18th June 2020

**Important Information regarding our school dog – Teddy**

Dear Parents/Carers,

As you are aware, we have a new member of the Lostock team who joined us at the end of March. Teddy is a Cockapoo which is a cross between a Cocker Spaniel and a Poodle. The breed has been carefully selected because of its ideal temperament and because it is used widely in the field of therapy and support. Cockapoos are by nature gentle and friendly creatures. Teddy has a curly, very low shedding coat which makes him much less likely to affect those with allergies (please specify if your child is allergic to dogs in the comment section of the permission slip below).

Over the last few months, we have undertaken a significant amount of research and are aware of many benefits to having a school dog, including:

* a calming effect on pupils, particularly those with behavioural or learning difficulties;
* improved behaviour, reduced stress and improved self-esteem;
* fostering a sense of responsibility;
* encouraging respect and thereby improving pupils’ relationships;
* teaching children to nurture and respect life;
* helping children build confidence in reading.

Teddy will undergo training in preparation for coming into school. While Teddy’s main place of residence will be in the school office, which is secure and separate from the classrooms, children will be able to interact with him under strict supervision at certain times of the week as long as parental permission has been given. Please understand that we will do everything we can to reassure children who are fearful of dogs and that under no circumstances will they be forced to interact with Teddy if they do not wish to. Whilst moving around the school, Teddy will be kept on a short lead and will always be with an adult.

Attached to this letter are a series of frequently asked questions which I hope will answer any questions or queries you may have, but if you have any further questions please do not hesitate to get in contact. We hope that the children at Lostock will gain a great deal of enjoyment from having Teddy in school and that he will very quickly become an established part of life at Lostock.

Yours sincerely,

Miss Beattie

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q. Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?**

A. The Legal owner of the dog will be Miss Beattie who will care for the dog out of school hours and will bear the costs associated with it. She will also be responsible for his training, with support from a professional trainer.

**Q. Will the dog be a distraction?**

A. Teddy will be kept in the office area which is separate from the classrooms to ensure that he only comes into contact with the children at appropriate times throughout the day. A careful timetable will be put together to ensure Teddy spends time in each class.

**Q. Has a risk assessment been undertaken?**

A. Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and have sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog.

**Q. How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?**

A. In the interest of health and safety, Teddy will be toileted in an area of the school site where the children have no access. Thus there will be no chance of the children coming into contact with faeces. While he is in training, any accidents that happen will be cleaned immediately and in an appropriate and hygienic way. All children in close vicinity to the dog will be removed while thorough cleaning takes place.

**Q. How will Teddy’s welfare be considered?**

A. Teddy will be exercised/walked throughout the day. He will be timetabled to join children in their classrooms, however he will be kept in the Office where he will have his own quiet, safe space to sleep and relax. He will always have access to food and water.

**Q. My child has allergies; how will this be managed?**

A. Teddy is a Cockapoo which is a cross between a Cocker Spaniel and a Poodle. This breed of dog has been carefully selected due to its hypoallergenic properties, however, children will not need to touch the dog which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions however small they may be. We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for children and adults that are allergic to dogs. Individual needs will always be met and we are happy to put additional control measures in place (please specify if your child is allergic to dogs in the comment section of the permission slip below).

**Q. My child is frightened of dogs; how will this be managed?**

A. Interaction with Teddy will be carefully managed and supervised. Children do not need to have close contact with him unless they wish to and permission for this has been given. We hope to work closely with children who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.