

Headteacher: Mrs Lynn Torrance

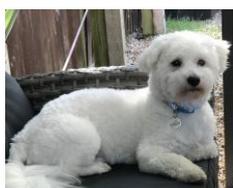


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Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021



Dear Parents & Carers,

I am writing to let you know that as a school we are considering having our very own school dog to join the Wroxall team. This decision had been reached after a lot of consideration over the last 6 months. During the summer term, when we hatched chicks in school, we saw the positive effect having animals in school had on children and staff wellbeing. This led us to consider having a school pet on a more permanent basis.

Otis is currently my family dog. He is 17 months old Havaton (Havanese x Coton-de-Tuleur). Havaton dogs are known for being 'a dog of the people' as they were bred as companions and rely heavily on human interaction for their happiness and confidence. Playful and humorous, the Havaton makes a good friend to young children and is generally much more tolerant than other breeds of a similar size, rarely growling or snapping. This is certainly our experience of Otis.

He is already very well socialised, loves meeting new people and enjoys being the centre of the family. He is very soft and fluffy but does not moult which makes him ideal for people who suffer with dog hair related allergies. We have had Otis since he was an 8-week-old puppy and he has brought untold joy to our family. I would like to share this experience with the school community by bringing Otis into school for 2-3 days a week.

Across the country, dogs are increasingly being welcomed into schools with great success. Some of you may have seen, in the media that therapy dogs are also being used in some hospitals which impacts greatly on patients' improving health and emotional well-being. Please understand that we will do everything we can to reassure children who may be fearful and that under no circumstances will they be forced to meet with Otis if they don't choose to. We hope the children will gain a great deal of enjoyment from having their school dog and that he becomes full member of our team.

As a school we have contacted Jenny Duckworth, who works as a school dog mentor. She will provide the training needed for Otis to work successfully in school and will provide ongoing support for the next year as Otis enters his new role. She will also support us to complete a thorough risk assessment bespoke to Otis' role within Wroxall.

There are many benefits to having a school dog, including:

- the presence of companion animals can improve the well-being of children and lower anxiety levels, simply by making the environment happier and more enjoyable.
- dogs in the classroom can be used to calm fears, relieve anxieties and teach skills.
- improved behaviour and concentration, reduced stress and improvement in pupils' self-esteem;
- encouraging expression, participation and confidence for all children;
- fostering a sense of responsibility;
- motivating pupils to think and to learn, as most children have a high level of natural interest in, enthusiasm for and enjoyment of animals;
- encouraging respect and thereby improving pupils' relationships with each other, parents and teachers;
- teaching children to nurture and respect life;
- helping children build confidence in reading;
- improving overall attendance;
- further promoting our well-being agenda for pupils and staff

Otis will not be staying in any classrooms during the day, although he may make short visits. His main place of residence will be in the main office area, where myself and Mrs Steele are based. He will slowly be introduced to the school community and we will begin by introducing him to small numbers of children.

Whilst moving around the school, Otis will be kept on a short lead and will always be with an adult. In an assembly this half term, we will discuss with the children the rules and expectations about having Otis in school and we will highlight the many benefits and rewards, too.

I appreciate that the idea of having a dog in school may cause concern for some of you. Should you have any queries or questions concerning the introduction of a school dog, please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss further. Equally should you wish your child NOT to meet with or spend any time with Otis, we will completely respect this decision. Please come into the school office to sign a form to withdraw your child from contact.

**We are keen to gauge parental viewpoint on the idea of having a dog in school and would therefore be very grateful if you could complete the survey using the link below. If the majority of parents who reply are uncomfortable with the idea, we will of course re-consider.**

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1ELhJ\\_F4MEdrXYOpY\\_wyrrAuTZOwyJ8jmweoQrY4i\\_g/edit](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1ELhJ_F4MEdrXYOpY_wyrrAuTZOwyJ8jmweoQrY4i_g/edit)

Yours sincerely



Lynn Torrance

Head teacher/dog whisperer