



Hednesford Valley High

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Headteacher: Mr S. Stokes, BSc (Hons), PGCE, NASENCo, NPQH

Deputy Headteachers:

Mrs E Hill, BSc (Hons), QTS, NPQSL, MA

Mrs E Perry, BSc (Hons), PGCE, PGDip, MA, NASENCo

Associate Assistant Headteacher: Mr C Wall, BSc (Hons), PGCE, NPQSL

Our Ref: SSo/EPe/NDu

14th March 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

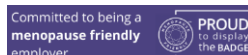
As a school we are always looking at ways to improve the experiences our students have. With this in mind, we have been extensively researching the benefits of having a Therapy Dog within school and have decided that this is something that we would like to do. At the moment this is in the consultation stages and will be subject to Governor approval.

Research has shown that having a therapy dog can:

- Have a calming effect on students.
- Improve behaviour and concentration.
- Reduce stress and improve self-esteem.
- Foster a sense of responsibility.
- Develop an enthusiasm for and enjoyment of animals.
- Encourage respect and boundaries
- Improve attendance.
- Promote wellbeing for students.

A Therapy Dog can also be used for students to read to, which lowers their inhibitions and increases their confidence when reading out loud.

Following the research we have undertaken, and considering the wide range of benefits that a Therapy Dog could bring to our school, I would like to introduce you to Monty.



Mrs Evans, Mr Hooper, Miss Foley and I will be fully trained as Therapy Dog handlers.

As part of the process to becoming a fully-fledged Therapy Dog, Monty will need time within Hednesford Valley High School and will complete affiliation days.

I would like to reassure parents/carers that rigorous research has been carried out before making this decision. A full risk assessment is in place and all contact between the Therapy Dog and our students will be carefully planned. At no point will the students be left alone with him. The reason we have chosen to train four staff members, is to ensure that there will always be someone available to facilitate therapy sessions with our students.

When Monty is not working with students he will be with Mrs Perry and Mrs Evans in our office. This meets the guidelines set out by Paws Therapy Dogs - the regulatory body we shall be working with.

We recognise some of our students may have allergies to dogs. We have therefore put the following measures in place:

- Movement of Monty around the school will be controlled
- Monty will be regularly groomed
- Students who are working with Monty will thoroughly wash their hands after contact

We fully understand that some children are very scared of dogs; this can often stem from a bad experience or from a fear held by a family member which has been passed on. We would therefore be very keen to work with students to overcome any fear or hesitance they may have, in a controlled way, should you wish for this to happen. Equally, if you would rather your child does not have contact, please inform us via the school office.

It is our intention to start introducing Monty to Hednesford Valley High School over the next few weeks, on a gradual basis. Monty's time within school will progressively be increased until he gains his full accreditation from Paws Therapy Dogs.

I hope you will join me in recognising the benefits and rewards of having a Therapy Dog at Hednesford Valley High School. **If, however you do have any queries or concerns regarding this, please do not hesitate to contact me.**

Yours sincerely



Mrs E Perry
Deputy Headteacher