



Abbey Park Pre-School  
Abbey Park First & Nursery School  
Abbey Park Middle School

Abbey Road  
Pershore  
Worcestershire  
WR10 1DF

Head of First School: Mrs C. Mitchell  
Head of Middle School: Miss R. Scully

Dear parents / carers,

I am writing to inform you that we have added a further new member to our school community. In June 2020, we welcomed, Indie, our school dog to come in to school daily and to work with our children. Additionally in June 2021 we have also welcomed 4 month old Raffi. We have adopted Raffi from the Dogs Trust to join Indie in being part of our school family. Indie and Raffi are cockapoo's.

We have chosen cockapoo's 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.

Indie is undergoing specific training, 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 purchasing a school dog and believe the positive effects of such demonstrably outweigh any negatives. Raffi has been assessed by the Dogs Trust behaviourist who was consulted prior to our adoption.

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 focussed 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 judgemental 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.

During the day, Indie and Raffi will be kept in my office – returning home with me once the school day is over. A suitable bed, food, water and cleaning supplies will be held for Indie and Raffi, and through training they are already 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 Indie and Raffi are being walked around the school, they will have a short lead to ensure they are controlled at all times.

Indie and Raffi will visit the classrooms with me regularly. Once Raffi is a little older and able to sit still for longer periods of time, pupils will read to him as well as Indie.

At all times, whether in classrooms or being walked by a pupil, an adult will supervise the activity.

I would like to reassure you that pupils will only be able to come into contact with Indie and Raffi if you are happy for them to do so.

We understand that many parents will have concerns regarding bringing school dogs 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. 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 cockapoo breed, which has a non-allergenic coat and does not molt, 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 Indie, 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 Indie.

More information is detailed in our risk assessment.

**Will the dog be properly cared for?**

Indie and Raffi will be subject to a rigorous grooming process to prevent the risk of infection or disease. They will be kept in my 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. Cockapoos are known for being extremely child-friendly and Indie will provide the opportunity for children to overcome their fears, with their parents' permission. The training that Indie will undergo will ensure that she is well-behaved, gentle and calm around children. If parents would prefer for their child not to come into contact with Indie, we will accommodate your request and ensure alternative arrangements are in place.

**Is the dog well-behaved?**

As previously mentioned, Indie has undergone training to ensure she is well-behaved at all times. (So far she has been brilliant)! She will be kept on a short leash whenever walking around school. Raffi is currently undergoing his training.

Please complete the attached slip, if you would **not like** your child to come into contact with Indie and Raffi. Please return the slip to the school office as soon as possible.

We hope you will join us in welcoming Indie and Raffi to our school and embrace all they have 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 me on [rs@abbeypark.worcs.sch.uk](mailto:rs@abbeypark.worcs.sch.uk)

Kind regards,

Rebecca Scully

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**Indie and Raffi, the School Dogs - Permission slip**

Please complete the following permission slip, if you would **not like** your child to come into contact with Indie or Raffi.

Name of pupil:		Class name:	
I do not want my child to come into contact with Indie or Raffi.			

Signature of parent: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_