KENSINGTON PRIMARY ACADEMY

SAPERE AUDE

Friday 15th October 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

You may have seen in the news recently, an increase in developing ways to help with children's wellbeing in schools. We are always working to ensure this is something we prioritise at school (using the MindUp programme is one example). It has become increasingly popular to have pets in schools as it is well researched that animals can have a calming effect.

With this in mind, we have decided to trial having a School Dog. There has been lots of research and press around this of late, with Sir Anthony Seldon stating that, "The quickest and biggest hit that we can make to improve mental health in our schools and to make them feel safe for children, is to have at least one dog in every single school in the country." The BBC has recently printed an article on the benefits of having a school dog as a pet.

West London Free School Primary and Earl's Court Free School Primary introduced a school dog in 2019 and have seen the benefits associated with a school dog with the children in their school.

One of the considerations we have taken into account is how the dog could be made available to the children (e.g. at playtime, in lessons, as a guided reading buddy etc), and the positive impact it would have. The dog will also need to be walked at lunchtimes which might be used as a good incentive for some children; others may enjoy the responsibility. Wherever the dog is in the school it will also be carefully supervised by it's adult.

We have carried out the appropriate risk assessments associated with this plan.

We have also thought carefully about how to introduce a dog into school, and Miss Hitchins has a very well-behaved Shih-Poo, who is calm and very used to being around children and adults. She has also attended obedience training.

We are initially proposing that the dog, Ada, could come to school two days a week after half term, and observing the impact on her presence around the school, with the possibility of increasing the number of days if there is a positive impact. We will of course take into consideration any children with allergies and ensure the dog does not go into those classrooms however Ada is a hypo-allergenic breed. Children who are possibly afraid of dogs could also benefit from learning to be around a dog; no one will have contact with her if they would prefer not to.

Please can you inform the office if your child has any severe allergies linked to this, and we can update our records and ensure the dog does not go into your child's classroom. Our risk assessment and policy will be available on the school website, along with a photo of Ada under the heading 'Our School'.

Best Wishes

Helen Barnes

Head of School