



ALMOND HILL
• JUNIOR SCHOOL •

Almonds Lane, Stevenage,
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Headteacher: Mrs J. Lovelock

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to inform you that we have a special member within our school community, Miya the school dog. Miya is a chocolate brown Cocker Spaniel and belongs to Mrs Fordham. Cocker Spaniels are a breed of dog that are known for their mild temperament and she has a low shedding coat which minimises the chance of allergic reactions.

Miya was introduced to the school when she was 18 months old in July 2019. She has been coming in regularly for short sessions since from September 2019 and this time has gradually increased. Miya now attends one full day each week and is present at break and lunch times and is often seen in and around school so the children are used to her presence. Mrs Fordham cares for Miya out of school and will take full responsibility for her but Mrs Burgess (Pastoral Teaching Assistant) will be taking her for sessions with the children.

In assemblies, we discuss with the children the rules and expectations about having a school dog and we have also talked about many of the benefits too. All classes have discussed their ideas and the children have been overwhelmingly positive. Prior to Miya being introduced to the school we have undertaken a significant amount of research and are aware of many benefits to having a school dog including,

Benefits:

- 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;
- further promote our 'Well Being' agenda for pupils.

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.

The dog's main place of residence is an office area, which is secure and separate from the classrooms. Miya is still only young and continues to be introduced to the school community. If your child is going to work in regular, close contact the dog we will request permission before such work commences.

All children, should they wish, will have the opportunity to interact with her. Whilst moving around the school, the dog will be kept on a short lead and will always be with an adult.





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With parental permission, over a period of time, we have supported children who are fearful of dogs in approaching, handling and gaining in confidence with her in managing their fear. At no time will a child be made to meet with the dog.

We believe the children gain a great deal of enjoyment from having the school dog and feel she is becoming an established part of life at Almond Hill Junior School. However, should you have any queries or questions on the matter then please do not hesitate to contact the school. In the meantime, please see the FAQs attached.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Lovelock



School Dog

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?

A. The legal owner of the dog is Mrs Fordham who will care for the dog out of school hours and will bear the costs associated with it; the school budget will remain unaffected.

Q Will the dog be a distraction?

A. The dog will be kept in an office area away from classrooms. We will be careful to ensure that time spent with the school dog is shared among the children fairly. We will also ensure that children who are not involved in regular, direct contact with the dog are still able to participate in a number of ways, should they wish to do so.

Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

A. Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog.





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Q. How will hygiene be managed?

A. Children will continue to be spoken to and reminded during assemblies around hygiene when handling or working with animals. The adult carrying out sessions or interactions with Miya will also advise children to wash their hands directly after they have come into contact with her.

Q. How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?

A. In the interest of health and hygiene, our school dog will be toileted in a designated area and this will be picked up, contained and disposed of immediately in an outside bin.

Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A. Miya will be walked before and after school as well as at lunchtime. The dog will be kept in an office area and will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have unlimited access to water. We will work closely with other professionals to ensure the dog's welfare is always carefully considered.

Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?

A. We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for children and adults that are allergic to dogs. The breed of dog has also been chosen for its hypoallergenic properties. Individual needs will always be met and we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies.

Q My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?

A. Access to the dog will be carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have regular, close contact with her unless permission for this has been given. We hope to work closely with parents of children who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this and have already successfully done this with a number of children.

