



St Regis

Church of England Academy

16th November 2023

Dear Parent/Carer

We are pleased to announce that we will be introducing our own school dogs and have joined The Dog Mentor Programme. The Dog Mentor programme has built upon the benefits of the human-animal bond by providing children positive experiences with dogs that can help them educationally, developmentally, emotionally and socially.

Over the last nine years The Dog Mentor programme has been proven to have a positive impact on children in all areas including self-esteem, behaviour, peer relationships and better engagement skills. These improvements then result in improved academic achievement.

Mr Green and Mr and Mrs Rogers will be bringing their dogs, Orla and Brian, into school regularly from 17th November 2023 following their training which took place last Wednesday 15th. We envisage that The Dog Mentor Programme will bring a positive influence into the school environment as a whole and look forward to the impact The Dog Mentor programme will have on our children. Full training has been given to both Orla and Brian and our staff owners, as well as Miss Nicholls-Owen (pastoral team), who will work with them in order to ensure that the welfare of everyone involved is maintained as a top priority.

Both dogs completed their assessment and now hold a licence to be support/assistance dogs (dog mentors). We are now an affiliated school to the programme that will bring many benefits across pastoral and curriculum areas of the school.



Please feel free to visit The Dog Mentor's website and Facebook page for more details and to see some of the schools that have introduced their dogs into school:

www.thedogmentor.co.uk

www.facebook.com/thedogmentor

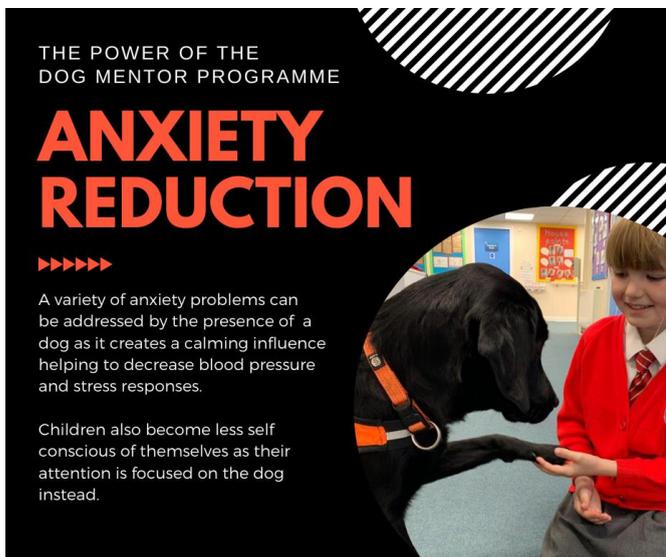
- please see the post from 15th Nov to see our dogs in training.

The Power of the Dog Mentor programme can help our children improve their abilities to:

- pay attention and focus
- calm down when upset or stressed
- make better decisions

It also helps them develop:

- awareness of inner and outer experiences
- the ability to recognise their thoughts as ‘just thoughts’
- the ability to recognise when their attention has wandered
- strategies and tools for impulse control



THE POWER OF THE DOG MENTOR PROGRAMME

ANXIETY REDUCTION

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A variety of anxiety problems can be addressed by the presence of a dog as it creates a calming influence helping to decrease blood pressure and stress responses.

Children also become less self conscious of themselves as their attention is focused on the dog instead.



The Power of the Dog Mentor Programme

ATTACHMENT AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

The ability to form and sustain relationships are natural for most children, but some find it difficult to acquire these skills for various reasons and need some help to acquire them. Working alongside a dog children are able to grow in confidence because they bond with someone who is calm, affectionate and more importantly non-judgmental and non-critical. Children experience a positive impact both physically and mentally.



Here they are:

Orla, 4 years old (left)

Brian, 6 years old (right)

I hope that you share our excitement, please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have. We will be using the newsletter and social media initially to share updates and I hope you get the opportunity to meet the dogs as well. I have included some FAQ's at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Green', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr C Green

Vice Principal – Quality of Education



Dogs in School - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Questions and concerns are inevitable when it comes to introducing a new and perhaps perceived radical programme into a school.

Most frequently asked questions relate to the following areas:

- Allergic Reactions
- Risk Management

Having participated in and completed the Dog Mentor Programme, the dog owners and handlers, and the dogs, have been deemed highly suitable for work in schools. We will ensure that teachers and students act appropriately with and around the dogs through education, training and awareness will continue to work with qualified and competent therapy dog organisations like The Dog Mentor.

School dogs are now being used across the country. By comparison, numerous health centres such as hospitals are using therapy dogs and their requirements may be even more demanding.

Allergic reactions

Parents and educators may be concerned about potential allergic reactions to dogs within the school environment. The Dog Mentor ensure full cleanliness and grooming requirements minimizing allergic contact. Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog. All pupils will know there is a dog in school. The dogs wear hi-vis coats and collars and are always with their handler. The dogs will regularly be walked around the school and outside areas.

All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school.

Where specific one-to-one pupil/parent and dog activities are planned then consent will be sought (as these activities may run for several weeks or terms).

Risk Management

· Supervision - The Dog Mentor will supervise the dog at all times, children will not be left alone with the dog. The dog will be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of the trained Dog Mentor. Easily identifiable by bright colour/hi vis lead, collar/coat/bandana.

· Animal maintenance - The Dog Mentor requires regular veterinarian checks for their dogs along with regular evaluations of their handlers to maintain their certification status. The Dog Mentor handlers are trained to watch for potential harm to either a child or their own dog and are primarily responsible to manage the animal when on site.

· Hygiene - In the interest of health and hygiene The Dog Mentor will ensure the dog is toileted when taken out for short walks in the grounds. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed.

· Fear of dogs – Some children have a fear of dogs, these fears may be based on prior negative interactions or from parents warnings to be careful around dogs which instils an emotional response of anxiety. The Dog Mentor programme is implemented where unwanted contact with a dog can be avoided, the fear issue can be minimized. Experience and research has also shown that with proper guidance and handling, children can learn to overcome their fear of animals and with it, grow in respect and appreciation of them. This is something we hope can support pupils.

The school and the dogs are fully insured.

