



7th May 2019

Broadstone Hall Primary School
Introduction of Companion Dog Visits

Dear Parents and Carers,

Some of you may be aware that the Department for Education and the Minister for Education have recently been promoting the benefits for children in having a companion pet in school. It is something that we have been considering at Broadstone Hall for a few years, but now we are in a position to introduce a companion dog into school, initially for one day a week.

The value of pet 'therapy' is widely accepted as a powerful aid to stimulation and communication. Studies have shown that the presence of companion animals can improve the well-being of children and lower the rate of anxiety and stress in more vulnerable children, simply by making the environment happier, more enjoyable and less forbidding. Children can all benefit from spending time with a companion dog either, to read to or stroke and studies have shown that such activities lower heart rate and increase the production of endorphins in the body, in other words reducing anxiety and stress.

When guide dogs and companion dogs are allowed on school premises, the animal's owner or handler must ensure that the animal is not a nuisance and that it does not interfere with the school environment. It is a requirement that our companion dog or any other companion animal is kept within the following recommended guidelines:

- All animals should be regularly groomed and checked for signs of infection or other illness.
- Pets that are ill should be diagnosed and treated by a vet and should not be allowed in the school premises until their health is restored.
- All animals should have received relevant inoculations.
- All animals should be wormed regularly every six months.
- Claws should be kept trimmed to reduce the risk of scratches.
- Pets should have been exercised before being allowed to work with children.
- All pets should have their coats cleaned regularly.

This dog is owned by a member of staff, is a recognised hypoallergenic breed, is regularly checked and vaccinated by a trained vet, has had obedience training and has the correct temperament to be near children.

We have written a full risk assessment for our companion dog, which is available on the website and we have checked that all arrangements and insurance are in line with LA expectations in this area.

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 who does not wish their child to interact with the companion dog is invited to contact the school to inform the Headteacher of their wishes.

Yours sincerely,
Simon Langley,

Headteacher
Broadstone Hall Primary School