HOBLETTS MANOR JUNIOR SCHOOL
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Dear Parents and Carers

We are excited to announce a wonderful new addition to our school community, - Monty Smith (who will become our School Therapy Dog).

We are proud to be introducing Monty who will become our school Therapy Dog with the expert support of PAWS Therapy Dog Training, the UK's leading Therapy Dog training provider.

PAWS Therapy Dogs have worked with hundreds of educational establishments around the UK, as well as within the NHS and police force, we chose PAWS due to their specialism and successfully training dogs to support children and young people.

You may already be aware that Therapy Dogs have been proven to enhance the well-being of children by providing emotional support and reducing stress and anxiety, as well as teaching important skills such as empathy and responsibility. And excitingly, PAWS Therapy Dogs have an incredible track record of boosting academic progress, improving attendance and motivation for learning!

Monty is a **Cocker Spaniel**,and is currently working through professional training with PAWS and our designated school handlers, to ensure his readiness for this important role.

Alongside Monty, the following staff are undertaking the learning and assessment so that they can be best equipped to support Monty's training and advocate for their welfare:

- Kelly Smith, Sally Short and Claire Short

We have not shared this as of yet with your children in order to provide you with the opportunity to do so first.

Attached, to this letter please find the PAWS' 'Guidelines For School Therapy Dogs', which includes key details about how Monty will be managed in school and how we will ensure the safety and comfort of all children and staff. We hope you find this information useful however if you have any further questions that are not addressed, please contact us directly.

We are confident that the introduction of a Therapy Dog will bring numerous benefits to our school community, from providing comfort and companionship through to fostering emotional growth and learning, further enhancing our core offer.

In preparation for Monty starting with us, I will be leading an assembly to talk to the children about this initiative in two weeks time, which will be followed by an assembly with Animal Aid who will talk to the children about pet care before Monty's visits start with us in October

We look forward to sharing the positive outcomes of having Monty in school and hope you will follow us along the journey!

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Short
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.