

Cariad Pet Therapy at Fenton Community School - Testimonial

We have been privileged to have had regular visits from Rob, Chrissie and the amazing Harper and Percy since November 2018. The difference that these visits have made to the children in school is clearly evident. We started with Reading Dog visits in Foundation Phase classes. Children in our year 1 and 2 classes read to Harper individually with children in Early Years having a story from Rob or another adult with Harper sitting with them. Straight away we could see that children who were perhaps reluctant to read out loud or to an adult were keen to sit and share books with Harper and Percy.

Both dogs respond extremely well to the busy school environment and children who were a little unsure about dogs at first were able to sit with them or pet them as much as they wanted. Rob and Chrissie are fantastic in these sessions, observing the children reading to the dogs and intervening if the children wanted help but allowing the children and the dogs to interact as well.

These visits have continued to develop with Harper attending our World Book Day Assembly (in fancy dress of course!) During this assembly Harper was able to move quietly around the hall and several staff noticed how her presence calmed the children down quickly. The children have adjusted quickly and have accepted Harper and Percy as part of the school. It has also enabled the children to develop their skills of respect, care and responsibility.

From these visits we developed 1-1 sessions with children who have complex needs. This is where the impact was most clearly seen. Harper has supported children in our LRC unit with significant needs. One child who found themselves unable to leave the classroom to visit other areas of the school was able to go to the office to collect Harper and within a short space of time was able to walk with Harper around the school, visit the school hall and also walk through the playground. Interaction with staff has also improved immensely.

Rob's skill and understanding at letting the children lead the pace of change is fantastic. Other children who found communicating difficult have, over time and regular sessions with Harper gained the confidence to speak and play with Harper and to begin to speak to familiar adults and in front of other children.

We are now beginning to develop these sessions with children who need additional emotional support, this could be for a range of reasons including, changes at home, loss of a family member, moving to new school etc. Being able to talk to Harper or Percy about how they are feeling or to simply be able to sit and talk to Rob while stroking a dog is beneficial.

Cariad Pet Therapy has made such a difference to our school. Not only to the children but also the staff! To see the children greeting a dog as it walks down the corridor, as it is a perfectly normal part of our school day, is wonderful.

To see the difference that simply spending time with a 4-legged friend is making is magical and we are looking forward to this continuing for a long time to come.