



School Lane, Yateley, Hampshire, GU46 6NN
Executive Headteacher: Miss J Redman

Dear Parents,

Of course, you are aware that as a federation community, we experienced a devastating loss in January with the passing of our much-loved school dog, Dexter. He was a very special part of Westfields who brought great, joy and learning opportunities to our children. We know that many of you, along with staff and pupils, will hold very fond memories of the difference he made to our schools.

Just as we highlighted when Dexter was introduced to the wonderful world of Westfields, you may also be aware that there is a growing movement in many schools to introduce school dogs as a way of teaching responsibility and providing a source of pleasure and learning. At Westfields, we have already seen the positive impact of such initiatives as we know they can provide calm, comfort and emotional support. There is strong evidence that children, particularly those who find managing emotions challenging, can benefit greatly from time spent with a well-trained dog. With these considerations in mind, and after careful reflection and consideration of community feedback and the undoubted impact Dexter had, the governors have agreed that we will welcome a new school dog. This decision has been made thoughtfully, recognising both the legacy of Dexter and the continued benefits that a school dog can bring to our community.

We have researched best practice, spoken to other schools and considered how we can introduce a new dog in a way that is respectful, gradual and centred on the needs of our pupils. From after half term, a havanese puppy (a hypoallergenic breed) will begin to be introduced. His home will be in the school offices. He will attend puppy training and, as he matures, we will work towards therapy dog training. As before, we will take a very gradual approach to introducing him to the children, ensuring that they learn again how to behave around and care for a dog in a safe and respectful way. We have carefully considered all practicalities, including risk assessments, insurance, training, toileting arrangements and allergies. We are very mindful that introducing a dog to a school setting should not be a distraction to the children's learning and that it should enhance our school ethos and the experiences we offer, therefore the children will mainly have opportunities to see him during break and lunchtimes.



We have shared this news with the children in assembly, acknowledging our previous dog and explaining how this new addition will continue that legacy in a new and different way. Our aim is that children across both schools will, over time, have the opportunity to get to know and spend time with our new dog. However, this will be a gradual process. We will also involve the children in suggesting a name; suggestion boxes will be available in Reception at both WIS and WJS.

Although we have previous documentation we would be grateful if you could update us if any children have allergies to dogs or specific phobias. Interaction with the school dog will always be entirely optional. If your child does not wish to spend time with the dog, they will not be required to do so. The dog will always be on a lead with a staff member. Please only complete and return the attached form to school by **Monday 1st June** if any of the statements apply to your child.

We look forward to welcoming this new member to our Westfields community, while continuing to cherish the important place Dexter holds in our hearts. As always, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Thank you for your continued support.

Kind regards,

Miss Jo Redman
Executive Headteacher



Westfields Federation Dog

Name of Child: _____ Class _____

Please tick the appropriate statement and **ONLY return if applicable:**

My child is allergic to dogs and I would prefer them not to be in contact with the school dog.

My child is allergic to dogs, I am happy for them to be in the same room but not touch the dog.

My child has a fear of dogs and I would prefer them not to meet the dog.

My child has a fear of dogs and I would like them to slowly be introduced to the dog in time to overcome their fear.

Signed: Date: