

St Nicholas Catholic Primary School Newsletter

Parent's Special Edition

Summer 2019

Headteacher: Mrs A Folland



Dear Parents,

As you will see overleaf we are getting a school dog in September as part of our Mental Health Strategy. This is not a decision we have taken lightly and we have carried out much research over the last 5 months into the benefits of having a school dog and how to do it properly. Ali Brocksom has visited schools in Exeter who have a dog and also contacted a number of schools around the country. The response has been overwhelmingly positive.

The benefits of having a dog in school are huge. In a BBC report <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-47655600> Sir Anthony Seldon (Vice Chancellor of the University of Buckingham) said that every school should have a dog or another pet to reduce stress in the classroom. He said it is *"a powerfully cost-effective way of helping children feel more secure at schools"*. Sir Anthony was speaking at a conference about the need to improve young people's sense of wellbeing. The Education Secretary, Damian Hinds, says more schools seem to have "wellbeing dogs" and "the pets can really help".

Our Cavapoo puppy will be very gradually introduced to the children as he will be very young when he first comes to school. He will mainly be in the Office with Ali so you may see him if you come to Reception for help. Initially Ali will be concentrating on training and socializing him and getting him used to the school environment and other staff so contact with children will be minimal.

Cavapoos are a very pretty breed known to be very trainable and intelligent. They are also very calm and although they enjoy a walk they also love to lie on a sofa! He will be puppy trained with the Dog's Trust and we will also ask them to come into school to deliver an assembly or workshop in the Autumn term to help the children understand how they should behave and make sure he is looked after and safe. He will have all appropriate health checks and will only be in school when fit and well. This breed of dog often have hypoallergenic fur and are low shedding and so children with allergies should not be affected as much as other dogs.

All staff involved with him will be following strict rules to ensure his and the children's welfare.

- Ali will be fully responsible for him at all times and will ensure all training and commands are consistent when he is with other members of staff (such as in Belvedere).
- When not in the Office with Ali he will always be on a lead and never alone with a child.
- He will not be allowed to wander the school and will always have adult supervision.
- Toileting will take place away from any areas used by children.
- He will not be around any children who are eating any food and drink and will not be allowed in the school hall during lunch.
- We will have a full risk assessment for him, published on the school website and will ensure all insurance is in place.
- We will respect fully any parent's or child's wishes not to interact with him.
- Our School Dog Policy will still stand. No other dogs will be allowed on site.

We will write to you again in September introducing you to him and formally giving you the opportunity to opt your child out of any contact if they are nervous or afraid. In the meantime if you have any questions please contact Ali (abrocksom@stncls.uk).