

9 September 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Last year we successfully introduced Hope, our Assistance and Wellbeing dog to the school. Hope is owned by Helpful Hounds, a fantastic charity that places assistance and therapy dogs with school and with families. She has already undergone training to enable her to work as an assistance dog and has previously worked in another Hampshire school.

What are the benefits of a school dog?

There will be numerous benefits to pupils and adults alike including:

- 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, as 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, parents and teachers;
- 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 'Well Being' agenda for pupils.

How has the school planned for this?

- A full risk assessment and policy has been written and will be available on the website at <https://www.testvalley.hants.sch.uk/hope-our-assistance-dog/>
- All contact will be carefully planned and children will not be left unsupervised with Hope unless they are comfortable around dogs and have shown that they can care for her correctly
- When not working, Hope will be based in a quiet area of the school to ensure her wellbeing

What about allergies?

- Hope is a Black Labrador, a short-haired breed that has low allergy qualities
- All areas of the school are vacuumed and surfaces are wiped down daily
- Movement around the school will be controlled
- Any pupil working with the dog will be reminded to wash their hands
- Hope will be kept away from any pupil with an allergy to pet hair

Lots of parents and carers who welcomed the addition of Hope to our school and we received many lovely comments about her. However, if any parent does not wish their child to interact with the dog, please to write to the school office to inform us of your wishes.

Yours sincerely

Mr A Page  
Deputy Headteacher

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