

Dear Families,

We are very excited to introduce you to a new member of staff who we will be welcoming to BSQ.

Dora is a 4 year old dog who is going to become a Literacy Mentor to some of our primary students.

Below we have set out the benefits of a school dog, and tried to address concerns you may have.

What are the benefits of having a school dog?

Numerous research studies have shown the benefits of therapy dogs in schools. Therapy dogs have been working in schools for the past 5 years across the UK. However, they have been commonplace in schools in the USA and Australia for many years. Here in Ecuador, this is still a new field that we are excited to put in place for the benefit of our students.

Evidence indicates that benefits include:

* Cognitive – companionship with a dog stimulates memory, problem-solving and game-playing
* Social – a dog provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, encourages responsibility, wellbeing and focused interaction with others
* Emotional – a school dog improves self-esteem, acceptance from others and lifts mood, often provoking laughter and fun. Dogs can also teach compassion and respect for other living things as well as relieving anxiety.
* Physical – interaction with a furry friend reduces blood pressure, provides tactile stimulation, assists with pain management, gives motivation to move, walk and stimulates the senses
* Environmental – a dog in a school increases the sense of a family environment, with all of the above benefits continuing long after the school day is over.
* Reading – reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop literacy skills and build confidence, through both the calming effect the dog’s presence has on children as well as the fact that a dog will listen to children read without being judgemental or critical. This comforting environment helps to nurture children’s enthusiasm for reading and provides them with the confidence to read aloud.

Some concerns you might have

My child is allergic to dogs

* It is understandable that some of you may be concerned about possible allergic reactions to a school dog. However, Dora is compliant with all vaccines and injections and will be subjected to the most thorough cleanliness and grooming regime. She will also only be allowed in situations with students who voluntarily wish to work with her.

Will Dora be properly cared for?

* Dora will be extremely well looked after. She lives off campus and will be coming to work on Fridays, with a properly marked vest. She will then, in time, listen to students read in a controlled setting and will always be accompanied by an adult. While Dora is in school she will have access to her basket in the SENCo office where she can relax during the day. This is where she will spend most of her time. During all her breaks, she will be on a lead with a staff member. If Dora is unwell for any reason she will stay at home.

My child is scared of dogs

* Some children may have had upsetting experiences and therefore have a fear of dogs (or another animal). Dora will only be in contact with children whose parents have given their permission. However, Dora’s temperament is very calm and sweet, making her gentle around children. Experience and research have shown that, with proper guidance and handling, children can learn to overcome their fear of animals and grow in respect and appreciation for them.

We hope you will join us in welcoming Dora to the British School Quito family and embrace all that she has to offer the school. More information about this can be requested to Ms. Sofia Leon Garcia, our SENCo at [sleon@britishschoolquito.edu.ec](mailto:sleon@britishschoolquito.edu.ec)

If you have any concerns regarding this please do not hesitate to contact us.