



We are very excited to introduce you to a new member of our team who we will be welcoming to Leftwich Community Primary School.

Elsie was born on 4th October 2018. She is a miniature golden doodle who is in training to become a school dog and is set to become an integral part of our school community. She will shortly be beginning her first set of puppy classes and individual training.

Below we have set out the benefits of a school dog, and tried to address concerns you may have.

What are the benefits of having a school dog?

Numerous research studies have shown the benefits of therapy dogs in schools. Therapy dogs have been working in schools for the past 5 years across the UK. However, they have been commonplace in schools in the USA and Australia for many years.

Evidence indicates that benefits include:

- Cognitive – companionship with a dog stimulates memory, problem-solving and game-playing
- Social – a dog provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, encourages responsibility, wellbeing and focused interaction with others
- Emotional – a school dog improves self-esteem, acceptance from others and lifts mood, often provoking laughter and fun. Dogs can also teach compassion and respect for other living things as well as relieving anxiety.
- Physical – interaction with a furry friend reduces blood pressure, provides tactile stimulation, assists with pain management, gives motivation to move, walk and stimulates the senses
- Environmental – a dog in a school increases the sense of a family environment, with all of the above benefits continuing long after the school day is over.

Reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop literacy skills and build confidence, through both the calming effect the dog's presence has on children as well as the fact that a dog will listen to children read without being judgemental or critical. This comforting environment helps to nurture children's enthusiasm for reading and provides them with the confidence to read aloud.

Some concerns you might have

My child is allergic to dogs

It is understandable that some of you may be concerned about possible allergic reactions to a school dog. Elsie is a golden doodle. These dogs were bred specifically for people with

allergies who required a working dog, for example people who were sight or hearing impaired. This type of dog doesn't shed fur, additionally Elsie will be subjected to the most thorough cleanliness and grooming regime. Your permission will of course be sought in advance of Elsie having access to, and working with, your child in school.

Will Elsie be properly cared for?

Elsie will be extremely well looked after. She will live with Mrs Guy and her family and will come to school most days but will stay safely in the offices until satisfactory training has been completed. She will then, in time, work with small groups or on a one to one basis, but will always be accompanied by a trained adult. She will undergo thorough and rigorous training (beginning with puppy classes) so will be extremely well-behaved.

Whilst Elsie is in school she will have access to a dog crate in the offices where she can 'chill out' during the day! This is where she will spend most of her time initially. Elsie will visit the vet regularly for all her injections as well as regular check-ups.

If Elsie is unwell for any reason she will stay at home with a babysitter!

My child is scared of dogs

Some children may have had upsetting experiences and thus have a fear of dogs (or another animal). Elsie will only be in contact with children whose parents have given their permission. However, Elsie's training will help her to be calm and gentle around children; she is already showing signs of a very loving and gentle nature. Experience and research have shown that, with proper guidance and handling, children can learn to overcome their fear of animals and grow in respect and appreciation for them.

The school has a 'no dogs' policy

Our school does have a 'no dogs' policy, however because Elsie is training to be a school dog different rules apply. Initially she will be on a leash at all times when moving around the school property and will always be accompanied by a trained adult. Elsie will also be fully insured to carry out his role thus allowing her to be on the school site.

We hope you will join us in welcoming Elsie to the Leftwich family and embrace all that she has to offer the school. More information about her progress will be in future newsletters. If you do not wish for your child to have direct contact with Elsie please contact the school office.

With best wishes,

Mrs Guy and Mrs Harrison
Head teachers

Love from Elsie

