



▲ Volunteer Anne with Luka, aged 12. Hospital stays can be boring for Luko so he enjoys taking part in practical work with the school team.

A HOSPITAL SCHOOL FOR THE WHOLE COMMUNITY

Despite its name, the Royal Free Hospital Children's School provides support far beyond Hampstead's Pond Street. Spread across four sites and the hospital's wards, it provides education for children who are unable to access regular schooling due to their physical or mental health needs.

At the Royal Free Hospital, the school provides regular classroom-based lessons for children and young people staying on the wards, liaising with their home schools to ensure their education is affected as little as possible by their stay. Teachers also provide pastoral support to patients and their parents and carers.

The other sites offer:

- classes for patients of the child and adolescent mental health services who are receiving treatment for eating disorders
- outreach teaching for young people experiencing anxiety and emotionally-based school avoidance
- a GCSE day school for years 10 and 11, known as the Hive.

How the charity helps

The school service, rated excellent by Ofsted, is supported by 12 Royal Free Charity volunteers. They help students during lessons, especially where volunteers have a particular understanding of a subject. They help to run art activities and provide emotional support through pet therapy.

Shiva, a volunteer who helps with maths lessons, says of her therapy dog Rolo: "I feel Rolo is an ice breaker between myself and the young adults. I also find the presence of Rolo when I work with students one on one makes them focus more intently on the subject matter."

"For me it's a privilege to work with the young students and help them with furthering their knowledge of maths and ultimately their education."

Alex Yates, the headteacher, said: "The therapy dogs play a really important role in re-engagement: they are soothing, encourage empathy and can help some young people develop social skills. The staff greatly enjoy their presence as well."

Kathy, a volunteer, supports older students who are working towards their GCSEs or other qualifications, ready to go on to further education or work. She said: "There is a very warm, vibrant and empathetic feel about the school. It is a pleasure to be part of. If a student needs 'time out' there is always a member of staff to talk to."

Diabetes initiative

Funding from the charity has allowed the school to provide extra support for children learning to live with diabetes, through providing special equipment and books.

It is important that carers of children diagnosed with type 1 diabetes can accurately measure and count carbohydrates. Studies found that young people who have a high percentage of blood sugars at two weeks post diagnosis are more likely to have this picture at two years.

The charity provided a £1,915 grant for 40 packs of weighing scales, measuring cups and copies of Carbs and Cals, a book with a visual guide to carbohydrate and calorie counting. These were given to patients at diagnosis and teaching sessions were provided to help children and families learn to use the equipment.



▲ Rolo, one of the school's two therapy dogs

STEVE'S FUNDRAISING

Steve Green, the assistant headteacher of the school, recently completed the London to Brighton bike ride to raise money for the charity.

Steve said: "There's nothing better than taking part in a cycling sportive with 20,000 other cyclists, through stunning countryside, all encouraging each other until the end,

with the added benefit of raising money for such worthy causes. It was a brilliant day, and I am truly grateful for the amazing generosity of our supporters who managed to raise over £4,000 for our cause."

