

March 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

### MOLLY – OUR SCHOOL WELLBEING DOG

I can't believe that I wrote to you in June/July telling you all about Molly – our school 'Well Being Dog.' Molly is now 10 months old, and is learning very fast! We have decided to have a school wellbeing dog, along with other schools in the area as part of the ongoing provision for wellbeing and mental health. Molly was born on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2020 in Brecon, Wales. Her mum and dad are both Kennel Club registered and Molly's Kennel Club name is 'Lady Brecon of Kinver.'



Molly, our school dog, will live with me (Mrs Garratt) and come in to school 2 to 3 days a week to be alongside the children and provide 'Walk & Talk' time with classes in The Wyre Forest as well as the benefits listed below. Many of you know that my old greyhound (aged 13) died February 2019. He visited Woodlands to do 'kind hands' work and when he was younger came with me to my last school. I am therefore experienced with sight hounds and several special schools I have contacted have chosen Whippets as their wellbeing dog. There are many benefits of having a school dog, as detailed below:

- 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;
- Developing an 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;
- Helping overcome a fear of dogs – if this is the case let the class team know and we can build this up slowly;
- Increasing staff morale and wellbeing;
- Developing the understanding of unconditional love;
- Supporting with the development of cooperative play;
- Supporting children to develop empathy;
- Further promote our wellbeing agenda for pupils.

Following the disruption to many of us, a wellbeing dog is an added intervention for us.

### 'Walk & Talk' time

We are offering some classes the opportunity to spend some time in The Wyre Forest, going for a walk with Molly (and me). The benefits of being in nature are overwhelming and being able to walk and talk (especially with a dog) is becoming a really good way of destressing, reducing social anxiety and improving well-being. It's also good exercise and fun! After being in lockdown for so long we feel it's important to get children physical and out in nature. I am also looking forward to spending more time with classes. As soon as we can we will be out and about. Russell House will also be having weekly 'walk & talk' time with Molly.

### How has the school planned for this?

- Rigorous research has been carried out to ensure that we have selected the most suitable breed of dog for our school, pupils and staff;
- Prior to purchasing the puppy, Mrs Garratt visited the home of the breeder to ensure that the puppy's temperament, and that of its parents, is suitable for interaction with children;
- A full risk assessment and policy has been written and will be available on the school website;
- All contact will be carefully planned and children will not be left unsupervised with the dog;
- When not working, the dog will be based in Mrs Garratt's office.

### What about allergies?

- Our dog is a Whippet and has low shedding qualities;
- All areas of the school are vacuumed and surfaces are wiped down daily;
- Movement around the school will be controlled;
- Any child working with the dog will wash their hands.

### How can I find out more information?

- We aim to put a regular spot on our newsletter to keep parents and children up to date on the progress of the school dog.

I know there will be lots of parents and carers who support the new addition to our school, however, if there are any further questions, please email me. We have had therapy dogs in school before and they have proved very popular but they are not always there when a child really needs it.

Any parent or carer who does not wish their child to interact with the dog, please email [office@wfs.worcs.sch.uk](mailto:office@wfs.worcs.sch.uk) or give school a ring 01562 827785.

Yours sincerely



**Mrs Rebecca Garratt**  
Headteacher