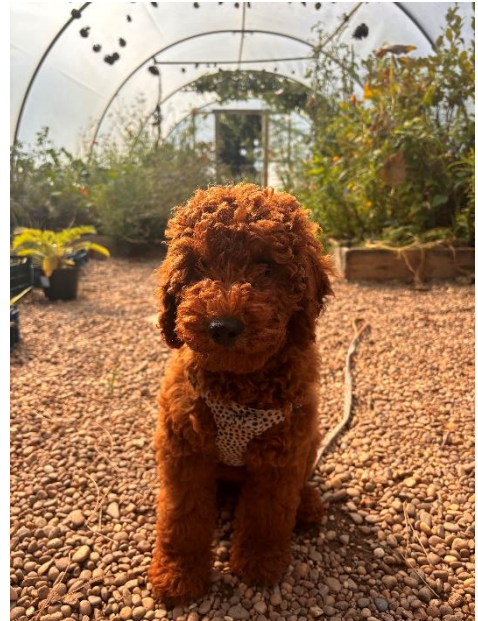


Dear Mawnan Families,

I am writing to share some exciting news regarding the introduction of our new school dog in-training, Bertie, who will soon be joining our school community. We believe that Bertie will provide wonderful enrichment opportunities for our children, and we are eager to see the positive impact he will have on their social and emotional well-being.

Miss Prosser is Bertie's owner and she and her family will be caring for Bertie outside of school. Bertie is a 3 month old Miniature Poodle. The breed has been carefully selected because of its ideal temperament and he has a hypo-allergenic coat.



A number of schools across the country, have successfully introduced school dogs over the past few years and have seen great benefits from this. Research shows that dogs in schools can have many positive outcomes including:

- a calming effect on pupils;
- improved behaviour and concentration, reduced stress and improved self-esteem;
- encouraging expression, participation and confidence for all 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;
- helping children build confidence in reading;

As Bertie is still only young so his introduction to the school community will be slow and we will begin by introducing him to small numbers of older children.

We will be requesting your permission (via a google form) for your child to interact with Bertie. Over this academic year all children will have the opportunity to interact with him as he begins to visit more classrooms and moves around the school more. Whilst moving around the school, Bertie will be kept on a short lead and will always be with an adult.

We understand that although this is an exciting opportunity, there may be some concerns about introducing a school dog. To address these concerns, we have conducted a comprehensive risk assessment, focusing on several key areas:

1. **Allergies:** Some children may have allergies aggravated by pet hair. Bertie is a hypoallergenic breed. Hypoallergenic dogs shed less hair and don't drool. Allergy sufferers are allergic to the protein found in the saliva and urine of the dog and as they groom themselves the protein spreads to their skin and coat. So the shed hair exposes people to the protein. Although no dog can be 100% non-allergenic, Bertie is less likely to cause problems to allergy sufferers. He will have designated areas within the school during his visits. If your child has allergies and you are concerned, please do not hesitate to contact us for a discussion.
2. **Phobias:** We recognise that a gentle temperament may not alleviate fears for children with genuine phobias of dogs. If we are aware of any phobias, we will ensure that the child is not in contact with Bertie and will restrict his location within the school accordingly. Bertie will never be allowed to wander unsupervised, and we are more than willing to work with families to help overcome any phobias, guided by your preferences.
3. **Safety of Our Children:** At all times, **no child will be left unsupervised with Bertie.** Children will receive guidance on how to interact with him, including appropriate ways to touch and, if suitable, play with him. This will always occur under supervision and only if the child wishes to engage.
4. **Welfare of Our Dog:** Bertie will not be present in school every day. When he is here, an adult will supervise his interactions with children. If Bertie becomes tired, he will have a safe space away from the classroom to rest. Additionally, we will educate children on the importance of not feeding Bertie and how to interact with him kindly and carefully.

In the coming weeks, we will engage with the children to discuss the rules and expectations associated with having a school dog. It is important that we establish a clear understanding of how to interact with Bertie, ensuring a safe and positive environment for all. Alongside these discussions, we will explore the numerous benefits that accompany the presence of a school dog.

We have undertaken a significant amount of research and are aware of the many advantages of integrating a dog into our educational setting and we are confident that the introduction of Bertie will foster a delightful atmosphere for our pupils. He will be a comforting presence, lending a floppy ear to those who wish to chat and providing a kind face for our readers.

We will publish pictures of our school dog, Bertie, via ClassDojo so that everyone can enjoy his development. Should you have any further questions regarding our school dog, please let me know.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Warm regards,

Jilly Pridmore

Headteacher

Mawnan CE VA Primary School