



Kensington Community Primary School

Brae Street
Liverpool L7 2QG
Head Teacher Kitty Davies

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Dear Parent / Guardian,

Please meet Beau, our favourite member of staff.

Beau was born on 15th December 2020 and is a F1 Labradoodle puppy. We selected a Labradoodle as they are known for their friendly, loving nature, are sociable and are good with children and other dogs. Beau is owned by Mrs Davies and lives with her and her family. She is training to become our Educational Assistance dog as part of our on-going mental health and well-being provision.

'Schools have an important role to play in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their pupils by developing approaches to the particular needs of their pupils' Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools (Nov 2018 DfE)

As part of her role, Beau will be trained to become a reading companion to children who find reading 'tricky'. It has been proven that struggling or emerging readers gain a higher desire to read and write to non-judgemental dogs who 'just listen' and do not make fun of them if they make a mistake. Children cannot fail in their relationship with a dog. Dogs do not judge them or make fun of them; they just offer unconditional affection.

It has also been proven that animals help with depression, anxiety and stress and promote happiness and wellbeing. Our belief is that having a School Dog will make the school feel a 'nicer' place to be for the whole school community. We are sure that her introduction will:

- Encourage positive behaviour
- Build self-confidence and increase self-esteem
- Encourage respect, responsibility and trust
- Improve reading skills by the children having fun and enjoying the experience
- Help with anger management and de-escalation of anger/frustration
- Improve attendance

Having a School Dog has been common practice in Australia and America for some time and there are now a growing number of schools in the UK with a School Dog, several schools in Liverpool already have dogs working in school. However, there is currently no benchmark standard of training in order for a dog to come into school.

Having carried out a lot of research and to ensure that our school dog is safe to work in an educational environment we have registered with the dog trainer David Skeels who is a qualified dog trainer with over 23 years' experience as an RAF police dog handler. He initially worked with Police dogs such as German Shepherds and later qualified as a specialist search dog handler, operating globally with his dogs.

Since leaving the RAF he has trained and used his own Labrador, Isla as a certified education assistance dog and until recently was working with the charity Dogs Helping Kids, as the Northern area representative, approved trainer and National Welfare Manager. Following the sad closure of the charity, he now offers bespoke consultation and training packages to schools, assisting with the training and implementation of school assistance dogs into their education setting. He is also a registered trainer with Scentwork UK and has qualified with the Open College Network as a qualified dog trainer.

It takes several years to train a therapy dog and during Beau's first year she will have little contact with our children and will be working behind the scenes. When she is at school, she will be based in Mrs Davies's office and when walked, be on a short lead, with an adult and away from our children. She will never be loose in school or without a trained member of staff.

In Beau's first year, pupils will learn more about animal welfare and how to behave around dogs and predominately learn to 'ignore her.' We ask that parents also follow this rule so that she learns to become accustomed to her school environment.

Please note that as mentioned, over the next year she will be working behind the scenes and that no child will be working with Beau. Children will be regularly updated with pictures and learn about safety around dogs. When Beau passes her first year assessment then permission for parents will be obtained before she works with any of our children.

There is a thorough risk assessment in place which can be accessed on the website detailing support in place for pupils with allergies or who may be anxious around dogs. At this stage, I would ask that you ensure you let school know via email schooladmin@kensingtonprimary.co.uk if your child is allergic or fearful of dogs so we can ensure we are well prepared.

If you have any further queries or questions then please do not hesitate to contact the school by emailing schooladmin@kensingtonprimary.co.uk

Yours sincerely

Mrs K Davies
Head Teacher