



The Stoke Poges School

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**Headteacher: Liz Astley BA (Hons),
P.G.C.E., N.P.Q.H.**



Dear Parents and Carers

New Member of Staff

I am delighted to introduce you to a new member of staff. Fred will initially be joining us in School on a part-time basis with the intention of becoming full-time after an induction period.

A full risk assessment has been completed which is attached to this letter, along with some frequently asked questions.

Extensive research has shown that 'Pet therapy' is widely accepted as benefitting children's well-being and communication skills. Studies have shown that the presence of companion animals can improve the well-being of children and lower the rate of anxiety simply by making the environment happier, more enjoyable and less forbidding. Dogs are increasingly being used in schools with great success and some of you may have seen in the media that they are now being used in some hospitals and care homes as the emotional health benefits they bring are so vast.

Fred will live with Ms Sheehan and her family and will be introduced to the school environment and pupils gradually, starting with an introduction visit. He will grow up in the school environment becoming fully accustomed to the routines of the day.

We have researched an appropriate breed for a school dog and have decided to have a Cavapoochon, as they make very good therapy dogs, due to their calm and child friendly temperament and hypoallergenic hair. Ms Sheehan has visited the home of the Fred's mother and received information on Fred's father to ensure that the temperament of the parents and puppy is suitable for interaction with children. Fred has been thoroughly checked for any illnesses and his immunisations are up to date. He is also registered with a local vet under a pet plan which includes an annual health check, immunisations, plus worming and flea treatments at the appropriate intervals. Ms Sheehan will be responsible for his vaccination programme

with all records kept as part of the risk assessment. He is enrolled in puppy training school and eventually we will explore therapy training once he is settled with us.

Fred's main place of residence will be Mrs Palmer and Ms Sheehan's office, which is secure and separate from the classrooms. He will be kept on a short lead when he is around the school and will always be with a member of staff.

Please contact the School Office via email if your child is allergic to dogs or you would like Fred to be introduced progressively to your child as they are nervous around dogs.

I hope the children and the school community will gain a lot of enjoyment from having a school dog and there will be pictures on the website of all that he gets up to! It has been arranged for the Dog's Trust to come into school and give all the children an assembly and workshop on how to 'Be Dog Smart'.

If you have any individual questions or queries, please do not hesitate to contact me via my email address.

With best wishes

Liz Astley
Headteacher