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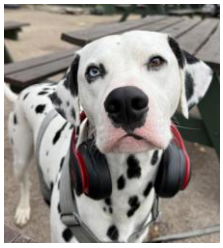
Working together for excellence

Dear Parents/Guardians,

We are delighted to share an update regarding our plans to introduce a Therapy Dog to the Marlwood school community.

Following my communication last summer about Cookie, our proposed School Therapy Dog, we have had to make some unforeseen changes to our plans. However, I would like to reassure you that, as a school, we remain fully committed to introducing a Therapy Dog and the many benefits this can bring to our students.

We are therefore very pleased to introduce Bluey!



Bluey is a two-year-old Dalmatian who will soon begin visiting Marlwood to familiarise himself with our school environment, staff and students. This will be an important first step before he begins his initial training with **PAWS Therapy Dog Training**, the UK's leading Therapy Dog training provider.

We have chosen to work with PAWS because of their expertise in training dogs to support children and young people, with certified PAWS Therapy Dogs making a positive difference in educational settings, as well as within the NHS and police force.

Therapy Dogs can offer a range of benefits to young people, including emotional support, companionship and opportunities to reduce stress and anxiety. They can also help to develop empathy, confidence and a sense of responsibility. We are excited about the positive contribution Bluey may make to the well-being, engagement and learning experiences of our school community.

As Bluey begins to familiarise himself with Marlwood, his welfare and the safety and comfort of our students and staff will remain central to our approach. We will continue to work with PAWS to ensure that the appropriate training and arrangements are in place as we progress with this exciting initiative.

Permission forms

If you completed the Therapy Dog Consent Form last summer and your permissions have not changed, there is no need to complete the form again.

However, if your permissions have changed, or you did not complete the form last summer, please take a few moments to complete it using the link below:

Therapy Dog Consent Form

We have also included PAWS' *Guidelines for School Therapy Dogs*, which provides further information about how a Therapy Dog will be managed within school and the measures we will take to support the safety and comfort of everyone in our community.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you for your continued support as we take this next step. We look forward to welcoming Bluey to Marlwood and sharing his journey with you as he begins to settle into school life.

Yours sincerely,

Yours sincerely,



Helen Simmons
Headteacher

PAWS Guidelines For School Therapy Dogs

Please take a moment to read this carefully; there may be some actions you need to take if they apply to your child.

Safety Around the School Therapy Dog:

- A comprehensive risk assessment will be undertaken and available on the school website.
- The dog will always be on a lead and accompanied by a member of the designated handling team when outside the school office.
- When in the school office, the dog will be supervised by one of the handling teams or safely secured in their crate.
- Children will only have supervised contact with the dog under the guidance of one of the handling teams.
- To ensure safety, workshops and assemblies will teach students and staff how to behave appropriately and safely around the dog.

For Individuals with Allergies:

- Parents, care-givers, and staff are responsible for notifying the school office of an allergy to dogs. Access to the dog may be restricted, depending on the individual's allergic triggers.
- All individuals with known allergies will be logged to ensure their safety.
- On the rare occasion that an allergic reaction does not subside, medical attention will be sought.
- The therapy dog will be regularly groomed and bathed to minimise hair.
- To further reduce the risk of allergic reactions, the dog will not consume any food known to trigger allergies 48 hours before attending the school site.

For Individuals with a Fear of Dogs:

- Parents, care-givers, and staff are responsible for notifying the school office of any student with a phobia or fear of dogs.
- Familiarisation sessions will be held for any young people (upon request) that have a fear of dogs to help build confidence and comfortability around the dog.

- While the presence of a dog will not be entirely removed due to phobias, every effort will be made to separate the dog from young people or staff with phobias.
- A whole-school log of individuals with phobias or anxieties around dogs will be maintained to help plan effectively.
- Clear safety boundaries will be outlined through assemblies and a dedicated display board.
- Signs will be displayed in reception areas and on doors to inform everyone, including visitors, when and where the dog is present.
- Plans will be created to support those with phobias to ensure their comfort and wellbeing.

Health and Wellbeing of the Dog:

- The dog will receive all necessary vaccinations, grooming, and medical care to maintain their health and wellbeing.
- Medical issues will be addressed immediately, and the dog will be covered by pet insurance. If the dog becomes unwell, it will stay at home until it is fit to return to school.

Hygiene Protocols:

- A designated toilet area, away from areas used by students, will be used during the dog's training and attendance on site.
- Any accidents will be cleaned immediately by a staff member using appropriate cleaning materials.
- Children will be taught the importance of washing their hands after any contact with the dog.

Thank you for taking the time to review these important guidelines.

The school is committed to ensuring that every student can benefit from this wonderful new resource while maintaining a safe, inclusive and positive environment for all.

Your cooperation and support will make a significant difference in our school community.