Colton Hills Community School

Headteacher - Ms J Hunter

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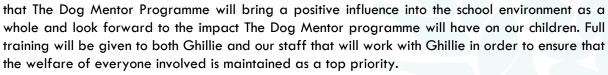
JHU/KHA

11th September 2025

Dear Parents and Carers

Re: School Mentoring Dog

We are pleased to announce that we will be introducing our own school dog and will be joining The Dog Mentor Programme.

The Dog Mentor programme has built upon the benefits of the human-animal bond by providing children positive experiences with dogs that can help them educationally, developmentally, emotionally and socially.

Over the last 10 years The Dog Mentor programme has been proven to have a positive impact on children in all areas including self-esteem, behaviour, peer relationships and better engagement skills. These improvements then result in improved academic achievement.

Mr Winward, Deputy Headteacher will be bringing his dog Ghillie Dhu (Ghillie for short!) into school from **Monday 13 October 2025**. We envisage that The Dog Mentor Programme will bring a positive influence into the school environment as a whole and look forward to the impact The Dog Mentor programme will have on our children. Full training will be given to both Ghillie and our staff that will work with Ghillie in order to ensure that the welfare of everyone involved is maintained as a top priority.

Ghillie will access **The Hills at Colton Hills Community School** as an inclusive space for him to be orientated in the coming weeks before he officially starts work in school. Ghillie is 3 years old in October this year and is a pedigree chocolate labrador bred with therapy use in mind. See Poole Hall Labradors, Shropshire for information: https://www.poolehalllabradors.co.uk/

Miss Payne, Inclusion & Community Manager and Mr McKerdy, SEND Officer in support of inclusion will be trained alongside Mr Winward who is the dog owner and who has previous years experience of raising a dog for use in therapeutic educational settings prior to being employed at the school.

Please feel free to visit The Dog Mentor's website and Facebook page for more details and to see some of the schools that have introduced their dogs into school:

Website: www.thedogmentor.co.uk   Facebook: www.facebook.com/thedogmentor

I hope that you share our excitement, please feel free to contact Mr Minward with any questions you may have.

Yours sincerely

Ms J Hunter
Headteacher