

 St Levan Primary School

 where all children SHINE…for life

The Bottoms, St. Levan, Penzance, Cornwall, TR19 6HD

Tel: 01736 810486

Monday 4th February 2019

Dear Parents/Carers

We are writing to let you know of some exciting news for St Levan Primary School; that we have decided to take on a school therapy dog. This decision has been made following extensive research, discussion with other schools that have a School Dog and approval of the Governing Body. A full risk/benefit assessment has been completed which will be available on our website as part of our new Biolphilia Policy, which details our aims to use nature to enhance learning and wellbeing.

There has been much research on the benefits of pets in education, particularly the use of therapy dogs. Dogs are increasingly being used in schools with great success and some of you may have seen in the media that they are now being used in some hospitals as the emotional health benefits they bring are just so vast. In an assembly we will discuss with the children the rules and expectations about having a school dog but we will also talk about many of the benefits too.

These benefits include :-

* a calming effect on pupils;
* improved behaviour and concentration, reduced stress and improved self-esteem;
* encouraging expression, participation and confidence for all children;
* fostering a sense of responsibility;
* motivating pupils to think and to learn, as most children have a high level of natural interest in, enthusiasm for and enjoyment of animals;
* encouraging respect and thereby improving pupils’ relationships with each other, parents and teachers;
* teaching children to nurture and respect life;
* helping work undertaken with the most vulnerable children;
* helping children build confidence in reading;
* improving attendance;
* further promote our ‘Well Being’ agenda for pupils.

Our school therapy dog is Pippin, who is a 2 year old Cockapoo and belongs to Miss Finch, and regularly goes to the vet for yearly vaccinations, flea and worm treatments. Cockapoos are a breed of dog that are known for their mild temperament and has a hypo-allergenic coat. Pippin is registered with the charity ‘Pets as Therapy’, and, in order to achieve this, has been temperament tested by a registered veterinarian.

Pippin will be based in Class Two and the children will only be able to interact with him under strict supervision and as long as parental permission has been given. He will initially be in school one day every week. When he is moving around the school he will be on a lead and always with an adult, in class he will be off the lead and will have a dedicated area for when he is not working, away from the children. When he is working, Pippin will be fully supervised by an adult and we hope he will be able to support children in school in areas such as Forest School, reading, nurture groups, and with attendance. With parental permission, over a period of time, children who are fearful of dogs can be supported in approaching, handling and in gaining confidence in managing their fear. We hope the children will gain a lot of enjoyment from having a school dog but if you have any individual questions or queries, please do not hesitate to speak to Miss Carter or Miss Finch.

Please complete and return the attached slip by Friday 8th February. It is planned that Pippin will begin to visit school after half-term.

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Carter Sharon Brolly

Headteacher Chair of Governors

**Letter of consent regarding School Therapy Dog**

Please find attached Appendix 2 from the Biophilia policy which covers frequently asked questions about a school dog. Having read this please complete and return this form by **Friday 8th February**.

Name of child/ren

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Please tick as appropriate:

* I am happy for my child to be involved with all aspects of caring for the school dog, including supervised walks.
* My child is fearful of dogs, but in time, I would like them to work with the dog to develop their confidence with and understanding dogs.
* I would like to discuss my child’s needs.

Signed **…………………………………………………………………**..Parent/Carer

Name **………………………………………………………**Date**………………………**