....

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Signed: ..... **Date:** .....
(parent/carer)

Please return this form to Ms Buxton, Lealands High School.