

# SEND DEPARTMENT NEWS

The SEND department at Kinton High School are very excited to announce that we will be getting a school dog! We know you will have some questions, so hopefully this newsletter can tell you everything you need to know.



This is Frank. He is a Yellow Labrador. He is a quick learner and very intelligent. He has quickly settled into a routine at home and meets lots of different people.

He is at home with two children aged 12 and 9 and loves being part of our family. He happily plays games with them and follows instructions when told. He loves other people and animals and regularly plays freely with other dogs off the lead.

Frank is an inquisitive dog and likes to investigate, we have two guinea pigs and he likes to watch them running out in their run.

To sum up Frank's temperament, he loves to be in the company of people and receiving attention. He loves being exercised on and off the lead and he is a calm and well behaved dog.

- James Daly, Head of Y8 and Frank's owner.



## The Benefits of a School Dog

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

1

Improves academic achievement.

5

Increased confidence.

2

Increases literacy skills.

6

Teaches responsibility and respect to all life.

3

Calming behaviours.

7

Helps to prevent truancy.

### **Behaviour:**

In some schools, dogs are making a difference in the behaviour of pupils. Researchers report that students can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel. Behaviour problems occur in school and these can interfere with learning. Some schools are using dogs to improve behaviour problems by promoting positive behaviour in students. In a controlled study, students were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Students' behaviour improved toward teachers, and students also showed more confidence and responsibility. Additionally, parents reported that children seemed more interested in school as a result of having a dog at school.

### **Attendance:**

Case study: Mandy was a student with poor attendance and truancy. Mandy was encouraged back into school using caring for River, a dog, as an incentive. By telling Mandy that "if she didn't come to school to care for him, he wouldn't get walks, water or love," Mandy came to school almost every day for the rest of the year, only missing two days.

### **Education:**

Reading programmes with dogs are doing wonders for some students. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even adults are likely to be less scared to read to a dog. "It might be less stressful for a child to read aloud to a dog than to a teacher or a peer. After all, a dog won't judge or correct you." Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud. With the presence of a "calm and well-trained dog," students find social support and peer interaction.

Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have student read to them or join a group of children in the library whilst they are having a book reading session. Dogs give unconditional acceptance, as they are non-judgmental, which is especially crucial to struggling, emerging readers. The dogs also provide confidence to children as they do not make fun of them when they read,. Research has proved that students who read to dogs show an increase in reading levels, word recognition, a higher desire to read and write, and an increase in intra and interpersonal skills among the students they mix with.

### **Social Development:**

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching student's social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help older students build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Older students use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower students.

With a dog in school, students have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving students in the daily care of classroom dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The students also learn about responsibility, caring, and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school.

### **As a reward:**

Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the students. Those students who have performed incredibly well during the week or those who have made progress in a certain subject, or those who have achieved tasks set for them, will be rewarded with spending time during lunch or break to interact with these dogs. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities students will be allowed to undertake. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem.

Support Dogs can work with students on a one-one basis and will especially help those students who have been bullied, abused, going through upsetting/difficult times or even scared/phobic of dogs. The dog will bring much joy and help to all the students they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the students they are spending time with. Students who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **Will the dog be a distraction?**

Frank's time will be split between the office area of the SENCO and the office area of our Heads of House. The offices are separate from the classrooms / playground area to ensure he only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision.

The dog will also have a space to spend time within Horizon and the field area where children can interact safely. He could also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation, following consultation with staff beforehand.

## **Has a risk assessment been undertaken?**

Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog.

## **How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?**

In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks. Only staff members will do this and clear away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground. Dog bags will be sealed and disposed in designated bin. Hands must be washed immediately afterwards.

## **Will my child be left alone with the dog?**

No, your child will never be alone with Frank. Frank will always be supervised by an adult, and he will not be in a space with lots of pupils, creating over stimulation. All interactions with Frank will be in a calm and stable environment.

## **How will the dog's welfare be considered?**

Frank will be walked regularly and given free time outside. Parents will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to be able to walk with a member of staff and the dog during that time. This will also be used as a behaviour reward, in line with our behaviour policy. Frank will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. He will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have access to food and water. He will have timetabled 'quiet time' with no interaction with children during the day. We will work carefully to ensure his welfare is always considered.

## **How will this be managed where staff/children & visitors have allergies?**

Staff/children & visitors will not need to touch the dog, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for children and adults that are allergic to dogs. Individual needs will always be met and we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies. The breed of dog is known for minimal moulting, he is given a high quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possible allergens.

## **My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?**

Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with Frank unless they wish to. We hope to work closely with parents of children who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.

**If you have any further questions, please email [enquiries@kinetonhighschool.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@kinetonhighschool.org.uk)**