

Mrs Louise Marsh – Deputy Head

22 September 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

'Pet therapy' is widely accepted as benefitting children's well-being and communication skills. Studies have shown that the presence of companion animals can improve the well-being of children and lower the rate of anxiety simply by making the environment happier, more enjoyable and less forbidding. Dogs are increasingly being used in schools 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 so vast.

Cheney School introduced a school dog in September 2019 – a golden retriever called Maxi. Maxi belongs to Mrs Payne (nee Jackson), Head of Student Progress Year 11 and Mrs Payne is the main point of contact for any dog questions. Maxi came into school throughout the last academic year and has grown up in the school environment, becoming fully accustomed to the routines of the day and supportive of students within the school. She completed the Kennel Club Dog Good Citizen Bronze Award in March 2019 and will be beginning the silver award in the near future.

The benefits of having a school dog include:

- a calming effect on pupils;
- improved behaviour and concentration, reduced stress and improved self-esteem;
- encouraging expression, participation and confidence for all children;
- fostering a sense of responsibility;
- motivating pupils to think and to learn, as most children have a high level of natural interest in, enthusiasm for and enjoyment of animals;
- encouraging respect and thereby improving pupils' relationships with each other, parents and teachers;
- teaching children to nurture and respect life;
- helping work undertaken with the most vulnerable children;
- helping children build confidence in reading;
- improving attendance.

Maxi's main place of residence is in the SEND department or the Year 11 area. She also has her own area in the Music department, which is secure and separate from the classrooms with access to an outside space away from students. Maxi spends time in the year offices, the school library, sixth form spaces and in some lessons.



CHENEY SCHOOL
Think for yourself, act for others

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Whilst moving around the school, Maxi is kept on a short lead and is always with a member of staff or a trained sixth form student.

You will be able to see the school dog policy on the school website and there is also a full risk assessment, which is reviewed regularly – this include Covid19 updates.

It is accepted that interacting with animals is not appropriate for all children but that for some it has the potential to provide many positive benefits. **Any parent / carer who does not wish their child to interact with the dog is invited to write to Mrs Payne, via email or letter, to inform her of their wishes.** Please also ensure your child's medical record is up-to-date and the school has been made aware of any allergies – you can do this [via our online parent portal here](#). If you have already contacted Mrs Payne, this has been recorded and you do not need to contact her again.

Permission for your child to have some contact with the school dog will be presumed if no written communication to Mrs Payne is received by Friday 01 October 2021.

Contact email address: LPayne@cheney.oxon.sch.uk

We hope students will continue to gain a great deal of enjoyment from having Maxi in school and that she continues to be an established part of life at Cheney School.

Kindest Regards,

Louise Marsh
Deputy Head of Cheney School