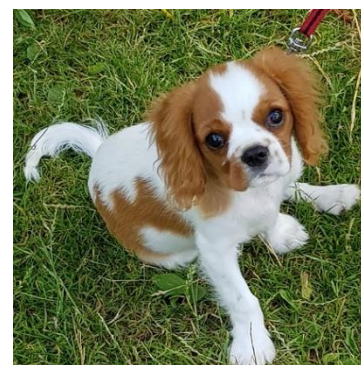


14th September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are very excited to introduce you to a new member of our team at Queen's Park Academy. Henry is a 6 month old Cavalier King Charles Spaniel who, with the support from the staff at QPA, is in training to become our school dog and is set to become an integral part of our school community.



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 'well being 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.

In summary, 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, reduced stress and improve self esteem
- Encourage expression and participation in more withdrawn children
- Foster a sense of responsibility
- Motivate pupils to think and learn, as children have a high level of natural interest in, enthusiasm for and enjoyment of animals
- Encourage respect and thereby improving pupils' relationship 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 to develop literacy skills and build confidence, helping nurture children's enthusiasm for reading

We have chosen to have a Cavalier as they are intelligent, devoted, loyal and clean. They are also patient, friendly, affectionate, love children and adapt well to new situations. They have a calm disposition and are an excellent breed to work with children and adults.

Queen's Park Academy

Sian Thomas, BEd (Hons), CEO - AAT
 Alexandra Prout, BA, Director of Primary Education, NLE
 Sarah Simmons, BEd (Hons), Principal

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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. Henry will be subjected to the most thorough cleanliness and grooming regime. He is not a high moulting breed and will only be allowed in situations with people who voluntarily wish to work with him.

Will Henry be properly cared for

Henry will be extremely well looked after. He will live with Mrs Simmons and her family, including her 11 and 7 year old children and 2 cats. He will come to school most days but will stay safely in the school 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 an adult. He will undergo thorough and rigorous training (beginning with puppy classes) so will be extremely well behaved. While Henry is in school, he will have access to a dog pen in the office where he can relax during the day. This is where he will spend most of his time initially. Henry has had his necessary injections and will visit the vet regularly for regular check-ups. If Henry 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 other animals). Henry will only be in contact with children whose parents have given their permission. However, Henry'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.

The school has a 'no dogs' policy

Our school does have a 'no dogs' policy, however because Henry 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. Henry will also be insured to carry out his role, thus allowing him to be a working dog.

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 dig and gain from a relationship and contact on a regular basis. We hope you will join us in welcoming Henry to the QPA family and embrace all that he has to offer the school.

Any parent that does not wish their child to interact with our school dog is invited to write to me to inform me of your wishes. Alternatively, please feel free to contact me by telephone. Also, if your child has a known allergy to dogs, please inform us.

Kind regards,

Mrs Simmons
Principal

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