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|  | **ANSTON HILLCREST PRIMARY SCHOOL**Hawthorne Avenue, South Anston,Sheffield S25 5GRTel. 01909 550022**Headteacher: Mrs Kate Rayner**school@anstonhillcrest.org***“Making a difference”*****Our values are**: **RESPECT, RESILIENCE, TEAMWORK, KINDNESS and ASPIRATION** | **A logo with a road and sun  Description automatically generated** |

Dear families,

I hope this letter finds you well. If you recall a while ago I write to you about the prospect of us having a therapy dog in school. After discussions with Herbie’s owner Alison Arthur (who some of you will know as one of our parents) we have arranged for Herbie to start visiting us for 1 ½ hours on a Monday afternoon starting after the half term holidays.

There are many benefits to having animals in school particularly a trained therapy dog. They can have a calming effect on pupils, therapy dogs have been shown to help reduce anxiety, stress, and feelings of loneliness. A therapy dog can also act as a bridge for students who may struggle with social interactions. The dog provides an opportunity for students to practice communication and empathy in a safe and non-judgmental environment. This can be especially beneficial for students who may feel isolated or have difficulty forming relationships.

Dogs in school can also increase enthusiasm for and enjoyment of animals which will motivate the children to think and learn. Additionally, therapy dogs can create a more inviting and enjoyable school atmosphere, which contributes to a positive learning environment.

They encourage respect and thereby improving pupils’ relationship with each other, parents and teachers. Taking care, going on short walks, and even simple petting can encourage our children to engage in physical activity, which is beneficial for overall health.

Having the opportunity to learn more about Herbie will teach children to nurture and respect life. Having a therapy dog in school also offers us the opportunity to learn about responsibility and compassion. The children can learn about his care, feeding, and routine, which promotes a sense of ownership and respect. This experience can teach valuable life lessons about kindness, empathy, and the importance of caring for others.

Supporting all children with their social and emotional learning needs, developing reading skills, improving behaviour, attendance and academic confidence, as well as increasing understanding of responsibility in the development of empathy and nurturing skills. We envisage that Herbie will be a beneficial addition to our therapeutic offer in school and very much look forwards to welcoming him.

Supervision and contact with Herbie

Children will be able to interact with Herbie under strict supervision as Alison will be with him at all times when he is in school as long as parental permission has been given. Herbie will not be given access to other visitors without supervision and mutual consent. He is gentle mannered, demonstrably affectionate yet sensitive and well trained through the Pets for Therapy programme. He will be visiting on Monday afternoons only and will be in school only a short time as per guidelines and risk assessments in place to ensure his wellbeing and safety too.

We understand that it is not possible for all families to have a family dog or pet and therefore we hope that this is an opportunity for children to have a “share” in a dog/pet and gain from a relationship and contact on a regular basis.

Please complete the consent form and return it to the school office as soon as possible. We will **not** let children interact with Herbie until consent forms have been received. A paper copy of this letter will go out on Monday with all pupils in school despite the fact that most children in school will not get to see Herbie initially.

Herbie’s schedule in school

Herbie will be visiting Class 7- our Speech and Language Integrated resource on Monday 24th February, 10th and 17th March he will be visiting Year 5 (Miss Bennett’s class).

I will keep you updated on Herbie’s schedule via the SWAY. We value your input and would love to hear your thoughts or if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Yours sincerely,

**Mrs K Rayner**

Headteacher

Child’s Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Please complete as appropriate:

|  |
| --- |
| I give / do not give permission for my child to interact with Herbie |
|  | Yes | No |
| My child has a fear of dogs and I do not wish them to interact with Herbie in a group or 1.1 basis (however, it is unavoidable that on occasion your child may pass Herbie on the corridor). |  |  |
| My child has a fear of dogs and I would like the school to help manage the fear by interacting with Herbie on a 1.1 basis. |  |  |
| My child has an allergy to pet hair |  |  |
| My child is uneasy about Herbie and may need some additional support to become more comfortable  |  |  |

Signed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Parent / Carer)