

Stanhope Barrington C of E  
Primary School



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Dear Parent/Carer

18<sup>th</sup> October 2023

**Re: Our new Therapy Dog**

I am writing to let you know that we are getting a Therapy Dog at school. In reality she is first and foremost my new pet puppy but it is the plan to train her up so she can work in school as a qualified Therapy Dog.

She is a fox red Labrador and is called Aela.

Having a Therapy Dog in school is a huge undertaking as she has to complete various rigorous training courses before she can qualify to work with children. Her training begins at the end of November when she begins the Kennel Club Good Citizenship course. Once she has passed that course she can begin training with the Therapy Dog UK scheme. This involves bronze, silver and gold stages of training and it is anticipated that she will not be fully qualified for between 12-18 months. Once her training is complete she will be formally assessed by a qualified assessor from Therapy Dogs UK. Thereafter she will be assessed every 6 months.

Whilst in training, Aela will be wearing a vest with states: "Therapy Dog In Training". She can attend school to get to know the staff, children and what will be her working environment. We will be building up her time in school over the next 3-6 months as there is an awful lot for her to get used to.

Her first visit will be on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2023 when she will come into school to meet the team before the children arrive and then I intend to bring her out to the school gate to say a quick hello to everyone. I have explained to the children that she is very young and if she becomes overwhelmed I will take her back inside. She will then be collected at 9.30 to return home and no doubt crash out!

Please be assured that we have an Animals In School Policy, a thorough Risk Assessment and all legal requirements and training requirements will be exceeded. Aela will never work with children on her own and will always be supervised.

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I have waited for all of the data collection sheets to be returned before going ahead with this plan so that we can ensure that there are no children with pet allergies in school. If a child started school with a pet allergy then we would review the risk assessment at that stage.

Obviously, Aela is very young and there is no guarantee that she will pass all of her training or even qualify but at this early stage she is extremely bright and loves to learn so I am confident she will do well.

I also wanted to reassure everyone that ALL costs associated with Aela will be met by me and there will be no impact on the school budget whatsoever.

The team and children are really excited about Aela joining our team and I am looking forward to her first visit on Friday.

Our therapy hens have been a huge success and have made a massive impact on our children and I am sure Aela will do the same.

Yours sincerely

*Mrs D Cross*

Mrs D Cross  
Head Teacher