



*Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School and
Nursery*
Headteacher Mr C Beazeley
Windermere Road, Southend on Sea, Essex, SS1 2RF
Phone: 01702 534546
Email: office@sacredheart.southend.sch.uk



Dear Parents/Carers,

5th January 2024

We are writing to let you know of some exciting news for Sacred Heart Catholic School. Mrs White, our new SENCO, has joined our school and will be bringing in a 'school dog', called Milo, who will be a regular attender. Milo is 3.5 years old small Shihpoo (cross breed of a shih tzu and poodle). Shihpoos are a breed of dog that are known for their mild temperament, and he has a hypo-allergenic coat.

In school, we will discuss with the children the rules, expectations and benefits of having a dog in school. Milo was a regular visitor at Mrs White's previous school and there are many benefits to having a school dog including some of those listed below. This new 'visitor' will be in addition to our therapy dog who visits on a Tuesday afternoon.

Benefits:

- a calming effect on pupils.
- improved behaviour and concentration, reduced stress and improved self-esteem.
- encouraging expression, participation and confidence for all children.
- fostering a sense of responsibility.
- motivating pupils to think and to learn.
- most children have a high level of natural interest in, enthusiasm for and enjoyment of animals.
- encouraging respect and thereby improving pupils' relationships with each other.
- teaching children to nurture and respect life.
- helping work undertaken with the most vulnerable children.
- helping children build confidence in reading.
- improving attendance.
- further promote our 'wellbeing' agenda for pupils.

Dogs are increasingly being used in schools with great success and some of you may have seen in the media that they are now being used in some hospitals, as the emotional health benefits they bring are just so vast.

The dog's main place of residence will be the office area, which is secure and separate from the classrooms. Milo will slowly be introduced to the school community, and we will begin by introducing him to small numbers of children. Over the year, all children will have the opportunity to interact with Milo as he begins to visit more classrooms and moves around the school more. Whilst moving around the school, the dog will be kept on a short lead and will always be with an adult.

Please understand that we will do everything we can to reassure children who are fearful and that under no circumstances will they be forced to meet with the dog. We will publish pictures of the dog, Milo, via our social media, so that everyone can enjoy his development.

Headteacher: Mr C Beazeley
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We hope the children will gain a great deal of enjoyment from having a dog in school and that he becomes an established part of life at Sacred Heart Catholic School. **If your child is happy to interact with the school dog, there is no further action.**

However, should you have any queries or questions on the matter then please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Kerri White
SENCO

Permission slip for working with the school dog

Please tick as appropriate:

- My child is a little nervous of dogs, but I am happy for him/her to be involved in all aspects of caring for the dog in school, including supervised walks at break time.
- My child is fearful of dogs but, in time, I would like them to work with the dog to develop their confidence with and understanding of dogs.
- I do not give permission for my child to come into direct contact with the dog.

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