

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Bungalow Road, Edlington, Doncaster

Executive Headteacher: Mrs B. Nesbit Head of School: Mrs S. McCall



Friday 21st March 2025

Dear parents/guardians,

We have some very exciting news! We are consulting parents and carers on the introduction of a school dog. During this two-week period of consultation, we would like to hear your feedback on this proposal. Comments can be made verbally, via email or written and handed in to the school office. This information will be considered and shared with the school governing body before a final decision is made.

In the meantime, we are sharing with you the rationale, purpose and practicalities of our intentions...



Please meet Bella...

Bella is a King Charles Cavalier Spaniel, and she is almost one-year-old. Once we have approval and listened to feedback from parents, Bella will start her journey here at St Mary's; slowly being introduced to these new surroundings - and snoozing in Mrs McCall's office, whilst getting to know the staff. Once Bella is comfortable, we will start to slowly introduce her to the children.

All being well, and where possible, Bella will be in school one day per week and spend her time with small groups of children, visiting the classrooms and listening to readers from across the school. This will start after consultation and for a trial period over the summer term.

There are many benefits to having a school dog, including:

- a calming effect on pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties

- improved concentration, reduced stress and improved self-esteem
- encouraging expression and participation in more withdrawn children
- fostering a sense of responsibility
- motivating pupils to think and to learn, as most 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 respect life
- helping work undertaken with the most vulnerable children, and educational improvements with low achievers
- helping children build confidence in reading

We are aware that some parents, teachers, and children may be unsure about dogs so we organised a full day of workshops with The Dogs Trust in the school so that all members are aware of what to do and more importantly what not to do around a dog.

With parental permission and over a period of time, children who react fearfully to dogs will be supported in approaching, handling, and gaining confidence in managing their fear. While the dog's main place of residence will be an office area, which is secure and separate from the classrooms, children will be able to interact with the dog under strict supervision at certain times of the week as long as parental permission has been given. The dog will not be given access to other visitors without supervision or mutual consent. Please understand that we will do everything we can to reassure children who are fearful and that under no circumstances will they be forced to meet with the dog.

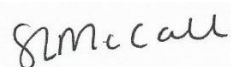
Whilst moving around the school, Bella will be kept on a short lead and will always be with an adult. We have chosen a King Charles Cavalier as the most appropriate breed of dog for the school because of its ideal temperament - loving, caring and wonderful with children.

Please find attached a document with Frequently Asked Questions and Bella's School Passport that we will share with the children in school. There will be a Risk Assessment on our school website. Your child will be coming home with a School Dog Permission Form, please complete and return to their class teacher.

Consultation is an opportunity to raise questions and provide comments and feedback that we will share with the governing body.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,



Mrs McCall
Head of School