

St. Thomas More RC Primary School – Wellbeing & Pastoral Care: Therapeutic Provision

Meet Bella, our Therapy Dog

Some of the things our pupils say about Bella are below...

- Bella helps me to not feel angry
- I have learned that taking deep breaths helps me to be calm
- Bella has helped me make good choices by teaching me about my brain
- Bella helps me remember that I can change my bad thoughts to good thoughts
- Bella helps me to believe in myself
- Bella teaches me how to control my body by using my brain



We understand that schools have an important role to play in supporting the mental health and well-being of their pupils by nurturing and developing approaches to the particular needs of their pupils. We acknowledge that some children need extra support to understand and improve their well-being, develop social skills, increase their confidence, self-esteem and at times need help to express their thoughts and feelings when going through difficult times in their life. The school aims to help develop and support children throughout their journey with us and one of the ways we do this is by providing Dog Therapy within our school.

Giovanna and her Labrador Bella are linked with The Dog Mentoring Programme and have been working with us since 2017. They build relationships with our pupils to provide:

Opportunities for children to improve and develop social skills

Learn how to understand and build respect, responsibility, and trust

A safe way to support children who display difficult behaviours

An opportunity to understand how to be calm and control their own anxieties

Ways for children to develop their empathy and understanding of others

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Situations where children can speak about their thoughts and feelings in a safe and comfortable environment

Learn about their self-confidence and self-esteem

Enjoyment from interaction with an animal

This form of intervention has been built upon the benefits of the human-animal bond by providing children positive experiences with dogs that can help them educationally, developmentally, emotionally and socially. Bella has proven to be very popular with pupils and staff alike at St Thomas More and these are some of the comments from the children themselves: