



Imogen is 'Top Dog' at Battersea Dogs & Cats Home

Eleven year old Imogen Richings from Coulsdon has recently (Thursday 1st November) had her dearest wish to spend a day behind the scenes at Battersea Dogs & Cats Home granted by Starlight Children's Foundation, the UK's leading wish granting charity for children with serious and terminal illnesses.

In September 2011, Imogen was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia, which is a life-threatening cancer of the white blood cells. To fight the disease, Imogen had to undergo an intensive course of chemotherapy, which was very unpleasant for her. She also had to spend lots of time in hospital and away from home but she was very brave and faced her treatment with real determination.

While Imogen has lots of interests, including cooking and playing the piano, animals are her passion. She has a cat called Poppy, who is a much-loved member of the family, and cats and dogs are Imogen's favourite animals.

Imogen's mother Celia heard about Starlight's wish granting programme and, knowing how brave Imogen has been throughout her illness, she thought she really deserved a special treat. Celia contacted Starlight and the charity was delighted to offer Imogen a wish.

Imogen has always longed to visit world-famous animal charity Battersea Dogs & Cats Home. For her wish, she asked to visit the charity's Old Windsor centre to help out for the day and the team at Battersea Dogs & Cats Home was delighted to be able to help Starlight grant Imogen's special wish.

Like lots of girls her age, Imogen adores puppies and kittens and during the day she was given plenty of opportunities to spend time with some of the younger residents at the centre. Playtime is an important time for the animals at Battersea and Imogen and her family had lots of fun playing with some of the Home's four legged-friends, including Buttons and Kitty, a puppy and kitten who have been hand-reared together and are so close they think they are sisters.

During their visit, Imogen, Alex and Celia were also invited to participate in a dog-training session and Imogen got to try her hand at training some of the dogs at Battersea who are waiting for new homes.

Imogen's mother Celia said, "Imogen has had a very difficult time since being diagnosed with leukaemia. I cannot thank Starlight and Battersea Dogs & Cats Home enough for arranging for Imogen, Alex and myself to visit the Old Windsor Centre today. We all had a wonderful time finding out more about what Battersea does and meeting some of the lovely animals in their care – Imogen especially enjoyed playing with Kitty and Buttons!"

Neil Swan, Chief Executive of Starlight Children's Foundation, said, "Imogen has clearly been a very brave young lady and we are delighted to have been able to grant her dearest wish. Starlight brightens the lives of over half a million children a year and we hope that Imogen and her family will treasure the happy memories of her Starlight wish."

Kaye Mughal, Centre Manager at Battersea Old Windsor added: "We were thrilled to be able to welcome Imogen and her family to Battersea and give her some time at our centre meeting some of our residents. Imogen really enjoyed her time here and the dogs and cats certainly liked having someone else to make a fuss of them. Spending time with animals can be very therapeutic, and that was certainly highlighted today."

Information

About Starlight Children's Foundation

Starlight grants once-in-a-lifetime wishes for seriously and terminally ill children, restoring the magic and fun of childhood and giving the whole family happy memories to share, whatever the future holds.

Starlight also creates entertainment in every hospital and hospice throughout the UK. Sick children go to Starlight parties, laugh their way through pantomimes, go out on Starlight Escapes, play games and watch films on the Starlight Fun Centre, and enjoy the toys and puzzles of the Starlight Distraction Box. Happy children respond better to treatment and Starlight helps children to forget about their illness and simply have a bit of fun.

For more information on Starlight, please contact Henny Vere Nicoll at henny@starlight.org.uk / 020 7262 2881 # 231.

To refer a child for a wish or to make a donation, please go online at www.starlight.org.uk. For every £1 you donate, 93p goes towards helping Starlight's very ill children.

About Battersea Dogs & Cats Home

- Established in 1860, Battersea Dogs & Cats Home aims never to turn away a dog or cat in need of our help. We reunite lost dogs and cats with their owners through our Lost Dogs & Cats Line or care for them until new homes can be found for them, giving them shelter and the highest standards of kennelling and veterinary care.
- Battersea Old Windsor cares for around 70 cats and 120 dogs at any one time.
- In 2011 Battersea Old Windsor took in almost 700 cats and 1400 dogs.
- Since it was founded, Battersea has rescued, reunited and rehomed over 3.1 million dogs and cats.
- It cost £12.7 million to care for Battersea Dogs & Cats Home's animals in 2011.
- In addition to the site in Old Windsor, the Home also has two other centres based in Battersea, London, and Brands Hatch, Kent.
- Battersea Dogs & Cats Home rehomes dogs and cats all over the UK.
- Battersea Dogs & Cats Home receives no government funding towards the running of the Home and relies on the generosity and support of the public to help care for lost and abandoned dogs & cats. To make a donation visit our website or call 0870 890 0000.
- For further information on Battersea Dogs & Cats Home please visit www.battersea.org.uk.