



POUND HILL JUNIOR SCHOOL

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Dear Parents,

As you are all aware, we are proud of building a strong sense of community and belonging at Pound Hill Junior School. Over the last few weeks we have been considering and evaluating an opportunity we have had to have a specially trained school dog; this is known as "Animal Assisted Activities". As part of this work, we have talked to primary and secondary schools that already have a school dog, to evaluate and plan for this in the best possible way.



The research is very compelling and has shown that there are distinctive benefits for the whole school community if this is structured in the right way. After her assessment we now know that Poppy is an appropriate dog for us and we are planning to gradually introduce the dog to working at Pound Hill Junior School from the summer term onwards. The three primary areas of benefit for this will be pastoral, learning support and reward. We see enormous benefits that caring for animals will bring to our students. We are also aware of Health and Safety planning and have developed a robust risk assessment and routines to keep all members of our community safe and to ensure the dog is happy and secure.

Of course, we have ensured the safety of students as a key priority. The dog selected is a Labrador retriever, who will be fully trained and used to children. We will be working very closely with Michelle Garvey from **Essentially Paws**. Michelle is a qualified trainer and has done extensive work with other local schools in training their school dog as well as training other therapy, medical and assistance dogs. We are very grateful for her support, wisdom and expertise.

I appreciate that there may be some students, parents and staff who do not wish, or are not able to be involved with our school dog. If, for any reason, you wish to ensure this is the case, please contact the school office to let them know. We will then collate a list to ensure that we are all aware of who has opted out.

Proposed benefits will include:

- Learning, including reading and literacy.
- Self-esteem and interest for all students, especially for some of our most vulnerable groups.
- Anger management.
- Bereavement.
- Developing responsibility.
- Reducing stress.
- Love and support for groups of students.
- Knowledge and understanding of animals.
- A feel and sense of community.
- Some curriculum involvement and benefits.

Answers to genuine concerns:

- The school dog will be professionally trained prior to fully working in the school and this training will continue with staff and students at Pound Hill Junior School in the future.
- Students will not be left unsupervised with the dog and there will always be adult supervision from staff who are experienced with dogs.
- No child, or adult, will need to come into contact with the dog unless they want to.
- The dog will be fully insured in and out of school.
- The temperament of the dog has been assessed by a vet and a trainer to identify her suitability to work in a school.
- There is a signposted and fenced off area for dog toileting
- Hand cleansing facilities are available after contact with the dog
- The dog will not be left at school overnight and will be assured of a loving home after the "day job" is over!

We believe that through visiting schools who already have a school dog and having researched this project fully, having a school dog with us at Pound Hill will provide significant benefits. We are looking forward to gradually introducing Poppy, our school dog, to our school.

If you would like any further details please do not hesitate to contact us. We will keep you up to date with progress and hope you will get the chance to meet Poppy at Pound Hill in the future.