

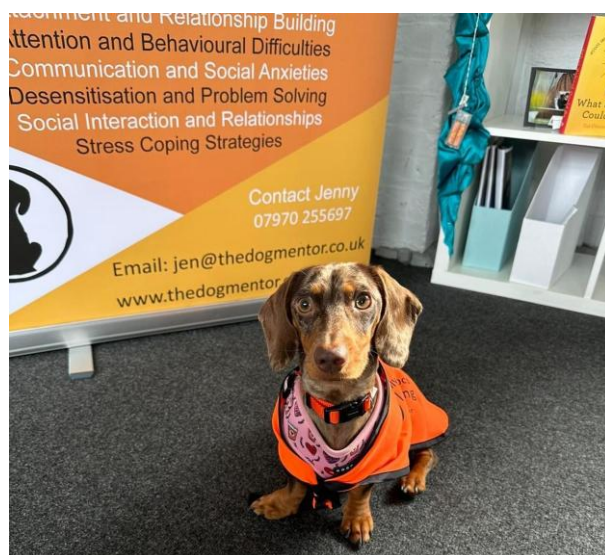
Friday 11th September 2026

Dear Parents/Carers,

## Re: Coco - The Dog Mentor

As many of you know, we have a school Dog Mentor, Coco, who visits Woodhill two days per week. Coco is a 4 year old Dachshund who lives with myself, Mrs Waterton, and has been coming into school for the last 3 years to support children in a variety of ways.

Woodhill has had a Dog Mentor for many, many years. Some of you may remember Benji, Mrs Carpenter's dog, who was followed by Sid, Miss Murphy's dog. All of our Dog Mentors have had specialist training and assessments by Jenny from [The Dog Mentor](http://www.thedogmentor.co.uk) to ensure that they have the best nature and most appropriate training to support children in school with a wide range of strategies and intervention groups.



We understand that having a dog on the school site also comes with some possible concerns, for example children with allergies, a fear of dogs or religious observances. Please be assured that children are never put in a situation where they would be at risk, feel uncomfortable or scared with Coco. In fact, we have many children who were initially wary of dogs but, over time, they have built up their confidence to stroke her and even give her treats! If you have any concerns about your child's interactions with Coco, please do not hesitate to email me: senco@inspirewoodhill.co.uk

Below are some FAQs from the Dog Mentors:

### Allergic reactions

Parents and educators may be concerned about potential allergic reactions to dogs within the school environment. The Dog Mentor ensures full cleanliness and grooming requirements, minimizing allergic contact. Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog. All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school.

### Risk Management

- **Supervision** - The Dog Mentor will supervise the dog at all times; children will not be left alone with the dog. The dog will be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of the trained Dog Mentor (Mrs Waterton).
- **Animal maintenance** - The Dog Mentor requires regular veterinarian checks for their dogs along with regular evaluations of their handlers to maintain their certification

status. The Dog Mentor handlers are trained to watch for potential harm to either a child or their own dog and are primarily responsible to manage the animal when on site.

- **Hygiene** - In the interest of health and hygiene The Dog Mentor will ensure the dog is toileted when taken out for short walks outside of the school grounds. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectants if needed.
- **Fear of dogs** – Some children have a fear of dogs; these fears may be based on prior negative interactions or from parents warnings to be careful around dogs which instils an emotional response of anxiety. The Dog Mentor programme is implemented by permission or voluntarily, and only in areas where unwanted contact with a dog can be avoided, the fear issue can be minimized. Experience and research has also shown that with proper guidance and handling, children can learn to overcome their fear of animals and with it, grow in respect and appreciation of them.

This year, Coco will be involved in targeted group work, lunch clubs, 1:1 work and ad-hoc sessions, therefore this letter is to provide parents with an opportunity to opt out of allowing their child to join in with these activities. If we do not hear from parents, we will assume that your child has permission to interact with our Dog Mentor.

Finally, if you have any questions, concerns or suggestions, please contact me using the email above.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mrs Waterton', written in a cursive style.

Mrs Waterton  
SENCo