

# Coláiste na hInse



*Aimsigh do Réalt Eolais*

28 August 2023

Dear parents and guardians,

We are delighted to inform you of the exciting news that Coláiste na hInse has been selected to take part in a new Community Dog Programme, run in conjunction with the Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind. As part of this programme we will be welcoming Quentin to the Coláiste in the coming week. Quentin is a three and a half year old Labrador retriever and has been in training for over two years. We hope he will become an integral part of our school community.

The Community Dog pilot programme is the first of its kind in Ireland. We will be the seventh school nationwide to be lucky enough to have a trained assistance dog in our school. Iníon Doyle will be the handler for Quentin and has attended training with the Irish Guide Dogs. She will also continue this training with Quentin throughout his time in school.

There are a huge number of benefits to having a school community dog, otherwise known as a Therapy Dog and there is an abundance of research to support this. Evidence indicates that a school therapy dog helps students on a social level, it can improve self-esteem and lift mood. Dogs can also teach compassion and respect for other living beings as well as relieving anxiety. Interaction with a dog provides tactile stimulation and can help build confidence. A dog provides a common talking point and can help students develop relationships and make friends.

Quentin will be slowly integrated into the clann. There will be clear signage on the door to inform students that he is in the building. He will be based in one space but may need to move with his handler on the lead during class time.

The daltaí will have a presentation from their Caoimhnóir where they can learn more about Quentin and ask questions about his arrival.

We hope you are as excited as we are about being a part of this pilot programme. Follow us closely on social media where we will keep you up to date on the activities Quentin is involved in.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Iníon Doyle [cdoyle.cni@lmetb.ie](mailto:cdoyle.cni@lmetb.ie)

Warm regards,

Sarah Ross