

## Benji Blog

We are delighted to announce that we will be welcoming a new member of staff to our team. We are pleased to introduce Benji.



Benji was born on the 14<sup>th</sup> January. Benji belongs to Miss Radcliffe. Miss Radcliffe has been in close contact with the breeder and has met Benji's mum – a wonderful cocker spaniel and Benji's dad – a delightful poodle. Miss Radcliffe will be attending special puppy training classes with Benji. Benji will spend his early days at school in my office. Benji will be starting work on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

We decided to get a school dog to help with post Covid schooling. There are many benefits to having a school dog:

- **Cognitive** – companionship with a dog stimulates memory, problem-solving and game playing.

- **Social** – a dog provides a positive mutual topic for discussion amongst children, encourages responsibility, wellbeing and focused interaction with others.
- **Emotional** – a school dog improves self-esteem, acceptance from others and lifts moods, often provoking laughter and fun. Dogs can teach compassion and respect for other living things as well as relieving anxiety.
- **Physical** – interaction with a dog reduces blood pressure, provides tactile stimulation, gives motivation to move, walk and stimulate the senses.
- **Community** – a dog in school increases the sense of a family environment, with all of the above benefits continuing long after the school day is over.
- **Motivational** – spending time with a school dog (whether stroking, walking or reading to it) gives children the motivation to stay focused and on task.

During next week, I will do an assembly (on Zoom) with the children explaining about Benji joining the Queensgate family. Benji will be introduced to the staff and children slowly, so that he does not become overwhelmed with people.

We are aware that some children may be afraid of dogs or have allergies. The reply slip below enables you to decide how much you would like to your child/children to be interacting with Benji.

We are happy to host small group and one-to-one sessions with children who are fearful of dogs to help build their confidence. Benji has an ideal temperament to help with this. He is a cockapoo so he does not shed hair which helps minimise the possibility of allergic responses, however if you are concerned about your child possibly having an allergy to dogs please let us know.

If you have any individual questions or queries, please do not hesitate to speak to Miss Radcliffe or myself.

Please complete and return the attached slip by Friday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2021. If not returned it will be taken that you consent to your child/ren being involved with all aspects of caring for the school dog.

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### **Letter of consent regarding School Dog**

*Please complete and return by Friday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2021.*

Name of child/children

Class/es

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Please tick as appropriate:

☐ I am happy for my child to be involved with all aspects of caring for the school dog, including supervised walks.

☐ My child is a little nervous of dogs, but I am happy for him/her to be involved with all

aspects of caring for the school dog, including supervised walks.

☐ My child is fearful of dogs, but in time, I would like them to work with the dog to develop their confidence with and understanding dogs.

☐ My child has an allergy which means they must not come into contact with the dog.

☐ I **do not give permission** for my child to come into direct contact with the dog.

Signed .....Parent/Carer

Name .....Date .....