

Our Ref: SST/HBr

Monday 15th December 2025

Dear Parents / Guardians,

Re: The Duston School's Approach to Inclusion; Rocco, The School Therapy Dog

As part of our approach to inclusion and our holistic pastoral support for our pupils at The Duston School, I am pleased to update you on the progress of Rocco, our School Dog.

Rocco, who is a two-year-old Pedigree Labrador, works in the school every Wednesday as part of a series of targeted support sessions. The feedback regarding this provision has been excellent from both pupils and parents and it has been a privilege to see Rocco grow in confidence and become a member of our school community.

Lots of studies have shown that school dogs can have a very positive effect on a range of people, from helping pupils who are struggling in school, reducing anxiety, improving reading confidence (by being read to) and generally being a calm influence.

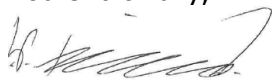
We have designed five educational pathways that Rocco is involved in as part of a formal Animal Assisted Intervention series of sessions. There are four main areas this work include:

- **Identification** - We identify children who would benefit from Animal Assisted Intervention with Rocco.
- **Pathway** - Discussion takes place around suitable pathways for the individual or group of children. Three new pathways (including a fitness and protective behaviour) are currently being written ready for September 2026.
- **Sessions** - Children will follow a formal work booklet. Sessions begin and end with theoretical learning which is linked to practical activities through Animal Assisted Intervention. For example, within session 1 of the Self Esteem and Positive Thinking Pathway there is a focus upon security and relationships. This leads into practical work with Rocco around trust and re-framing negative thoughts.
- **Feedback** - Parents receive formal feedback each session (via email) outlining progress. Parents/staff are invited to watch the final session which is a showcase of learning and celebration.

Rocco has participated in several school events including Sports Day, his own weekly extra-curricular club and our annual Remembrance Parade. He is also busy meeting every single Primary Phase child to help educate them around safety and animals.

We look forward to sharing more news on Rocco and his role at The Duston School in due course.

Yours faithfully,



Mr Strickland
Principal/CEO

Mr S Strickland - Principal - BA (Hons), MA, NPQH
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