

Virtual Volunteering - Ellingham C of E Primary School September 2020

In Spring 2001, an amazing volunteer arrived at our school to offer her help with a family reading afternoon in Reception. Brenda Frier had two grandchildren attending our school at that time, but has been volunteering at our school ever since. Nineteen years later, this is sometimes up to three times a week. Brenda oversees our school library organisation, including the computerised loan system, and has even been known to do book exchanges for us with our School Library Service colleague Jackie (in supermarket car parks), to ease our workload and support the best provision for our pupils.

Brenda, Eileen Duncan (ex-Chair of Governors) and Cryssie (ex-pupil) all volunteered weekly hearing pupils read in our school library, including issuing story sacks and supporting in class, as needed. Covid-19 put an end to this for a while and we all missed the weekly support and interaction.

As we always like a solution driven approach, we now have 'Virtual Brenda' back in our school library for twice weekly reading sessions via Google Meet. We have started this with our Key Stage 2 pupils, due to 'bubble' access to the library.



Not only is Brenda "Delighted to be back part of our school", but here are some quotes from some of our pupils:

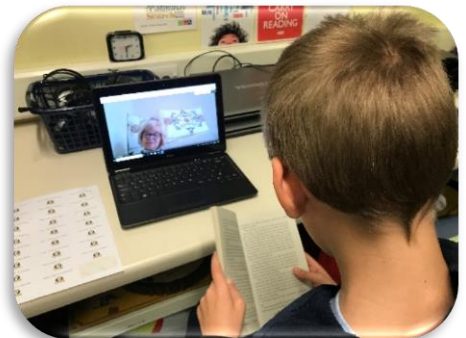
"It makes me feel happy to see Brenda again." Bobby Y5

"It feels like being back at school properly." Daniel Y5

"My parents thought it was funny when I had a 'Today I have read to Virtual Brenda' reading sticker in my book." Suhmer Y5

"It's fun seeing Brenda again and its easier for her as she doesn't have to travel." Florrie Y4

"I've really missed her and although it's hard holding the book up for her to see, it's really good." Annabel Y4



In small, rural schools our precious volunteers help share the considerable staff workload, improving wellbeing for both groups. Following our full return to school, it has been a delight to hear Brenda and our pupils reading, chatting and enjoying being back part of our school community together.

Every school should have a 'Brenda' - virtual or otherwise- but I'm not sharing ours!

Diane Lakey (Headteacher)

