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6th October 2026

Welcome: Socks

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to share some exciting news about a new addition to life at **St. Paul's CE Primary School**. Following careful planning, consultation and consideration, we are delighted to announce that **Socks** will be joining our school community as our school dog (following success and compatibility of his upcoming training). Socks will be accompanying me, Mr Emmett, into school and will become part of our wider approach to supporting children's wellbeing, confidence, emotional development and engagement with learning.

This is something that I am personally very passionate about.

Throughout my career, I have seen first-hand the positive impact that carefully trained dogs can have in schools. In previous schools, I have successfully raised and worked with therapy dogs from as young as eight weeks old, supporting children in a wide range of ways. When Socks joined our family, I did so with the intention that one day he would follow a similar path.

From the very beginning, Socks' upbringing has been centred around this goal. His daily routines, training, socialisation, diet, exercise, professional behaviour training and interactions have all been carefully planned with the long-term aim of preparing him to work safely and positively alongside children. Alongside extensive personal training, Socks will also undertake professional training as part of **The Dog Mentor Programme**, ensuring that the highest standards of welfare and safety are maintained.

Many of you may already be aware of the growing body of research demonstrating the benefits of appropriately trained dogs in educational settings. Over the past decade, schools involved in **The Dog Mentor Programme** have reported positive outcomes in areas including children's confidence, self-esteem, emotional wellbeing, behaviour, relationships with peers and engagement in learning. These improvements can in turn support children's academic progress and overall school experience.

At St. Paul's, we see Socks not simply as a school pet, but as an additional way of supporting children to flourish. He may, over time, become involved in activities such as:

- Listening to children read.
- Supporting children who may feel anxious or worried.
- Helping children develop confidence and communication skills.
- Providing opportunities to discuss responsibility, kindness and care.
- Celebrating children's achievements and successes.
- Supporting wellbeing of both children, staff and parents.

As with every decision we make, the **wellbeing** and **safety** of our children remain our highest priority. Before Socks begins spending regular time in school, robust **risk assessments**, **procedures** and **training** will be in place. Children will never be required to interact with Socks if they do not wish to do so, and we will work closely with families where there are concerns regarding allergies, fears or other individual circumstances.

Over the coming weeks, we will be sharing further information about how the programme will operate within school and the safeguards that will be in place. We will also provide opportunities for parents and carers to ask questions and share any comments they may have.

Throughout this process, thorough consultation and thought has been put into Rita and Hector and their current commitments to the school. Rita has been informed of the process involved with Socks: we are passionate about Hector remaining in school with Rita and the children, and this will continue every Tuesday.

As a dog owner, I know that every dog has their own unique personality. As a Headteacher, I know that every child does too. My hope is that Socks will become another valued member of our school family and that the positive relationships he builds with our children will help them feel even more confident, secure and supported during their time at St. Paul's.

If you would like to learn more about The Dog Mentor Programme, please visit:

- www.thedogmentor.co.uk
- www.facebook.com/thedogmentor

I hope that you share our excitement about welcoming Socks to St. Paul's. Should you have any questions, queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me: I would be more than happy to share time to discuss anything.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support.

Yours faithfully,



Mr Stephen Emmett
Head of School



Name: Socks
DOB: (10.5.2025)
Age: 17 months
Breed: Springer spaniel x Border Collie (Sprollie)