

The best for every child all the time

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Dear Parent/Carer,

We have a very special member of our school community. We have our very own school dog who will be comes into school and works with our pupils.

We have a Miniature Poodle named Nala who was born 06/06/24. We chose this breed for the following reasons:

- The breed is known to be child-friendly, lively, gentle mannered and affectionate, yet sensitive.
- The breed is known to be highly intelligent and respond excellently to training.

We wish to reassure parents that we undertook a significant amount of research into purchasing a school dog and believe the positive effects of such demonstrably outweigh any negatives. Some of the many benefits of having a school dog include the following:

- Cognitive development – building a companionship with a dog helps children stimulate their memory, problem-solving and game-playing skills. Having a school dog is known to increase enthusiasm for, and enjoyment of animals, which motivates children to think and learn.
- Social skills – dogs provide a mutual topic for conversation with others, and encourage responsibility, wellbeing and focussed interaction with others.
- Emotional skills – dogs improve self-esteem, acceptance from others and are known for improving moods. Dogs can also help children develop compassion and respect for other living things and can reduce children's anxiety. Building respect can improve children's relationships with each other, parents and teachers and shows them how to nurture and care for another living thing. If any children are suffering from bereavement or are particularly sad, dogs can provide children with comfort and friendship.

Respect

Curiosity

Creativity

Compassion

Perseverance

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- Physical development – interaction with dogs is known to reduce blood pressure, provide tactile stimulation, assist with pain management and give motivation for children to move and walk.
- Reading – school dogs are known to help children with their reading and literacy skills, through their calming presence and ability to listen to children read without being judgmental or critical. Children can build their confidence to read aloud to others through having a school dog.
- School community – having a school dog builds the sense of a family environment and togetherness.

Nala is owned by me. During the day, Nala is kept in my classroom and returns to my home once the school day is over. A suitable bed, food, water, toys and cleaning supplies are held for Nala, and she is toilet trained. I must stress that pupils are not expected to clean up any dog mess and we ensure that the school grounds are kept clean at all times.

Whenever Nala is being walked around the school, she is on a lead to ensure she is under control at all times. Nala has a sectioned off area in the corner of my classroom which is her safe space.

At no time will children be forced to interact with Nala or Nala forced to interact with the children.

We understand that parents may have concerns regarding bringing a school dog onto the premises, and I would like to use this letter to provide some reassurance to parents. We have undertaken a full risk assessment to ensure that any hazards can be adequately controlled. Below, I have listed some responses to questions and concerns which some parents may have.

My child is allergic to dogs, and I don't want them to have an allergic reaction.

As previously mentioned, we have chosen a Miniature Poodle, which means that she sheds infrequently and has a low shedding coat. This helps to significantly reduced risk of an allergic reaction. If, however, you would still prefer your child not to have direct contact with Nala, we will accommodate your request and ensure that arrangements are in place. We have undertaken a thorough risk assessment, which details the hygiene practices that will be in place – such as cleaning of hands and the environment after coming into contact with Nala.

Will the dog be properly cared for?

Nala is subject to a rigorous grooming process to prevent the risk of infection or disease. Nala is based in my classroom during the day and has an adequate supply of food and water. Nala has passed a health check from the vets, is fully vaccinated, wormed and has had flea treatment in line with current expectations. She is under a Pet Health Care Plan which will ensure future treatments will continue.

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

I (Miss Ackland) am the legal owner of the dog, and I care for Nala out of school hours. I bear the costs associated with Nala; the school budget remains unaffected. I insure Nala and she is also covered by the school's public liability insurance.

My child is scared of dogs.

We understand that some children may be fearful of dogs. Miniature Poodles are known for being extremely child friendly and Nala will provide the opportunity for children to overcome their fears. The training that Nala has had and continues to undergo helps to ensure that she is well-behaved, gentle and calm around children.

Is the dog well-behaved?

Nala has settled in to school life well. She can sit and stay, lay down, give paw and recalls when called. Nala has undergone and will continue to undergo training to ensure she is well-behaved at all times. She will be kept on a short lead whenever walking around school. There are times, as long as all of the children are happy, when she will be let off the lead within the classroom or school grounds.

We hope you look forward to meeting Nala and embrace all she has to offer to our school community. I hope to have provided reassurance to any concerns you may have via this letter; however, if you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me. Equally, should you wish your child NOT to come into direct contact with Nala, you can opt out by contacting me directly or by contacting the school office.

Yours sincerely,

Miss Ackland

tackland@andaras.org

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