

AMO/cal/2808190079

28 August 2019

Dear Parents and Carers

We are very excited to introduce you to a new member of staff who we will be welcoming to Mascalls Academy.

Levi was born on Thursday 23 May 2019, he is a 13-week old Cocker Spaniel puppy who is in training to become a school dog and is set to become an integral part of our school community. He will shortly be beginning his first set of puppy classes and in time we plan to train him to become a fully qualified Pet Therapy Dog. He has been named Levi after Claude Levi-Strauss, anthropologist and ethnologist whose work was key in the development of the theory of structuralism and structural anthropology.

Below we have set out the benefits of a school dog, and tried to address concerns you may have. What are the benefits of having a school dog? Numerous research studies have shown the benefits of therapy dogs in schools. Therapy dogs have been working in schools for the past 5 years across the UK. We already have therapy dogs working in other schools within the Leigh Academies Trust, having huge impact on children's academic, social and emotional progress. However, they have been commonplace in schools in the USA and Australia for many years. Evidence indicates that benefits include:

- Cognitive – companionship with a dog stimulates memory, problem-solving and game-playing.
- Social – a dog provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, encourages responsibility, wellbeing and focused interaction with others.
- Emotional – a school dog improves self-esteem, acceptance from others and lifts mood, often provoking laughter and fun. Dogs can also teach compassion and respect for other living things as well as relieving anxiety.
- Physical – interaction with a furry friend reduces blood pressure, provides tactile stimulation, assists with pain management, gives motivation to move, walk and stimulates the senses.
- Environmental – a dog in a school increases the sense of a family environment, with all of the above benefits continuing long after the school day is over.
- Reading – reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop literacy skills and build confidence, through both the calming effect the dog's presence has on children as well as the fact that a dog will listen to children read without being judgemental or critical. This comforting environment helps to nurture children's enthusiasm for reading and provides them with the confidence to read aloud.

Some concerns you might have:

My child is allergic to dogs:

It is understandable that some of you may be concerned about possible allergic reactions to a school dog. However, Levi will be subjected to the most thorough cleanliness and grooming regime. He will also only be allowed in situations with pupils who voluntarily wish to work with him. Should you wish your child not to have access to Levi, please do not hesitate to contact me via: enquiries@mascallsacademy.org.uk

Will Levi be properly cared for?

Levi will be extremely well looked after. He will live with Miss Mohamed and will come to school most days but will stay safely in the offices until satisfactory training has been completed. He will then, in time, listen to pupils read in a controlled setting and will always be accompanied by a trained adult. He will undergo thorough and rigorous training (beginning with puppy classes) so will be extremely well-behaved. Levi will be assessed by a Pets As Therapy Assessor before working with any children. Whilst Levi is in school he will have access to a dog crate in the offices where he can relax during the day. This is where he will spend most of his time initially. Levi will visit the vet regularly for all his injections as well as regular check-ups. If Levi is unwell for any reason he will not attend school.

My child is scared of dogs

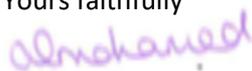
Some children may have had upsetting experiences and thus have a fear of. Levi will only be in contact with children whose parents give their permission. However, Levi's training will help him to be calm and gentle around children; he is already showing signs of a very loving and gentle nature. Experience and research have shown that, with proper guidance and handling, children can learn to overcome their fear of animals and grow in respect and appreciation for them.

The school has a 'no dogs' policy

Our school does have a 'no dogs' policy, however because Levi is training to be a Pets As Therapy dog, specific rules will apply to him and him alone as outlined in the Mascalls Academy Therapy Dog policy. He will be on a lead at all times when moving around the Academy and will always be accompanied by a trained adult. Levi will also be fully insured to carry out his role thus allowing him to be on the school site.

We hope you will join us in welcoming Levi to Mascalls Academy and embrace all that he has to offer the school. More information about this can be found on our website along with regular updates on the work he is doing. It is accepted that interacting with animals is not appropriate for all children but that for some it has the potential to provide many positive benefits. Any parent / carer who does not wish their child to interact with Levi is invited to write via email, to inform us of your wishes. **Permission for your child to have some contact with Levi, whilst with a trained adult during break or lunch times, will be presumed if no written communication to Miss Mohamed is received by Friday 6 September.** If you have any concerns regarding this, please do not hesitate to contact via email Miss Mohamed on anna.mohamed@mascallsacademy.org.uk.

Yours faithfully



Miss A Mohamed

Assistant Principal - Deputy Head of Earhart SENC