

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

22.09.25

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.

Last year we carefully considered 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 believed that having a school dog would enhance and extend children's opportunities for learning, both academically and socially. We were proven absolutely right!

Our Dog Mentor, Bennie, joined the Kirkby Avenue family in September 2024. Now aged 15 months old he continues to be a bundle of fun and energy. Bennie is a cockapoo and this breed is 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 no exception and the impact he has had in school continues to surprise us in so many ways. Children, families and staff alike love Bennie and his presence in school and he in turn loves coming to work. He has also met so many people over the last year, regularly joining meetings with visitors into school.

Bennie and his handlers, undertook training to become an accredited Dog Mentor school. 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. We achieved Bronze and Silver awards last year and intend to 'go for Gold' this year by proving the impact Bennie has had in his work.



Bennie has become a huge part of the life of school, not only providing therapeutic intervention but also support the curriculum. For example, he has worked with children in Maths and P.E lessons as well as increasing pupil understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills. He even did travel training with some of our pupils last year!



All classes know how to be 'Bennie ready' and this is something we regularly refresh and remind children and staff.

We wanted to give you this update and just send a reminder of the robust procedures and expectations we have in school regarding the safety of all:

- A full risk assessment and policy is in place and is available on our website
- All contact with children is carefully supervised and children are not 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 Manager
Class Teacher

Miss Bainbridge



Class Teacher
Staff Governor
SEN Support

Miss Jones

Class Teacher
EYFS Co-Lead

