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Executive Headteacher (Thrive Trust): Mr P Cavanagh
Head of School: Mr C Leng
Deputy Headteachers: Mrs C Grandidge, Mrs L Piercy, and Mr J Shaw

Wednesday 13th July 2022

Re: Parental Consultation – School Wellbeing Dog

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are delighted to let you know that we are in the process of looking to introduce a new member to the Kelvin Hall School team. This new member of staff would become an integral part of our school community, and we cannot wait for your children to meet her: Lizzie, a school wellbeing dog.

Lizzie is currently 4 weeks old, and is still being taken care of by her Mum, Maggie. Maggie is a small black Labrador and she works as a therapy dog for the Humberside Police department. There, she regularly visits police stations with her owner, a Police Officer who has a great deal of experience training therapy dogs. Lizzie's Dad is a poodle who lives on a farm. He is very good with other animals, as well as with children.

Lizzie has been selected because of the calm and friendly nature of her parents, and her siblings from a previous litter. She will grow up to be of small size, and we believe this will make her less intimidating and more welcoming than larger animals. Lizzie is an F1 miniature Labradoodle. This means that she will not moult, and her coat is hypoallergenic.

We are most confident that with such qualities, Lizzie will make an excellent wellbeing dog. She will be owned by my family and me, and we will work together with her to ensure that she receives the training, care, and love she'll need to flourish as a pet, and as a working dog.

I would like to now take the time to present to you our thought process, which led to this decision that we, the Kelvin Hall team, believe will have a tremendously positive impact on school life.

Over the past few years, we have become aware of a number of schools nearby who have successfully introduced a school wellbeing dog:

- Chiltern Primary School in Hull
- Cottingham High School
- Roos C of E Primary School in Roos

After meeting with Marlowe, staff, and students at Cottingham High School, I have been so impressed by the positive impact that Marlowe has had on the students', staff and whole school community. This experience reinforced our conviction that Lizzie would make a formidable addition to Kelvin Hall.

My team and I have also been reading a great variety of newspaper and blog articles from education professionals relating their own experiences with welcoming a school dog in their community.

The [following article](#) from the BBC tells of Jade, a cavalier King Charles who sits with pupils during lessons at Burry Port Community School in Wales, helping pupils build confidence and self-esteem.

This [blog](#) from the SENAD Group relates a personal experience from Mrs Forsyth, Headteacher of Alderwasley Hall School and Sixth Form in the Peak District. There, she describes and testifies to the overwhelmingly positive impact that Bramble, the school cockapoo, has had on pupils' wellbeing, by reducing or easing anxiety when in school.

This [thesis](#) by Hazel Davison for her professional Doctorate in Educational Psychology at the University of East London, concludes that a "significant positive impact on children's reading age scores" and "benefits to their emotional attitudes towards reading" was observed in schools participating in their the Reading to Dogs programme.



My last example will be this [blog](#) posted on Worth It, a website dedicated to preventing mental health problems in children and young people. Laura Sweetman is one of the Pastoral Leaders at Tudor Grange, a big comprehensive school in Solihull. Laura relates her past experience with a wellbeing dog based in a college, and her new experience with Blue, Tudor Grange's wellbeing dog.

I believe that the value of these articles and blogs lies in the observations that education professionals have been able to see first-hand in a school setting. All of these unanimously agree on the positive influence that a wellbeing dog has had on pupils, be it by helping with reading skills or with a variety of mental health difficulties. It is with this in mind that we are introducing Lizzie to our pupils.

Having Lizzie as a puppy will make training her easier, and we will be working from an early age to eliminate any undesirable habits that may be difficult to change, as an older dog might. It will also be important for Lizzie's welfare, as she will be introduced early to a school atmosphere.

If students, parents, carers, governors, and staff are in favour of introducing Lizzie as Kelvin Hall's wellbeing dog, she will undertake puppy training classes outside of school and will also be working with a dog trainer to support her transition to school. She will visit as a puppy to acclimatise to the school building, smells, and noises, and she will then be gradually introduced to pupils when we feel that she is ready. A full risk assessment will be in place that will be quality-assured by our Health and Safety Advisor at Thrive Trust.

When Lizzie has completed her training, she will take a more active role in school life. She will be working with Mrs Counter and Miss Dunn, our Wellbeing team, to assist students who are suffering with anxiety, panic attacks, and stress. Lizzie will also help with promoting positive interactions with individuals for emotional regulation and support. I would like to underline that, whilst Lizzie will be helping pupils with their mental health and wellbeing, her own wellbeing will be considered first and foremost, and she will be removed from any situation we feel would be detrimental to pupils or Lizzie herself.

Lizzie will always be supervised by a trained member of staff and I would like to reassure you that the welfare of the students and the dog is of the utmost importance, and as such, our risk assessment will identify key measures and procedures to ensure both. This will include ensuring that Lizzie has appropriate areas to rest, feed, and toilet away from students.

We understand that you may have some reservations around your child coming into contact with a dog in school. Below are some questions and concerns you may have.

1. My child is allergic to dogs.

Labradoodles are a recognised breed with a hypoallergenic coat. Labradoodles do not shed hair which significantly reduces risks of an allergic reaction due to stray dog hair. Furthermore, Lizzie will follow a very thorough cleanliness and grooming routine. Students will need to wash their hands before and after coming into contact with her. The areas where she will be based will be cleaned on a daily basis. It is essential to us that you make us aware of allergies that your child may have and to that effect, you will find a Google Form at the end of this letter for you to fill out with all necessary details.

2. Will the dog be properly cared for?

Lizzie will be extremely well looked-after. She will live at home, with my family and me. When she eventually comes into school, she will be based in my office or Mrs Counter's, our Designated Wellbeing Lead. She will undergo rigorous training and will follow a carefully planned induction programme to school. Measures will be put into place to ensure her and the pupils' safety. Lizzie will be fully insured, groomed every six weeks, and will have regular visits to the vets where she will be kept up to date with vaccinations, worming, and flea treatments.

3. My child is scared of dogs. How will this be handled in school?

We understand that some pupils may have had upsetting experiences involving dogs or other animals. As such, Lizzie will only be in direct contact with students who feel comfortable to do so, and for whom we have received parental consent. Pupils will be



made aware of where the dog is, and when she will visit. Moreover, labradoodles are, as a breed, renowned to be calm and gentle. We believe that this could support pupils with a phobia, to work towards overcoming their fears, should they wish to. You will find a Google Form at the end of this letter through which you can let us know if your child has a phobia of dogs.

4. How will hygiene be managed?

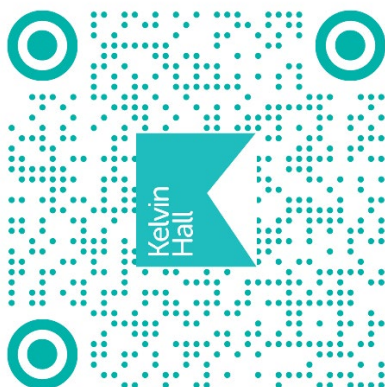
A thorough risk assessment is currently being devised, and will entail all hygienic practices that will be put in place. This will be shared with you at a later date, once completed, checked, and approved by the relevant authorities.

As this project continues to develop, we will be able to send out more information, including our school dog risk assessment and policy, if we go ahead with introducing Lizzie to Kelvin Hall.

We are writing to you today as part of a consultation process to see how parents feel about this proposal. We would appreciate it if as many parents as possible could complete the school wellbeing dog consultation. This will only take a few minutes and is essential for us to gather as much information as possible. The Google Form will remain accessible until Wednesday 20th July 2022, end of day, at which time we will close it and no longer accept responses.

Google Form: <https://forms.gle/R1jG871MuMkhQZZF9>

You can also scan the QR code below to access the Google Form:



Thank you for taking the time to complete the above questionnaire.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs C Grandidge
Deputy Headteacher

