

Kirkby Avenue Primary School
Kirkby Avenue
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Head Teacher
Mrs C A Clifford

12.9.24

Dear Parents/Carers,

As you know we are a school who introduce school pets to our children as a way of teaching them responsibility and providing a source of pleasure and learning.

We have been considering the benefits of a school dog for our children. There are a number of school dogs in post locally and around the country and we believe that having a school dog can only enhance and extend children's opportunities for learning, both academically and socially.

During the Summer holidays our Cockapoo puppy, named Bennie, joined the Kirkby Avenue family. Now aged 14 weeks he is a bundle of fun and energy. Cockapoos are renowned for their friendly, outgoing temperament and hypoallergenic fur. They are immensely intelligent and trainable making them suitable for roles such as therapy dogs. Cockapoos have a lively and energetic spirit, they are affectionate and thrive on interaction with children and other pets.

Bennie is lucky to have two owners, Ms Hedge and Miss Bainbridge and shares his time with each of their families when not in school.



We have signed up to a national Dog Mentor programme and Bennie will train to become a therapy dog, regularly attending school and becoming part of the KAPS team. The programme has a huge portfolio with more than 550 schools and over 650 dogs actively working in both primary and secondary schools. Since 2012, implementation of The Dog Mentor Programme across the UK has proven to have significant impact on many children's lives.

Bennie will be immersed in the life of school and not only provide therapeutic intervention but also support the curriculum. For example, he will be able to help the children learn concepts in subjects such as Maths. Research studies have shown that school dogs have been proven to help develop pupils reading skills, improve behaviour, attendance and academic confidence, as well as increasing pupil understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills.

Bringing any animal into school is not something to be approached lightly, both for the animal's welfare and that of the children and adults in school. We have taken advice from fellow head teachers who have school dogs and reached out to fellow Dog Mentor schools. We have discussed the practicalities, including



everything from risk assessments and insurance to doggy toileting and children's allergies. Children would never be left alone with Bennie and would be taught how to be around a dog before he remains in the classroom.

Bennie has visited school during the holidays, however, when we introduce him to the children he will have limited contact at first. This will increase with time.

With the support of the Dog Mentor Programme, Bennie will be slowly introduced to school life at Kirkby Avenue. A robust risk assessment has been carried out and will be available on our website before Bennie comes into school regularly, which will give some indication of the amount of thought and preparation that has gone into this provision. We will assume, if you do not contact us, that you are happy for your child to have contact with Bennie.

In summary:

- A full risk assessment has been completed and will be available on our website
- All contact with children will be carefully supervised and children will not be left unsupervised with Bennie
- Bennie will be on a lead when he is not in his rest space.
- When not 'working', Bennie will be based in rest spaces advised by the Dog Mentor Programme lead.
- No child will ever be made to interact directly with Bennie.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to come and see us.

Yours Sincerely,



Mrs C A Clifford, Head teacher

Ms Hedge



Assistant Head
SENCO and Inclusion Manger
Class Teacher

Miss Bainbridge



Class Teacher
Staff Governor
SEN Support

