

**Hamsey Community Primary School
Cooksbridge**

Skylark Federation

Executive Headteacher

Mr Stewart James BA (Hons) QTS

Head of School

Mr Matt Dean BA (Hons) PGCE



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Friday 24th February 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

Meet Minnie the Labradoodle – Hamsey’s School Dog



I am excited to introduce you to our latest member of the team at Hamsey Community Primary School!

The decision to have a school dog has been carefully researched and a thorough risk assessment is in place. There are many benefits to having a dog in school, including, but not limited to:

- **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 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.

There are many schools in Sussex who already have a school dog and a Google search for ‘school dog’ will reveal plenty of examples of how dogs are positively impacting on children’s wellbeing and learning in school settings.

Minnie will be based in Mr Dean’s office initially, where she will be secure and separate from the classrooms. In time, she will be introduced to our school and children will be able to interact with her, under strict supervision from an adult.

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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 as well as learning how to look after and behave safely around dogs.

I spent a lot of time investigating dogs with my family, and we finally decided on a labradoodle. The breed is known for its intelligence, loyalty, trainability, affectionate nature, low-shedding hypoallergenic coat, level headedness and sociable personality. Minnie has been with my family for two years now and during this time she has been a great source of comfort to us and particularly to our son, with whom she is wonderful.

The first step is making sure that Minnie is happy being in a school setting and that she is suitable for the job. On Friday 3rd March I am going to trial bringing her to school with me. Provided the trial goes well, I will slowly introduce her to small groups of children and I will be leading assemblies and workshops on how to interact safely with dogs.

We appreciate that some children may have allergies or be nervous of dogs and want to make sure that we are aware of any concerns before Minnie's first visit, so I include a [Google Form link](#) here for you to complete if you would like to share anything pertinent with us or if you do not want your child to interact with Minnie. Please can I ask you to complete the form by Wednesday 1st March. Thank you.

Please do not hesitate to come and speak with me if you have any questions or concerns. Minnie is looking forward to meeting you all soon!

Thank you for your continued support.

Matt Dean

Head of School

