

CBU/mmw

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**The Laurels**  
PRIMARY SCHOOL

Winterbourne Way  
West Durrington  
Worthing  
West Sussex  
BN13 3QH  
t 01903 830901  
e office@laurelsprimary.co.uk  
w www.laurelsprimary.co.uk  
**Headteacher: Charlotte Bull**

Dear Parents and Carers

We are very excited to introduce you to a new member of staff who we will be welcoming to The Laurels soon.



This is our new school pet, Zak, who is a chocolate labrador with a calm and sensitive manner.

Zak is well socialised with other dogs, children and people and lives with a member of the school staff.

He is 5-years-old and has attended training classes. He is well trained, obedient and up to date with all immunisations, flea and worm treatments.

Numerous research studies have shown the benefits of therapy dogs in schools. Dogs have been working in schools for the past 5 years across the UK. However, they have been commonplace in schools in the USA and Australia for many years. *Dogs for Good* and *Dogs Helping Kids* believe there is significant potential for dogs to help young people in a range of educational environments, bringing benefits to their academic, emotional and social development.

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.

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- 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.

Zak will be based in Miss Bull’s office at the front of the school, where he will be secure and separate from the classrooms, children will be able to interact with him under strict supervision at certain times of the day/week unless parents/carers indicate otherwise. The children will never be alone with the dog.

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 have a “share” in a dog, gain from a relationship and contact on a regular basis and have a friend for life.

Zak will be introduced to the children gradually, after they have had specific training, and he will be available in the library for some sessions for the children to read to and at lunch time for walks with child/children. Children and adults are required to adhere to the following:

- Always approach the school dog calmly and slowly
- Never run up to the dog
- Offer the back of your hand for the dog to sniff when meeting the dog
- All interactions must remain calm with the authorised adult in control at all times
- Children must wash their hands before eating if they have been stroking the dog

Please let the school office know if you do not wish your child/children to have contact with Zak and we will make a record of this and act accordingly.

We would very much welcome queries or questions, please contact the school office to talk to either Mr Edwards or Miss Bull.

Only the school dog is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the Headteacher has been informed beforehand.

### [School Dog Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#)

#### **Q Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?**

A The legal owner of the dog will be Mr Edwards who will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the FOTLs will support insurance costs where appropriate.

#### **Q Is the dog from a reputable breeder?**

A Yes. The dog is from a home where both parents were seen and has been specifically chosen for his temperament.

#### **Q Will the dog be a distraction?**

A The dog will be kept in the office area. The office is separate from the classrooms / playground area to ensure he only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision. The dog will also have a space to spend time in classrooms, the library and in the garden where children can interact safely. The dog will also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation, following consultation with staff beforehand.

#### **Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?**

A Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog.

#### **Q Who is responsible for training?**

A Mr Edwards will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for its training.

**Q How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?**

A In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks at the front of the grounds. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed. Our policy of no dogs in the playground is still applicable as we are unable to put effective control measures in place that guarantee temperament and safety when children come into unsupervised contact with unknown dogs.

**Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?**

A The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. Parents will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to be able to walk with a member of staff and the dog during that time. The dog will be kept in the administration area/Headteacher's office and will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have unlimited access to food and water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered.

**Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?**

A Children will not need to touch the dog, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for children and adults that are allergic to dogs. Individual needs will always be met and we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies. The breed of dog is known for minimal moulting, he is given a high-quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

**Q My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?**

A Access to Zak will be carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with him. We hope to work closely with pupils who are fearful of dogs (at parental request) to alleviate their fear and to help them manage this.

If this is a concern, please email [office@laurelsprimary.co.uk](mailto:office@laurelsprimary.co.uk)

**Q How do I know that my child will be safe around the dog?**

A A risk assessment and policy will be in place and will be available on the school website. The school will have additional insurance to cover having a dog on the school site. Children will only have contact with the dog when supervised by an adult. When moving around the school, the dog will always be on the lead. Children will receive training from Dogs Trust to learn how to interact safely with dogs.

Yours sincerely



**Miss Charlotte Bull**  
Headteacher