



## **Fairholme Primary School**

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**Headteacher: Miss H. Willis**

Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2018

Dear Parent/Carers,

Welcome back to the new school year, we hope you all had a fabulous summer holiday. We are happy to be able to share some exciting news for Fairholme Primary School. The school has decided to take on a school dog.

Harvey was born on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2018. He is a 16 week old Cavachon, who is set to become an integral part of our school community. Dogs are increasingly being used in schools, locally and nationally, with great success and some of you may have seen in the media that they are now being used in some hospitals as the emotional health benefits they bring are just so vast.

Cavachons are the offspring of the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, a breed renowned for their loving and gentle natures and the Bichon Frise, a breed of dog that are known for their hypo-allergenic coat. Families that struggle with dog ownership because of allergy issues are often quite happy to find that the Cavachon is very allergy friendly and well tolerated by individuals with allergies.



In an assembly we will discuss with the children the rules and expectations about having a school dog but we will also talk about many of the benefits too. We have undertaken a significant amount of research and are aware of many benefits to having a school dog.

Evidence indicates that benefits include:

- Cognitive – companionship with a dog stimulates memory, problem-solving and game-playing
- Social – a dog provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, encourages responsibility, wellbeing and focused interaction with others
- Emotional – a school dog improves self-esteem, acceptance from others and lifts mood, often provoking laughter and fun. Dogs can also teach compassion and respect for other living things as well as relieving anxiety.
- Physical – interaction with a furry friend reduces blood pressure, provides tactile stimulation, assists with pain management, gives motivation to move, walk and stimulates the senses
- Environmental – a dog in a school increases the sense of a family environment, with all of the above benefits continuing long after the school day is over.
- Reading – reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop literacy skills and build confidence, through both the calming effect the dog's presence has on children as well as the fact that a dog will listen to children read without being judgemental or critical. This comforting environment helps to nurture children's enthusiasm for reading and provides them with the confidence to read aloud.

Harvey's main place of residence will be with Mrs Kaura in the SENDCO's Office, which is secure and separate from the classrooms, and he will only come into contact with the children during closely supervised times. Whilst moving around the school, Harvey will be kept on a short lead and will always be accompanied by an adult. Any children who are fearful of dogs will not, under any circumstances, be forced to meet Harvey, unless a parent/carer specifically requests this. Harvey will not be given access to other visitors without supervision and mutual consent.

A risk assessment has been completed and this, along with Frequently Asked Questions will be published on our school website. We understand that it is not possible for all families to have a family dog and therefore

we hope that this is an opportunity for children to 'share' in a dog and gain from a relationship and contact on a regular basis.

Any parent who does not wish their child to interact with the dog, is invited to write to the school to inform us of your wishes. Also, if your child has any known allergies to dogs then please inform the school so we can update our records accordingly. We hope you will join us in welcoming Harvey to the Fairholme Primary School family and embrace all that he has to offer the school.

Yours sincerely

Miss H. Willis  
Headteacher