

Pets in School to Support The PSHE Curriculum & School Ethos

At On Track in Wisbech we support the idea that pets can bring educational and therapeutic benefits to the students and staff alike. The staff who bring their dogs in regularly are Chelsea Munday who brings in Ronda, Claudette Scoffield brings in either Freya or Floki, Capreece Simpson occasionally brings Belle in and Jane Wilson brings her pug dog Millie into school when she is visiting. The rationale behind this is best summed up by the UK charitable organisational Dogs For Good (www.dogsforgood.org) – This is a summary of the key points they make (quoted and paraphrased):

8 Benefits for Students with a School Dog

1. *A greater enjoyment of being in the school environment, improved attendance and a greater willingness to learn and participate.*
2. *Improved behaviour, social interaction and sense of responsibility in the classroom.*
3. *More effective therapy sessions. For example, students reaching their physiotherapy goals in a shorter space of time. Pupils also achieve more complex goals when the school dog joins their sessions.*
4. *Increased knowledge of dogs and how to behave safely and appropriately around them.*
5. *Students have greater access to the community with a school dog. For example, the presence of the dog can give them the confidence to go out on short trips outside their school.*
6. *They gain a better understanding of how to take responsibility for another living being. This, potentially, gives them better recognition of their own responsibilities.*
7. *A range of individual benefits for students with whom we have been working. They have had personal goals which range from literacy and road safety to fear of immunisations and personal hygiene.*
8. *Improvements in the way students interact with each other and with members of staff. The exciting part of this is that these effects extend into the home environment for some students.*

There are many more ways that dogs can benefit individual schools but this list describes the ones we see most often.

School Dogs Improve the Overall Working Environment of Schools

- *The presence of the dog in the classroom, around the school and at break times has a beneficial effect on students and staff.*
- *Members of the school have a 'shared interest'. This encourages everyone to communicate, which has a positive impact on communication and relationships around the school."*

All of our staff dogs have been Risk Assessed and their own safety and comfort in school is monitored by all staff. Dogs as reading partners is also an aspect of their presence which is being explored in tandem with the Accelerated Reader Scheme.