



BOTLEY C of E (Controlled) Primary School

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17th November, 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are delighted to announce that we hope to be welcoming a new member to our community: a therapy dog named Ruby and her volunteer handler from Pets As Therapy (PAT) for some regular visits to school. Ruby is a three year old cavapoo and will be with us to support your children's learning and well-being.

We are in the initial stages and will be meeting Ruby and her handler this week in school.

Pets As Therapy is a national registered charity that provides animals to hospitals, care homes and schools. We feel that this program will be a wonderful addition to the school to provide a calm and non-judgemental presence to our children.

Dogs and their handlers volunteering for Pets As Therapy are fully registered, insured and assessed by the charity, ensuring the highest standards of safety and temperament are met. A designated staff member will be present during interactions, and the dog will not have unsupervised access to children. Children will be taught proper hygiene practices, such as washing their hands after interacting with the dog and discussions will be had before hand on how to treat animals they meet.

While I understand this is a positive step for most, some children or parents may have concerns. If your child has a confirmed allergy to dogs or experiences high anxiety or a phobia related to dogs, please can you make contact with the office by phone or myself via email.

What are the benefits of a therapy dog?

Research consistently shows that interactions with animals can have a profound positive impact on children, including:

- **Improved emotional well-being:** The presence of a therapy dog can reduce anxiety, significantly reduce stress and improve mood.
- **Enhanced literacy skills:** Reading to a non-judgemental dog can help children build confidence and improve their reading skills.
- **Increased confidence:** Interacting with a therapy dog can boost self-esteem and encourage positive social behaviours.
- **Cognitive stimulation:** Companionship with a dog can help stimulate memory and problem-solving skills. Spending time with a happy, well-behaved pet can inspire a reluctant reader to pick up a book.

Once the initial meetings are complete, we are confident that Ruby and her handler will be a wonderful addition to our school community and we are excited to see the positive impact she will have on learning and overall wellbeing.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Kind regards,

Mrs Kate Roberts

Special Educational Needs and Disability Coordinator (SENDCo)

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