



St Mary's C of E School LEARNING WITH HOPE

Redinnick Place, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 4HP
www.st-marys-ce-pz.cornwall.sch.uk/site
Headteacher : Mr Dan Kay

SCHOOL DOG

Dear Parents and Carers,

You may be aware that there is a growing movement in many schools to reintroduce the concept of school pets as a way of teaching all children responsibility and providing a source of pleasure and learning. Of particular interest, is the current move towards 'Therapy Dogs'.

Therapy Dogs are being used as a source of comfort and relaxation for children and adults who may need 'someone to talk to' or just someone who will accept them and offer comfort or a calming influence in their lives. There is much evidence that children who struggle with relationships or with managing their own emotions gain a great deal from spending time with a pet.

Introducing a school dog can have many benefits, including:

- calming effect on pupils, particularly those with behavioural or learning difficulties
- improved behaviour and concentration, reduced stress and improved self-esteem
- encouraging expression and participation in more withdrawn children
- motivating pupils to think and to learn, as children have a high level of natural interest in, enthusiasm for and enjoyment of animals
- encouraging respect and thereby improving pupils' relationships with each other, parents and teachers
- teaching children to nurture and to have respect for life
- helping work undertaken with the most vulnerable children, and educational improvements with low achievers
- helping children build confidence in reading
- reducing children's anxieties if they have a fear of dogs

Alongside **Whiskey**, our current school dog, we will be introducing **Hugo**, who is an English Cocker Spaniel, to our school community. Hugo is currently 9-months old and already visits another local primary school where he interacts with children of all ages. Initially, he will be phased into school life at St Mary's: only attending one or two days a week.

A full risk assessment has been completed and our 'Dog Policy' has been updated.

If for any reason your child cannot interact with our school dogs, please can you notify the school office or your child's class teacher.

Many thanks
Mr King