Benny goes to school
“Starting at a new school can be a bit daunting for both children and their parents - but good liaison between home and school can help prepare everybody for the new opportunities ahead.”

“Benny’s parents communicated well with his new school, and now children and parents will be able to share this book with their teachers to help everybody understand about learning with Hydrocephalus”.

Neil Watts,
Headteacher,
Northgate High School, Ipswich

with love from
Benny Bear to:

Written by Rosemary Batchelor and Val Meyer-Hall from
Spina bifida · Hydrocephalus · Information · Networking · Equality - SHINE
Illustrated by Charlotte Meyer whose sister has hydrocephalus
This is Benny the Bear.
He is a very special bear.
Benny is a bear with hydrocephalus.
Benny is going to school.
Before he started school, Mummy took Benny for a visit. Benny met his teacher and he saw his classroom, then Mrs Brown, the classroom helper, took him to see where he would hang his coat and where he would eat his lunch.

And while Benny was having a good time finding out about everything, Mummy went to talk to the teachers about hydrocephalus.

She explained that Benny had a shunt operation when he was younger and she showed his shunt alert card so that the teachers would know what to do if Benny was poorly.

She told Benny’s teacher that having hydrocephalus means that sometimes Benny gets muddled up and finds things difficult to understand. Sometimes he gets lost especially in places that he doesn’t know. Sometimes he has temper tantrums. But mostly Benny is a happy and friendly bear.
When he got to school, Benny remembered his teacher and his classroom and he was pleased to see Mrs Brown.

He liked having lots of new friends. And there were so many new and exciting things to do like looking at books and doing puzzles, painting and playing shops.

Best of all, there was Annie, a bear from the top class whose job it was to meet Benny each morning and take him safely to his classroom.
In Assembly that morning, when all the little bears were supposed to be sitting up straight and listening, Benny was looking all round and facing the wrong way.

He suddenly saw Annie. He was so pleased to see her that he jumped up and shouted out, "Hello Annie! It’s me......." He didn’t get a chance to say any more because everybody stared at him and laughed. His teacher looked cross and said,"Sh!" She made Benny move over and sit with her.
Each day at school there were new things to do. Benny and his friends started to learn about words and letters and numbers.

They had to copy the words into their books and draw pictures.

Benny found some of the work very difficult. He tried as hard as he could, but the pencil just didn't seem to do what he wanted it to!

"Don't worry" said Mrs Brown and gave him a special slope to rest his paper on. It was a bit easier then but he still didn't seem to get his work done as quickly as the others.
sometimes, Benny just couldn’t sit still and sometimes he forgot what he was supposed to be doing.

Sometimes he couldn’t keep quiet like his friends, even when he tried. Poor Benny always seemed to be in trouble!

This made him sad, so sometimes Mrs Brown would take him out of the classroom to sit quietly with her while he did his work or she got Benny to help her with jobs that had to be done.
After a few days, Benny started to enjoy playtime but, at first, the playground looked so big and was so busy that he was frightened.

Some of the others in his class laughed at him and even tried to push him over.

Annie soon saw what was happening and took Benny to play ball with her. She gave him a hug when the shouting and noise in the playground upset him.

Playground noise could be bad but when aeroplanes went overhead or when workmen started drilling the road outside the school, Benny held his head and said his shunt really hurt.

Soon, Benny got more used to all the noise and rushing about and had friends in his class to play with.

But he always liked to know that Annie was near!
Some mornings, Benny’s class had to go to the big hall and get changed into their PE kit. Mrs Brown was always there to help him so that he was ready at the same time as everyone else.

Benny liked PE. He liked running and jumping and doing forward rolls on the special mat.

He didn’t like balancing on the beam because he always fell off – it just wasn’t wide enough for him!
Benny really liked football and most of all he liked the times when his teacher took his class swimming. Benny was the best swimmer in his class! He was glad that Daddy took him and his sister Sally to swim each Saturday.
Benny has to remember lots of new things at school! Luckily Mrs Brown is there to help and she is very kind. She understands that having hydrocephalus can make things difficult for Benny. She knows that he gets tired in the afternoons. She knows that he needs to be reminded to have his drink after each lesson. She makes sure that Benny doesn’t get lost and she helps him with his reading and writing and numbers. Benny doesn’t get told off so much now, and when he gets muddled, he can always ask Mrs Brown and she reminds him about what he is supposed to be doing.
some words that you may not know

Hydrocephalus
This is when the brain produces too much fluid or the fluid does not drain properly.

Shunt
A tube that takes away any extra fluid from the head and drains it into the tummy (or sometimes another part of the body) where it is absorbed naturally.

Shunt Alert Card
Ask a grown up to get you one from Shine.
You should carry your card with you in your pocket or bag every time you go out.
If you lose it (or put it in the washing machine!), we will send another one.

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This is a story about a special bear with a shunt but lots of girls and boys have shunts too. Perhaps you are one of them.