



TreeHouse school moves in

By Sheila Armstrong

The TreeHouse Trust was originally set up in 1997 by concerned parents of autistic children in Camden but is now at Woodside Avenue, Muswell Hill.

In the average Local Education Authority there are likely to be around 600 autistic children. Autism covers a wide range of behaviours mainly to do with inability to communicate. There are increasing numbers of children who are diagnosed as having it. It is a term that covers children who may have

a remarkable talent in one area or those unable to communicate who are described as being in a world of their own. One third of autistics never acquire speech. Four times more boys than girls are affected and there is no cure.

Mainstream or special

Because autistic children can have such different educational needs there is no one solution for their schooling and there are different educational provisions and approaches. Some children can attend

mainstream schools, maybe within a specialist unit. Others benefit from special education with teachers trained to help those with autism.

One to one

The methods used at TreeHouse school are based on ABA (applied behaviour analysis). Children are given an individual education plan tailored to their needs and work on this on a one to one basis for a large part of the school day as well as taking part in group activities. In order to build up their skills children are taught using a three-step process and get positive reinforcement for everything they do throughout the day.

Although TreeHouse is an independent charity children may be referred there by the LEA in which case they will pay the fees.

TreeHouse can be contacted for more information on 020 8815 5424 or at www.treehouse.org.uk.

Sam the PAT dog visits Martin Junior School

By Kathryn Salomon

Sam, my Greyhound, and I attended an assembly at Martin Junior School in East Finchley in order to demonstrate the Pets as Therapy Temperament Test. PAT is a charity which takes dogs and cats to visit sick or lonely people to help them feel better. The test is designed to ensure that only gentle, good tempered dogs become PAT dogs. When a dog has passed the test, the charity insures it for visits to hospitals, schools or residential homes etc.



A pupil at Martin Junior School helps to demonstrate the Pets as Therapy Temperament Test. Photo by Derek Ball

Calm and gentle

A pupil led Sam up and down the hall to demonstrate that he walks well on the lead. A PAT dog must be calm and controlled; you can't have one running wildly around a hospital ward or jumping up at everyone! Then another child knelt down and put both arms around him to show that being held in this manner did not disturb him. A PAT dog must not become distressed when handled. It is important

that a PAT dog can be touched on every part of his body so a pupil gently touched his ears, legs, neck, back and tail. Some dominant dogs do not like to be groomed so a pupil brushed Sam and he stood there placidly.

In the course of their visits PAT dogs have to meet many people with walking sticks, so another pupil walked up and down the hall with a stick, pretending to be a 'poorly person' and Sam, of course, didn't mind. In fact, because he meets so many people with sticks and wheelchairs he generally pays more attention to them!

Hospitals (and schools) can be noisy places so if someone drops a tray of instruments it is most important that the dog is not frightened. Firstly a nervous dog would be unhappy on visits and secondly it could react adversely. So a pupil dropped a loud, noisy object on the floor and Sam didn't bat an eyelid.

A treat for a star

Lastly, the people we visit love to give Sam treats and a PAT dog must accept a treat gently (as Sam does) and not launch greedily at their fingers. So my last helper rewarded Sam for demonstrating the test so ably. The children then asked so many thoughtful questions that Maggie Driscoll, the Head Teacher, allowed the assembly to run over time. The visit was obviously a success and Sam was a star!

For information about Pets as Therapy telephone 0870 240 1239 or visit www.petsastherapy.org

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Lenor outside the Odeon

Film cameras were outside Muswell Hill Odeon last month, while yellow-jacketed men with walkie-talkies held back the shopping crowds. Who were the people who were allowed to stroll past the cinema with shopping bags? Extras, apparently.

It was all to do with a commercial advertising Lenor and the cameras were concentrating on a couple in a car. So watch your screens!

Are you covered for your journey?

By Diana Cormack

For a number of years most travellers in Europe will have been aware that, as well as having travel insurance, it has been advisable to carry a copy of your E111 form. This entitles you to medical treatment free or at a reduced rate in any European Union country as well as in Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Sweden. Only treatment provided under the state scheme is covered.

However, not a lot of people know that their E111 form became invalid at the end of 2004. As a result of recent changes to European law, it is to be replaced by a new European Health Insurance Card next year. In the interim period, travellers need to fill in another E111 form.

The new form is now issued on an individual basis, though families will only need to complete one application form in order to gain an E111 for each member. This will be valid until December 2005.

THE ARCHER has found few locals who are aware of the situation but if you are plan-

ning to travel in Europe this year it is important that you fill in the appropriate forms. They are obtainable from the Post Office free of charge or can be downloaded at www.dh.gov.uk/travellers.

The European Health Insurance Card will automatically be issued to those who, when applying for the new interim E111, tick the box relevant to receiving the card.

Remember, the E111 does not cover you for things like repatriation in the event of an accident or serious illness, so you should always take out appropriate travel insurance too.

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