

# St Mark's C of E School

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Executive Headteacher: Mrs Stephanie Bryant

Head of School Primary: Mrs Lorraine Hoad

Head of School Secondary: Mr Ben Godber



14<sup>th</sup> January 2026

Dear Parents / Carers,

I am writing to let you know that St Mark's has decided to take on a new school dog, Wendy, who belongs to our Head of SEND Mrs Barker. This decision has been made following the success of having Blue our previous dog in school.

A full risk assessment has been completed which will be available on our website. Wendy is a 7-year-old cockapoo, who has had over 4 years of experience being a school dog. We have researched and seen the many benefits of having a school dog and what they can teach us. Also caring for an animal meets our Core Christian values of Love, Service and Belonging.

- **Responsibility** – by children having to remember to feed and give water to the dog it can give them a sense of importance as well as an education in recognising their own needs.
- **Patience** – they do not always do as they are told first time!
- **Compassion** – just like us, dogs feel pain and emotion.
- **Socialisation** – by the children learning how to interact with a dog they can better learn how to socialise with other children.
- **Fun** – they greet you with a wagging tail every day and put a smile on your face, even on a bad day.
- **Speech and Language** - talking to a dog comes with much less pressure than speaking to other humans and can help young children improve their speech and language skills
- **Reading** - encouraging children to read to the school dog can increase their desire to read.
- **Feeling calm** - having a dog around can help students and staff destress and lower their blood pressure more quickly.
- **Shared interest** - gives everyone a shared interest across our community and something to talk about!

Wendy has public liability insurance that means she will be able to come into school. Wendy will start in school imminently, with limited access to students at first as she gets to know the school. Some children have, in the first instance, been highlighted to have interventions with Wendy. Discussions have taken place with those children's parents.

Wendy will be based in the Attendance/ Primary SENCO office, which is separate from the classrooms and the children will only be able to interact with her under strict supervision and as long as parental permission has been given. When she is moving around the school she will be on a lead and always with an adult. We hope she will be able to support children across both phases and improve their school life experience.

With parental permission, over a period of time, children who are fearful of dogs can be supported in approaching, handling, and in gaining confidence in managing their fear. We will be arranging assemblies on how to be 'Dog Smart' for the children where they can ask questions.

Parents who completed survey forms in relation to our precious school dog, do not need to resubmit concerns as these are already filed and have been kept and acknowledged. For new parents or if any situations have changed please do complete the survey linked below so we have this on record.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/11wXGOvaDj4XPRu10Wgr5C5QyTrJfTJwDRhnA2u7pF70/edit>

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact the school office and someone will get back to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephanie Bryant".

Stephanie Bryant  
Executive Headteacher