

Why have a school therapy dog?

There have been many research studies undertaken to evaluate the benefits of animals in schools and in particular the contribution of therapy dogs. Evidence has shown that therapy dogs can enhance children's psychological development, improve social skills, and increase self-esteem among other benefits. Dogs can also teach responsibility, compassion, and respect for other living things. Dogs in the classroom can be used to calm fears, relieve anxiety, and teach skills. Here are some of the benefits:

- **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
- **Social** – a visit with a dog provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, promotes greater self-esteem and well-being, and focused interaction with others
- **Cognitive** – companionship with a dog stimulates memory, problem solving and game playing
- **Emotional** – an adorable four-legged visitor improves self-esteem, acceptance from others, and lifts mood often provoking laughter
- **Environmental** – a dog in a facility decreases the feeling of a sterile environment, lifts mood and this continues after visit

Therapy dogs properly managed in the school setting can not only make a measurable difference in terms of gaining various skills relational development. School counsellors

are finding that the presence of a therapy dog such as reading enhancement, but also in contributing critically to emotional and can decrease anxiety and enable students to work through issues such as anger management, bullying tendencies and other social challenges.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Legal liability** The school has informed their insurers that there will be a therapy dog within school so that our insurance includes this aspect of need.
- **Allergic reactions** Understandably, families may be concerned about potential allergic reactions to dogs within the school environment. Australian Labradoodles are a breed specifically used because they do not moult and are hypoallergenic. Families are asked to let school know if there are allergy concerns. Children who handle the dog will be asked to use hand sanitiser or wash their hands after this contact. The dog will be regularly groomed off site. Children and adults will choose whether they wish to interact with Daisy.
- **Animal Welfare** Daisy will have regular veterinarian checks. Ability Dogs for Young People, an island based charity who regularly place therapy dogs with families have assisted in the selection of Daisy and maintain the training and support of Daisy. This provides support for the school and the experience and understanding of what the needs of Daisy are as well as the children.

Staff in school are trained to watch for potential harm to either a child or Daisy and are primarily responsible to manage Daisy when on site.

- **Fear of dogs** There is no doubt that some children and adults have had very traumatic experiences with animals and thus have a severe fear of contact with a dog for example. The therapy dog is implemented by permission or voluntarily, and only in areas where unwanted contact with a dog can be avoided so that the fear issue can be minimised. Experience and research has also shown that with proper guidance and handling, children and adults can learn to overcome their fear of animals and with it, grow a respect and appreciation of them. Families should let school know if your child is frightened of dogs. We will work with the child to support this need.

Interacting with Daisy

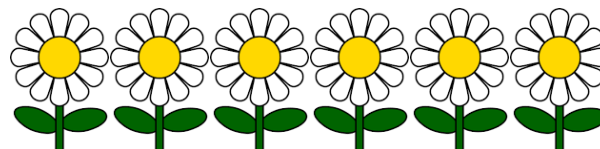
- We are calm in our approach asking to say hello to Daisy through the grown up with Daisy.
- We are gentle with our hands
- We read to Daisy who especially likes stories that we have written ourselves.
- If we are sad we can ask to speak to our Daisy about it.
- Daisy will always be on the lead and with a grown up.
- We do not need to touch or talk to Daisy unless we want to.

The school believes having a Therapy Dog is invaluable to the Lanesend community. To have a dog does bring expenses with the benefits. We will be fundraising to help with the costs, if you or your workplace could help with sponsorship please contact Carrie Almond, Finance Manager via email carrie.almond@lanesendpri.iow.sch.uk

The following charity has helped support Daisy being in school. The school community is exceptionally grateful for this support without which we would not be able to have Daisy in our school.

Ability Dogs for Young People - This wonderful charity has guided and advised the selection of the puppy and the ongoing training support for the puppy. The school will reciprocate and raise funds for the Charity.

Medina Veterinary Group are very kindly sponsoring all of Daisy's Healthy Pet Club vaccinations for the first year.



Lanesend Primary School

welcomes

Daisy

Our Pets as Therapy Dog

Daisy is an Australian labradoodle puppy. She is a hypo-allergenic dog and her breed is specifically bred in Australia to support visually impaired people. They are very intelligent dogs that are very kind and gentle.

This leaflet aims to answer any questions and concerns you have regarding Daisy's placement with us.

Ability Dogs will be supporting us all the way, and have offered to work with any children or adults who may be worried around dogs with a support programme.

