



St. Mary's CofE Primary

'Learning for Life'

Dear Parents/Carers

RE: WELLBEING DOG

The school has a wellbeing dog, Meeka, who belongs to Mrs Chambers. Meeka is a St Berdoodle (a cross between a St Bernard and a Standard Poodle) and is a low-shedding (hypoallergenic) breed, which reduces the chance of allergies.

Meeka comes into school most days and is based in Mrs Chambers office, where there is a penned area and also a crate. Meeka is kept on a lead and Mrs Chambers is always present when children interact with Meeka.

The school has followed Surrey County Council's 'Dogs in Schools Guidance' in writing our Wellbeing Dog Policy and Well Being Dog Risk Assessment.

Benefit of school dogs

The value of dogs in schools has been widely accepted and research has shown that they can help develop pupils' reading skills, improve behaviour, attendance and academic confidence, as well as increasing their understanding of responsibility and helping them develop empathy and nurturing skills. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog, resulting in improved well-being, lowered levels of anxiety and making the school environment a friendly, happy and homely place.

Scared/phobia of dogs / allergic to dogs

We want all pupils to be able to benefit from having a school wellbeing dog, however appreciate that some pupils may be scared/have a phobia of dogs or be allergic to dogs and that it therefore may not be appropriate for some children to interact with Meeka.

If your child is scared/has a phobia of dogs, is allergic to dogs or you do not want your child to interact with Meeka, please notify the school office by email (info@stmarys-byfleet.surrey.sch.uk) **before your child starts school** so that we ensure appropriate measure are in place. If your child is allergic to dogs, you will also need to complete the Pupil Allergy Form.

Kind regards

The School Office