



## Daisy and Vinnie: Our Canine Colleagues in Student Support

Our school dogs, Daisy and Vinnie, are vital members of our pastoral care team. They provide essential emotional, social, and academic support, working to create a calming environment that helps all students regulate their emotions and build confidence.

Daisy and Vinnie are especially adept at supporting students with emotional regulation and well-being needs. Their presence is scientifically proven to help lower cortisol (the stress hormone) and increase oxytocin, leading to reduced anxiety and improved mood. This effect is particularly impactful for students with Autism, ADHD, or sensory processing needs.

### Where to find Daisy and Vinnie

You will usually find Daisy and Vinnie based in the Maths room- mostly because they are working hard to improve their own Maths skills! Having them in the classroom helps to lower the “maths anxiety” some students may feel, providing a reassuring presence during a problem-solving lesson.

### Holistic, well-being and Thrive

Beyond the classroom, Daisy and Vinnie are active participants in our Thrive sessions, where they help students explore their feelings and develop social-emotional resilience. They are also big fans of our wellbeing walks, providing the perfect incentive for students to get some fresh air, exercise, and a “paws for thought” break in the fresh air.

### Key areas of impact:

- **Emotional Regulation & Wellbeing:** Daisy and Vinnie provide a reliable, calming presence that helps students manage stress and feel safe within the school environment.
- **Literacy & Communication:** Through programs like "Drop Everything and Read" and targeted reading interventions, students who may feel self-conscious reading to adults can practice with a non-judgmental listener, significantly boosting their reading fluency and confidence.
- **Social & Interpersonal Skills:** The dogs act as a "social catalyst," naturally encouraging students to interact with peers and staff. Activities involving their

care also teach vital skills like empathy, responsibility, and understanding boundaries.

- **Engagement & Attendance:** The presence of a canine friend often leads to improved student attendance and a greater willingness to participate positively in school activities.

### Why the Lhasapoo breed excels in the classroom

- **Hypoallergenic Presence:** Their low-shedding coats are ideal for shared classroom spaces, ensuring that students with allergies can still participate in therapy sessions and wellbeing walks.
- **Intuitive Emotional Support:** Inheriting the Lhasa Apso's "sentinel" history, Lhasapoos are naturally alert to changes in their environment. This translates to a high level of empathy; they can often sense when a student is becoming overwhelmed and will offer a calming, grounding presence.
- **Engagement and Focus:** Their Poodle heritage makes them quick learners who enjoy "jobs". By being based in the Maths room, they serve as a positive distraction that lowers subject-specific anxiety, making students more willing to engage with complex tasks.
- **Steady and Small Stature:** Their compact size makes them less intimidating for students who may be wary of larger animals. They are sturdy enough to join in Thrive sessions and active wellbeing walks while remaining calm enough to sit quietly under a desk during focused lesson time.
- **Social Catalyst:** They often display a playful, "clownish" personality that encourages students to communicate, practice social boundaries, and develop empathy through gentle care and interaction.

