



Brunel
School

Brunel School
170b Torquay Road
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TQ3 2AL

Telephone: 01803 665522
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Wednesday 1st April 2026

Dear Parent/Carer,

Parent/Carer Information Letter – Brunel School Therapy Dog (Etta)

We are writing to share some exciting news about a new wellbeing initiative at Brunel School. After the Easter break, we will be introducing a puppy into school. Her name is Etta, and over time she will be trained and developed to become The Brunel School Therapy Dog, supporting pupils' emotional regulation, confidence, communication skills and overall wellbeing.

Animal-assisted activities are widely used in SEMH settings to help pupils feel calm, connected and ready to learn. We believe Etta will be a valuable and positive addition to our school community.

Why are we introducing a puppy?

Research shows that spending time with a calm, well-supervised dog can help pupils to:

- regulate emotions more effectively
- reduce anxiety and stress
- build confidence and self-esteem
- develop empathy and responsibility
- improve communication and social interaction

As Etta grows and completes her training, she will take on the role of Brunel School's Therapy Dog, supporting pupils across a range of therapeutic and wellbeing activities. All sessions will be optional, structured and supervised by trained staff.

Initial Short Sessions

To ensure a calm and positive start, pupils will first meet Etta through short, carefully supervised sessions. These introductory visits will allow pupils to:

- see Etta in a calm, controlled environment
- become familiar with her size, behaviour and routine
- learn how to interact with her safely and respectfully



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- build confidence gradually

These short sessions will help pupils feel comfortable before Etta becomes more involved in wider school activities.

Pupils Will See Etta Grow

One of the most exciting parts of this initiative is that pupils will have the opportunity to see Etta grow from a small puppy into a fully trained adult therapy dog. This journey will help pupils learn about:

- responsibility and care
- patience and consistency
- animal development and behaviour
- forming safe, healthy relationships

Watching Etta mature over time can be especially meaningful for pupils in an SEMH setting, offering a sense of continuity, connection and shared experience.

About Etta

- Etta is a young puppy, fully vet-checked, wormed and flea-treated.
- She will only take part in short, quiet sessions appropriate for her age.
- She will always be accompanied by a trained adult handler.
- She will have a safe, quiet space to rest and will not be available all day.
- After the Easter break, Etta will begin her journey to becoming the Brunel School Therapy Dog.

How We Will Keep Pupils Safe

We have completed a full risk assessment and put the following measures in place:

- Pupils will only interact with Etta when calm and regulated.
- Sessions will take place in small groups or individually.
- Etta will remain on a lead or in a controlled space.
- Pupils will be taught how to behave safely and respectfully around her.
- Handwashing will be required after any contact.
- Pupils who do not wish to take part will not be involved.



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If your child has allergies, phobias, sensory sensitivities or trauma triggers related to dogs, please let us know so we can plan accordingly.

How We Will Keep Etta Safe

Because Etta is still very young, we will ensure:

- constant adult supervision
- no rough handling or picking up
- a quiet environment with limited noise and movement
- immediate removal from any situation that may cause stress
- plenty of rest breaks and access to water

Etta's welfare is a priority at all times, especially as she grows into her role as our therapy dog.

It's important that we are made aware of any allergies or fears so that we can put certain precautions in place prior to Etta starting with us. Please do give us a call if you have any questions or concerns.

Kind regards,
Ryan Distin
Care & Pastoral Senior Lead