



26-08-20

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Over the last year we have been considering the possibility of engaging a dog who would work in our school as part of our on-going provision for wellbeing and mental health. I am pleased to inform you that Nala, an emotional support dog will be a new member of our school community from next week. The dog will belong to our school counsellor, Clair Breen, and will be living with her on a full time basis. Nala is already trained as an Emotional Support dog through the Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind and we are delighted to be part of a pilot programme they are running. Clair has been working alongside The Irish Guide dogs since January in preparation for welcoming 'Nala' to The King's Hospital.

I understand there may be some questions:

What are the benefits of a school dog?

- Studies have shown that the presence of companion animals can improve the well-being of children and lower anxiety levels, simply by making the environment happier and more enjoyable
- Encouraging expression, participation and confidence;
- Fostering a sense of responsibility.

How has the school planned for this?

- A full risk assessment has been completed
- When the dog begins working with students, consent will be sought for each child to have contact
- Any parent who does not wish their child to interact with the dog, is invited to write to Clair Breen to inform her of your wishes.
- All contact will be carefully planned and students will not be left unsupervised with the dog
- When not working, the dog will be based in the school counsellors room
- Movement around the school will be controlled

How can I find out more information?

Over the next term, Nala needs to spend time in school getting used to her surroundings, and all of us! I know there will be lots of parents and guardians who support the new addition to our school however, if there are any further questions please contact Clair Breen counsellor@thekingshospital.ie.

We look forward to updating you on her progress

Mark Ronan

Let me introduce you to Nala.

