

# Emneth Nursery School

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Dear Parent/Guardian,

We are excited to announce that we will be welcoming a new member to our school community – a school dog named Millie! This decision follows the positive feedback from our parent survey and thoughtful discussions within our governing board.

Millie is a 8 month old Cockapoo who will gradually increase her time in school, beginning with short, carefully supervised sessions. This breed was chosen for several reasons:

- The breed does not moult – their coat is non-allergenic, meaning there is a reduced risk of allergic reactions.
- The breed is known to be child-friendly, lively, gentle-mannered and affectionate, yet sensitive.
- The breed is known to be highly intelligent and respond excellently to training.

Millie has already begun her training to ensure she is calm, well-behaved and safe around children. We wish to reassure parents that we have undertaken a significant amount of research into introducing a school dog and believe the positive effects demonstrably outweigh any negatives.

Some of the key benefits include:

- Cognitive development – building a companionship with a dog helps children stimulate memory, problem-solving and game-playing skills.
- Social skills – dogs provide a mutual topic for conversation and encourage responsibility, wellbeing and focused interaction.
- Emotional skills – dogs improve self-esteem, support emotional regulation and can reduce anxiety. They can also provide comfort for children experiencing sadness or bereavement.
- Physical development – interaction with dogs can reduce blood pressure, provide tactile stimulation and motivate movement.
- Reading – school dogs are known to support reading confidence through their calming, non-judgemental presence.
- School community – having a school dog builds a sense of family and togetherness.

Millie will begin her time with us by transitioning into the office space over February half term, when no children are present. This will allow her to explore the office environment calmly and start becoming familiar with the sights, sounds, and routines of the school. After February half term, Millie will then attend school one day a week and gradually build up her time once she is ready. Once she is settled and showing confidence, we will gradually introduce her to small groups of children. Before any interaction takes place, children will be taught how to safely and respectfully approach a dog

using a toy dog, following the guidance we have been provided with. All interactions with Millie will be carefully planned and will only happen when she and the children are fully ready.

During the day, Millie will be kept in the school office, which is fitted with safety gates to ensure she remains secure and separate from the wider school environment. She will **not** have free roam of the school. Millie will only take part in small, supervised group visits, and only where parental consent has been given. These sessions will be carefully planned and monitored to ensure the wellbeing of all children. At the end of each day, Millie will return home with Josh.

Please be assured that no child will come into contact with Millie without prior parental consent.

We understand that some parents may have concerns, and we hope the information below provides reassurance. A full risk assessment has been completed and is available on the school website.

### **My child is allergic to dogs**

Cockapoos have non-allergenic coats and do not moult, significantly reducing the risk of allergic reactions. However, if you would still prefer your child not to come into contact with Millie, we will ensure this is fully respected. We have undertaken a thorough risk assessment, which details the hygiene practices that will be in place such as hand-washing and cleaning of the environment will be followed before and after any interaction.

### **Will the dog be properly cared for?**

Millie will be regularly groomed and checked to ensure she remains clean, healthy and safe to be around. She will also be routinely wormed and treated for fleas as part of her ongoing care. During the school day, Millie will stay in the office with access to food, water and a quiet space to rest, and she will be taken outside for regular toilet breaks and fresh air. You can find more detailed information about these arrangements in our risk assessment.

### **My child is scared of dogs**

We understand that some children may be fearful. Cockapoos are known for being extremely child-friendly, and Millie's presence may help children gradually build confidence — but only with parental permission. If you prefer your child not to meet Millie, we will ensure alternative arrangements are in place.

### **Is the dog well-behaved?**

Yes. Millie is undergoing professional training to ensure she remains calm, gentle and well-behaved at all times. She will only meet children in small, supervised groups and only with parental consent. If at any point we feel that Millie is not suited to the nursery environment, we will pause or stop her visits to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children.

We hope you will join us in welcoming Millie to our school and embrace all she has to offer our community. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact us.

Kind regards,

Josh Peel

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ My child has a fear of dogs, but I am happy for them to be slowly introduced to the dog.

☐ I would not like my child to be around, or touch the dog.

☐ I am happy for my child to be around and touch the dog.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (name of parent), have read and understood the conditions of this letter.

I confirm my consent as indicated above and will inform the school in writing if this changes.