



St Martin's School

Ysgol Martin Sant

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Dear Parent / Carer,

Re: Wellbeing Dog

We are pleased to introduce you to a new member of staff who we will be welcoming to our school over the next few weeks. Marty was born in September 2019 and he is a red/brown Maltipoo who is in training as a school therapy dog who will become an integral part of our community. He will shortly be beginning his first set of puppy classes to learn how to be a therapy dog.

Throughout the media, we hear significant stories about the increase in adverse childhood experiences and heightened anxiety. Marty is joining the school to help support students affected by such issues. However, he will be available to all members of our school who may benefit from his help.

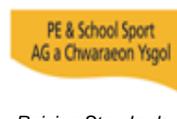
There are many benefits of having a school dog. Wellbeing dogs have been working in schools for the past five years across the UK. However, they have been commonplace in other parts of the world for many years.

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; and
- 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.

While there are numerous benefits to Marty joining our community, we recognise there are some concerns you may have. Please be assured that the school has been working with external agencies to ensure these have been considered. A few of these are listed below:

Learning Together, Achieving Forever **Dysgu ynghyd, cyflawni o hyd**



Raising Standards –



My child is allergic to dogs

It is understandable that some of you may be concerned about possible allergic reactions to a school dog. However, Marty will be subjected to the most thorough cleaning and grooming regime. He will also only be allowed in situations with students who voluntarily wish to work with him. Your permission will of course be sought in advance of Marty having access to, and working with, your child in school.

Will Marty be properly cared for?

Marty will be extremely well looked after. He will live with a member of staff and their family and will come to school most days but will stay safely in the offices until satisfactory training has been completed. He will then, in time, listen to students read in a controlled setting and will always be accompanied by a trained adult. Marty will undergo thorough and rigorous training (beginning with puppy classes) so will be extremely well-behaved. Whilst Marty is in school he will have access to a dog pen and crate in the offices where he can relax during his non-contact time. Marty will visit the vet regularly for all his injections as well as regular check-ups. If Marty is unwell for any reason he will stay at home with a baby-sitter!

My child is scared of dogs

Some children may have had upsetting experiences and/or have a fear of dogs (or other animals). Marty will only be in contact with children whose parents are happy for their child to work with him. However, Marty's training will help him to be calm and gentle around children; he is already showing signs of a very loving and gentle nature. Experience and research has shown that, with proper guidance and handling, children can learn to overcome their fear of animals and grow in respect and appreciation for them.

The school has a 'no dogs' policy

Our school does have a 'no dogs' policy. However, as Marty is training to be a 'therapy' dog, specific rules will apply to him, as a member of staff. He will be on a lead when moving around the school site and will always be accompanied by a trained adult. Marty will also be fully insured to carry out his role thus allowing him to be on the school site. Marty will not be allowed to roam the site freely so there will be no issues with toileting etc.

We hope you will join us in welcoming Marty to our school family and embrace all that he has to offer. While Marty will be introduced to the school in the coming week(s) via assemblies and walks of the site, should you not wish your child to come into contact with our school dog then please do let us know. You can do this by getting in touch with Mr Furtek, Business Manager by email furtekd@stmartins.caerphilly.sch.uk.

I do hope you will see the benefits of this new addition of the team and we are certain Marty will provide outstanding and unique support to our students.

Warmest woofs,

Yours sincerely,



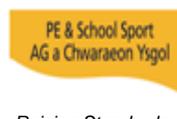
**Marty
Wellbeing Dog**



**Mr Jarvis
Headteacher**



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Raising Standards –