

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Charles Street, St, Helens, Merseyside, WA10 1LN

Telephone: (01744) 678319

Headteacher - Mrs Carol Gillespie

Web Address: <http://www.holycrossprimarysthelens.co.uk> E-mail: holycross@sthelens.org.uk

15th July 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

As you know, we have this week welcomed Fig, our school dog. Fig will live with Mrs Gillespie and come in to school every day to be alongside the children. There will be a long period of integration into the school, with the children taught how to act near the dog, as well as the dog receiving extensive training. There are many benefits of having a school dog, as detailed below –

- 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;
- Developing an 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;
- Helping overcome a fear of dogs;
- Increasing staff morale and wellbeing;
- Developing the understanding of unconditional love;
- Supporting with the development of cooperative play;
- Supporting children to develop empathy;
- Further promote our Well Being agenda for pupils.



St Helens
Chamber
Member



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How has the school planned for this?

- Rigorous research has been carried out to ensure that we have selected the most suitable breed of dog for our school, pupils and staff; Fig is a Corgipoo, a mixed breed of Pembroke Welsh Corgi and Poodle. Both Corgis and Poodles are known to be intelligent dogs with excellent obedience who are easy to train and have good temperaments.
- Mrs Gillespie visited the home of the breeder to ensure that the puppy's temperament, and that of its parents, is suitable for interaction with children;
- A full risk assessment and policy has been written and will be available on the website;
- When the dog begins working with children, individual consent will be sought for each child to have contact;
- All contact will be carefully planned and children will not be left unsupervised with the dog;
- When not working, the dog will be based in one of the school offices with either Mrs Gillespie, Miss Davies, Ms Chauveau or Mrs Swaine.

Will Fig be properly cared for?

Fig will be extremely well looked after. She lives with Mrs Gillespie and her family and at first, will come into our schools but will stay safely in a crate in a quiet non-teaching area of school. Mrs Gillespie will introduce her to our environments and she will then work with some of our children but will always be accompanied by an adult.

She will be kept clean and well-groomed at home and children will have to wash their hands and after contact.

What about allergies?

- Our dog is a Corgipoo and the breed has low allergy and non-shedding qualities;
- All areas of the school are vacuumed and surfaces are wiped down daily;



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- Movement around the school will be controlled;
- Any child working with the dog will wash their hands.

How can I find out more information?

- We aim to put a regular blog onto our website to keep parents and children up to date on the progress of the school dog.
- A risk assessment has been written, and this, along with Frequently Asked Questions can be found on our school website

We hope you will join us in welcoming Fig to our Holy Cross family and embrace all that she has to offer the school. Although we do not envisage Fig coming into frequent contact with the children for several months, there will be times when she is introduced to classes and assemblies.

With thanks for your continued support

Mrs C Gillespie

Headteacher



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Letter of consent regarding School Dog

Name of child/ren

Class/es

Please tick as appropriate:

- I am happy for my child to be involved with all aspects of caring for the school dog.
- My child is a little nervous of dogs, but I am happy for him/her to be involved with all aspects of caring for the school dog.
- 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 dogs.
- My child has an allergy which means they must not come into contact with the dog.
- I do not give permission for my child to come into direct contact with the dog.

SignedParent/Carer



St Helens Chamber Member

