



St. Giles' & St. George's Church of England Academy

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Dear Parent

We are writing to let you know that the school, with full support from the staff and Governors, has decided to take on a school dog. There are a number of reasons for this. The initial suggestion was made by the children as part of discussions on improvements they would like to see in the school. Our school dog is specially trained to work with children. We have undertaken a significant amount of research and are aware of many benefits to having a school dog:

- a calming effect on pupils, particularly those with behavioural or learning difficulties;
- improved behaviour and concentration, reduced stress and improved self-esteem;
- encouraging expression and participation in more withdrawn children
- fostering a sense of responsibility
- motivating pupils to think and to learn, as 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, and educational improvements with low achievers.
- helping children build confidence in reading. Please see separate article link below.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2011/feb/28/dogs-listen-to-children-reading>

Our school dog is trained to work with children who have special needs, suffer bereavement or who are upset in any way and in need of calm, comfort and space before being able to tell an adult what has upset them.

She will also be available to work with children (and adults) who have had bad experiences with dogs or other animals. With parental permission, over a period of time children who react fearfully to dogs will be supported in approaching, handling and gaining confidence in managing their fear.

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While the dog's main place of residence will be the office area, which is secure and separate from the classrooms, children will be able to interact with the dog under strict supervision at certain times of the week as long as parental permission has been given. The dog will not be given access to other visitors without supervision and mutual consent.

Harriet is a small Chocolate Labrador who as well as being trained has previously worked as a school dog. Labradors are by nature gentle and friendly creatures. They are also superb working dogs. We hope the children will gain a great deal of enjoyment from having their school dog and that she becomes an established part of life at St Giles' and St George's Academy

We understand that it is not possible for all families to have a family dog and therefore we hope that this is an opportunity for children to have a 'share' in a dog and gain from a relationship and contact on a regular basis. We do understand that some children may have an allergy to dogs and appreciate that there may be some parents who would not like their child to work with Harriet, thus in September there will be a form in your child's diary for you to sign to give your child permission to work with the school dog.

If you have any further questions we have a frequently asked questions document available to read on the school website.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Pointon

