

Westfields Infant School

School Lane, Yateley, Hampshire, GU46 6NN



Telephone: 01252 873603

Executive Headteacher: Miss Jo Redman

Website: www.westfields-inf.co.uk

Dear Parents,

You may be aware that there is a growing movement in many schools (not least Westfields Junior School) to introduce the concept of school pets as a way of teaching all children responsibility and providing a source of pleasure and learning. Of particular interest is the move towards 'Reading Dogs' and 'Therapy Dogs'. The former is based on research which shows that many children who find reading practice difficult are more willing and able to read to the audience of an animal than they are to a human! Therapy dogs are similarly being used as a source of comfort and relaxation for children and adults who may need 'someone to talk to', or just someone who will accept them and offer comfort or a calming influence in their lives. There is much evidence that children who struggle with managing their own emotions also gain a great deal from spending time with a pet. Since the introduction of Dexter at the Junior School, we have experienced these benefits for ourselves and also discovered that there are additional benefits for staff and parents too! One specific highlight is Dexter's Monthly News which is enjoyed by the children (staff and parents!) and his latest one is also attached for your information.



Since my appointment, many parents of siblings across the schools have asked if the children at the Infant School will benefit from Dexter and as this will be the case, I wanted to write to inform parents as soon as possible. For those of you who have not met Dexter already, he is a miniature, short-haired dachshund who is now 3 years old and has spent much of his time (from being 9 weeks old!) in school. As a result of this, he already has an extensive fan club at the Junior School and with the infant siblings who regularly pop by when we have been on early morning duty.

Over the Easter holidays, as I have moved into my office, Dexter has also begun to make himself at home! Of course his introduction to our children and staff will be gradual and obviously although tried and tested at the Junior school, it has been necessary to consider the practicalities, from risk assessments and insurance to ongoing training, toileting and allergies. Of course I will officially introduce Dexter (and his safety guidelines!) to all of the children and his home will be my office on the days he is in school. It will be our aim that children (who wish to!) across the school will have the opportunity to get to know and spend time with Dexter. In anticipation of this, it would be helpful to know whether we have any children who have allergies to dog hair or who have a particular phobia concerning dogs. Your children's interaction with our school dog will be **entirely optional**. If your child does not want to spend any time with Dexter, he or she will not have to. I can assure you that he will not be around the school off the lead and will only have access to restricted areas.

We are very mindful that introducing a dog to a new 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 have opportunities to see him during break and lunchtimes and not during learning time.

Please only complete and return the attached form to school by Thursday 20th April if any of the statements apply to your child. We are looking forward to sharing the benefits of Dexter but please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any specific questions.

Thank you for your support.

Kind regards,

Miss Jo Redman
Executive Headteacher

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

Name of Parent: