



BAYSIDE
ACADEMY

27th November 2020

Dear Parent(s)/Carer(s),

We are very excited to introduce you to a new member of our team at Bayside Academy. Arthur was born on 18th June 2020. He is a cocker spaniel who, with support from the staff and AAC members, is in training to become our school dog and is set to become an integral part of our school community from January.



You may be aware that there is a growing movement in many schools to reintroduce the concept of school pets as a way of teaching all children responsibility and providing a source of pleasure and learning. Of particular interest is the current move towards 'wellbeing dogs' or 'reading dogs'. These dogs provide a source of comfort and relaxation for children and adults who may need 'someone' to talk to or just someone who will accept them and offer comfort or a calming influence in their lives. There is much evidence that children who struggle with relationships or with managing their own emotions gain a great deal from spending time with a pet.

Academic research has shown that dogs working and helping in the school environment:

- Benefit children's social and emotional development
- Have a calming effect on pupils, particularly those with behavioural or learning difficulties
- Improve behaviour and concentration, reduce stress and improved self esteem
- Encourage expression and participation in more withdrawn children
- Foster a sense of responsibility
- Motivate pupils to think and to learn, as children have a high level of natural interest in, enthusiasm for and enjoyment of animals
- Encourage respect and thereby improving pupils' relationships with each other, parents and teachers
- Teach children to nurture and to have respect for life
- Help children build confidence in reading
- Reduce children's anxieties if they have a fear of dogs
- Reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop literacy skills and build confidence, helping to nurture children's enthusiasm for reading

We have chosen to have a cocker spaniel, as they are intelligent, devoted, loyal and clean. They are also patient, friendly, affectionate, love children and adapt well to new situations.

Potential concerns:

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, Arthur will be subjected to the most thorough cleanliness and grooming regime. He will also only be allowed in situations with people who voluntarily wish to work with him.

Will Arthur be properly cared for?

Arthur will be extremely well looked after. He will live with Mrs Tucker, his owner, and her family including Mrs Dean. He will come to school most days but will stay safely in the Principal's office until satisfactory induction has been completed, which we envisage will be after the Christmas break. He will then, in time, support pupils, including listening to reading and pastoral support in a controlled setting and always under adult supervision. He will undergo thorough and rigorous training (beginning with puppy classes) so will be extremely well-behaved. While Arthur is in school, he will have access to a penned area, including bedding, toys and water where he can relax during the day. This is where he will spend most of his time initially. Arthur has had his necessary injections and will visit the vet regularly for regular check-ups. If Arthur is unwell for any reason he will stay at home (with a dog sitter).

My child is scared of dogs

Some children may have had upsetting experiences and thus have a fear of dogs (or another animal), Arthur will only be in contact with children whose parent/carer have given their permission. Arthur's training will help him 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 but we will respect children's right to not come into contact with animals.

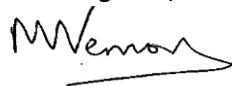
The school has a 'no dogs' policy

Our school does have a 'no dogs' policy, however because Arthur is training to be our wellbeing dog, specific rules will apply to him and him alone (please see our school dog policy on our website). He will be on a lead at all times when moving around the school property and will always be accompanied by an adult. Arthur will also be fully insured to carry out his role thus allowing him to be on the school site.

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 share in a dog and gain from a relationship and contact on a regular basis. We hope you will join us in welcoming Arthur to the Bayside Academy family and embrace all that he has to offer to the school.

Any parent who does not wish their child to interact with our school dog is invited to email the school office to inform me of your wishes. Alternatively, please feel free to contact me by telephone. Also, if your child has any known allergies to dogs then please inform us.

Kind regards,



Mr M Vernon
Principal

Bayside Academy

Sian Thomas, BEd (Hons), CEO - AAT
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