

Garburn Place, Newton Aycliffe, Co.Durham, DL5 7DE
T: 01325 300337
E: admin@stjosephsna.bhcet.org.uk
W: www.stjosephsna.bhcet.org.uk

Head Teacher: Mrs K Evans BA (Hons) NPQH
CEO: M Shorten M.Ed., BA (Hons)
Chair of Directors: Y Coates

We're getting a school dog!

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to inform you that we will soon be adding a new member to our school community. As of April 2023, we will be welcoming a school dog who will eventually be within the school to work with our pupils.

After careful consideration, we have chosen a cavapoo named **Coco**. **Coco is 10 weeks old** and will soon be ready to join our school community! We have chosen this breed for the following reasons:

The breed does not malt – 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.

Coco will be undergoing specific training shortly, to ensure she is well-trained for being around children. We wish to reassure parents that we have undertaken a significant amount of research into welcoming a school dog and believe the positive effects of such demonstrably outweigh any negatives. Some of the many benefits of having a school dog include the following:

Cognitive development – building a companionship with a dog helps children stimulate their memory, problem-solving and game-playing skills. Having a school dog is known to increase enthusiasm for, and enjoyment of animals, which motivates children to think and learn.

Social skills – dogs provide a mutual topic for conversation with others, and encourage responsibility, wellbeing and focused interaction with others.

Emotional skills – dogs improve self-esteem, acceptance from others and are known for improving moods. Dogs can also help children develop compassion and respect for other living things and can reduce children's anxiety. Building respect can improve children's relationships with each other, parents and teachers and shows them how to nurture and care for another living thing. If any children are suffering from bereavement or are particularly sad, dogs can provide children with comfort and friendship.

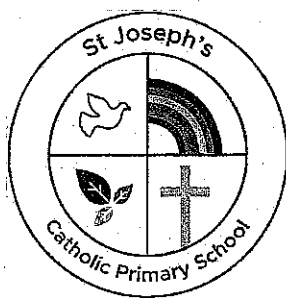
Physical development – interaction with dogs is known to reduce blood pressure, provide tactile stimulation, assist with pain management and give motivation for children to move and walk.

Reading – school dogs are known to help children with their reading and literacy skills, through their calming presence and ability to listen to children read without being judgmental or critical. Children can build their confidence to read aloud to others through having a school dog.

School community – having a school dog builds the sense of a family environment and togetherness.



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During the day, **Coco** will be kept in the EYFS classroom or in the **headteacher's office**. A suitable bed, food, water and cleaning supplies will be held for **Coco**, and through training she will be sufficiently toilet-trained. I must stress that pupils will not be expected to clean up any dog mess, and we will ensure that the school grounds are kept clean at all times.

Whenever **Coco** is being walked around the school, she will initially have a short lead to ensure she is controlled at all times. When she has had more training and is herself confident in school, she will be allowed to walk in certain places. **Coco** will be supervised by a member of staff at all times.

Once her training is complete, **Coco** will visit pupils in their classrooms and become part of school life.

I would like to reassure you that pupils will only be able to come into contact with **Coco** if parental permission has been received.

We understand that many parents will have concerns regarding bringing a school dog onto the premises, and I would like to use this letter to provide some reassurance to parents. We have undertaken a full risk assessment to ensure that any hazards can be adequately controlled – we have published this risk assessment on the school website for you to view should you wish to access it. Below, I have listed some concerns which I believe parents may have.

My child is allergic to dogs and I don't want them to have an allergic reaction

As previously mentioned, we have chosen a cavapoo breed, which has a non-allergenic coat and does not malt, meaning there is a significantly reduced risk of an allergic reaction. If, however, you would still prefer your child not to come into contact with **Coco**, we will accommodate your request and ensure that arrangements are in place.

We have undertaken a thorough risk assessment, which details the hygiene practices that will be in place – such as cleaning of hands and the environment before and after coming into contact with **Coco**.

More information is detailed in our risk assessment which is available for you to download.

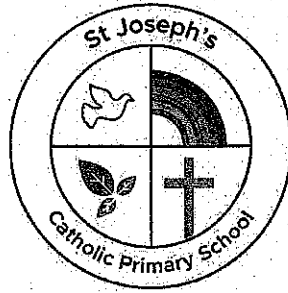
Will the dog be properly cared for?

Coco will be subject to a rigorous grooming process to prevent the risk of infection or disease. She will live with Mrs Young, her husband and three young children and will travel to school with her each day. **Coco** will be kept in the EYFS classroom whilst in school or the **headteacher's office** during the day and will have adequate supply of food and water. You can find more information on these arrangements in our risk assessment.

My child is scared of dogs

We understand that some children may be fearful of dogs. Cavapoos are known for being extremely child-friendly and **Coco** will provide the opportunity for children to overcome their fears, with their parents' permission. The training that **Coco** will undergo will ensure that she is well-behaved, gentle and calm around children. If parents would prefer for their child not to





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come into contact with **Coco**, we will accommodate your request and ensure alternative arrangements are in place.

Is the dog well-behaved?

As previously mentioned, **Coco** will undergo training shortly to ensure she is well-behaved at all times. She will be kept on a short leash whenever walking around school until she is fully trained.

Please complete the attached permission slip, outlining whether your child is able to come into contact with **Coco** or not. I would like to reassure you that a written list will be held of all children for whom permission has been received – this will be distributed to all staff members and only these children will be permitted to be around or touch **Coco**.

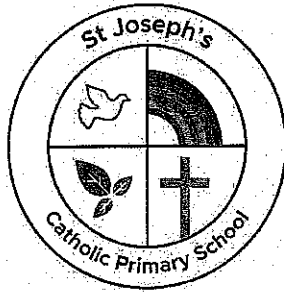
Please return the slip to the school office by Friday 21st April 2023.

We hope you will join us in welcoming **Coco** to our school and embrace all she has to offer to our community. I hope to have provided reassurance to any concerns you may have via this letter; however, if you have any further questions, please feel free to contact school.

Kind regards,
Mrs Evans

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Evans', written over a horizontal line.

Headteacher



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Permission slip

Please complete the following permission slip, providing a tick next to the condition which reflects your consent. Your consent will be valid until July 2023. Should you wish to amend your permission, please contact the school immediately in writing.

Name of pupil:	Year Group:
My child is allergic to dogs and I would not like my child to be around, or touch, the dog.	
My child is allergic to dogs, but I am happy for them to be around the dog, as long as my child does not touch the dog.	
My child has a fear of dogs and I would not like my child to be around, or touch, the dog.	
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 for reasons other than those outlined above.	
I am happy for my child to be around and touch the dog.	

I, _____ (name of parent/carer) have fully read and understood the conditions of this letter. I agree that I have provided the correct consent above and will inform the school in writing if my permission changes at any stage.

Signature of parent/carer: _____

Date: _____

