Guidance when considering the Use of Dogs within a school setting (2023)

Based on research conducted by Rebecca Crompton (Educational Psychologist) and Natasha Jackson (Rushey Mead Primary).

Introduction

Dogs are becoming an increasingly common fixture in schools in the city. However, there is limited quantitative research or standardisation in place in terms of how they are used.

This guidance document provides schools with a set of questions to consider when deciding whether to incorporate a dog into their SEND and/or whole school offer.

Photo with kind permission of Rushey Mead Primary

| **Assessment: considerations**  | **Plan: training, documentation, adaptions, limitations or specific focus** | **Do: Action Plan** | **Review (including dates)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Ethos of schoolCurrent therapeutic and SEND interventions where a dog would support or enhance provision already availablelinked to provision  | See Appendix 1: bibliography.<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/45/section/9>[Animal welfare in England: domestic pets: Government Response to the Committee’s Third Report (parliament.uk)](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmenvfru/1003/1003.pdf)Examples of Leicester school websites where dogs are a part of the school provision: Rushey Mead Primary, Marriott Primary, Leicester. |  |  |
| Initial planningWhose dog is it?* Owner expectations: owner sources dog, school sources dog.
* Should owner leave what happens to the dog.
* What responsibilities are expected of the owner.
* NB teachers are responsible for the children and young people in an emergency, who would be responsible for the dog?

Who funds?* provision during holidays
* paying for doggie day care
* on costs such as bedding, food, treats, grooming, faeces waste bags
* microchipping
* vet fees
* insurances (public liability insurance)
* dog training
* dog temperament certification
 |  |  |  |
| Suitability of dog* Is the dog suited to working in a school, consider the temperament of the dog? e.g. Kennel Club Good Citizen Scheme Bronze award.
* What experience or training has the dog had of school settings or public settings? e.g. Kennel Club Good Citizen Scheme Bronze award. Dog licenced trainers.
* Dog breed relating to allergies.
* Puppy, rescue or other source e.g. Underdog International.
 |  |  |  |
| How will the dog be integrated within the school system for maximum impact, ensuring adults understand its role?* Staff meeting
* Regular bulletins for staff and governors
* Display board
* Updates in school newsletter and social media e.g. Instagram
* Website

  |  |  |  |
| Will the dog be used as part of a formal intervention or be informally available?What needs will the dog target?SEMH/SLCN/Literacy/autism/otherIf used flexibly how will this be managed and monitored?What training/support will the adults have so that the dog is effective in their support?What training/support will the pupils have so that the dog is effective in their support? |  |  |  |
| How will the impact of the intervention be evaluated?* Attendance monitoring
* Boxall Profile
* Spencer Anxiety Scale
* Self-esteem scale
* Reading miles
* Reading age/comprehension
* CPOMs analysis of behaviour
 |  |  |  |
| How will the dog be safeguarded? Including * rest breaks during the school day and week
* suitable venue during the school day
* walking and exercise
* feeding and snacks
* toileting and waste management
* where will the dog reside when not at school
* doggy day care vetting
* dog’s well-being and health
* end of life care
 |  |  |  |
| How will pupils’ safety be maintained?* Risk assessment of pupil response
* Risk assessment of dog with pupils

(Appendix 2 example risk assessment)How will the pupils be introduced to the dog and its purpose?* Social story
* Assembly
* Reminder sessions or pre session
* Display board

How will pupil allergies or phobias be managed? Where will this information be kept? |  |  |  |
| Will the inclusion of a dog within school be culturally appropriate to the community it serves? |  |  |  |
| How will the wider school engage with the dog?* Dog has school photo with school bandana, and displayed on staff noticeboard
* Dog assemblies
* Dog events to engage the whole school e.g. dog walk as a prize
* Dog club
 |  |  |  |

**Appendix 1**

**Bibliography**

Abadi, M. R. H., Hase, B., Dell, C., Johnston, J. D., & Kontulainen, S. (2022). Dog-assisted physical activity intervention in children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A feasibility and efficacy exploratory study. *Anthrozoös*, *35*(4), 601-612.

Baird, R., Grové, C., & Berger, E. (2022). The impact of therapy dogs on the social and emotional wellbeing of students: a systematic review. *Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, *39*(2), 180-208.

Barber, O., & Proops, L. (2019). Low-ability secondary school students show emotional, motivational, and performance benefits when reading to a dog versus a teacher. *Anthrozoös*, *32*(4), 503-518.

Bassette, L. A., & Taber-Doughty, T. (2016). Analysis of an animal-assisted reading intervention for young adolescents with emotional/behavioral disabilities. *RMLE Online*, *39*(3), 1-20.

Becker, J. L., Rogers, E. C., & Burrows, B. (2017). Animal-assisted social skills training for children with autism spectrum disorders. *Anthrozoös*, *30*(2), 307-326.

Beetz, A., Kotrschal, K., Turner, D. C., Hediger, K., Uvnäs-Moberg, K., & Julius, H. (2011). The effect of a real dog, toy dog and friendly person on insecurely attached children during a stressful task: An exploratory study. *Anthrozoös*, *24*(4), 349-368.

Boe, V. R. M. (2008). Effects of Animal-Assisted Therapy on a Student with an Emotional/Behavioral Disorder. *Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals*, *25*, 47.

Chadwick, Z., Edmondson, A., & McDonald, S. (2022). Engaging with animal‐assisted interventions (AAIs): exploring the experiences of young people with ASD/ADHD diagnoses. *Support for Learning*, *37*(1), 44-61.

Connell, C. G., Tepper, D. L., Landry, O., & Bennett, P. C. (2019). Dogs in schools: The impact of specific human–dog interactions on reading ability in children aged 6 to 8 years. *Anthrozoös*, *32*(3), 347-360.

Fung, S. C. (2017). Canine-assisted reading programs for children with special educational needs: rationale and recommendations for the use of dogs in assisting learning. *Educational Review*, *69*(4), 435-450.

Fynn, W. I., & Runacres, J. (2022). Dogs at school: a quantitative analysis of parental perceptions of canine-assisted activities in schools mediated by child anxiety score and use case. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, *16*(1), 4.

Gee, N. R., Fine, A. H., & Schuck, S. (2015). Animals in educational settings: Research and practice. In *Handbook on animal-assisted therapy* (pp. 195-210). Academic Press.

Juríčková, V., Bozděchová, A., Machová, K., & Vadroňová, M. (2020). Effect of animal assisted education with a dog within children with ADHD in the classroom: A case study. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, *37*(6), 677-684.

Kirnan, J., Siminerio, S., & Wong, Z. (2016). The impact of a therapy dog program on children’s reading skills and attitudes toward reading. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *44*, 637-651.

Lamkin, D. (2017). *Fostering literacy learning with three middle school special-education students using therapy dogs as reading partners*. State University of New York at Albany.

Le Roux, M. C., Swartz, L., & Swart, E. (2014, December). The effect of an animal-assisted reading program on the reading rate, accuracy and comprehension of grade 3 students: A randomized control study. In *Child & Youth Care Forum* (Vol. 43, pp. 655-673). Springer US.

Leos, R. A., Cuccaro, P. M., Herbold, J. R., & Hernandez, B. F. (2022). Exploring School Staff Perceptions Relating to Animals and Their Involvement in Interventions to Support Mental Health. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *19*(12), 7126.

Levinson, E. M., Vogt, M., Barker, W. F., Jalongo, M. R., & Van Zandt, P. (2017). Effects of reading with adult tutor/therapy dog teams on elementary students’ reading achievement and attitudes. *Society & Animals*, *25*(1), 38-56.

Linder, D. E., Mueller, M. K., Gibbs, D. M., Alper, J. A., & Freeman, L. M. (2018). Effects of an animal-assisted intervention on reading skills and attitudes in second grade students. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *46*, 323-329.

Martens, K. (2015). Effect of Dogs on Communication and Behavior Patterns of Adolescents/Children in a Residential Treatment Program. Vienna: uniwien

Meints, K., Brelsford, V. L., Dimolareva, M., Maréchal, L., Pennington, K., Rowan, E., & Gee, N. R. (2022). Can dogs reduce stress levels in school children? effects of dog-assisted interventions on salivary cortisol in children with and without special educational needs using randomized controlled trials. *Plos one*, *17*(6), e0269333.

Moe, A. M. (2022). “Sunny Makes Everything Okay”: Therapy Dogs as a Pedagogical Tool in Sensitive Classes. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, *33*(3), 388-405.

Ngai, J. T., Yu, R. W., Chau, K. K., & Wong, P. W. (2021). Effectiveness of a school-based programme of animal-assisted humane education in Hong Kong for the promotion of social and emotional learning: A quasi-experimental pilot study. *Plos one*, *16*(3), e0249033.

O'Haire, M. E., McKenzie, S. J., McCune, S., & Slaughter, V. (2013). Effects of animal-assisted activities with guinea pigs in the primary school classroom. *Anthrozoös*, *26*(3), 445-458.

Schoenfeld-Tacher, R., Hellyer, P., Cheung, L., & Kogan, L. (2017). Public perceptions of service dogs, emotional support dogs, and therapy dogs. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, *14*(6), 642.

Schuck, S. E., Johnson, H. L., Abdullah, M. M., Stehli, A., Fine, A. H., & Lakes, K. D. (2018). The role of animal assisted intervention on improving self-esteem in children with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder. *Frontiers in pediatrics*, *6*, 300.

Solé, M., Camerino, O., Rodrigo, M., Jonsson, G., Prat, Q., & Castañer, M. (2023). Patterns of Interactive and Motor Behavior: Animal-Assisted Intervention in Inclusive Education. *Apunts. Educació Física i Esports*, (151), 17-26.

Steel, J. (2023). Reading to Dogs in schools: a controlled feasibility study of an online reading to Dogs intervention. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *117*, 102117.

Steel, J., Williams, J. M., & McGeown, S. (2021). Reading to dogs in schools: an exploratory study of teacher perspectives. *Educational Research*, *63*(3), 279-301.

Stevenson, K., Jarred, S., Hinchcliffe, V., & Roberts, K. (2015). Can a dog be used as a motivator to develop social interaction and engagement with teachers for students with autism?. *Support for Learning*, *30*(4), 341-363.

Uccheddu, S., Albertini, M., Pierantoni, L., Fantino, S., & Pirrone, F. (2019). The impacts of a Reading-to-Dog Programme on attending and reading of nine children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. *Animals*, *9*(8), 491.

Zents, C. E., Fisk, A. K., & Lauback, C. W. (2017). Paws for intervention: Perceptions about the use of dogs in schools. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, *12*(1), 82-98.

**Appendix 2**

**Risk Assessment example considerations**

Example provided by Rushey Mead Primary 2023

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **What are the Hazards?** (What can go wrong)**Who might be Harmed & How ?** | **Existing Control Measures**  | (What are you already doing to manage the hazards/risks?) |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Canine related diseases and parasites | Pupils/ staffIll health | * Dog to have necessary and current vaccinations before coming into school. Vaccinations and other medical treatment is the responsibility of ….
* Dog to have regular veterinary checks
* Dog will be kept free of fleas, ticks
* Dog to be bathed regularly
* Dog lives with ….. when not in school and only visits on agreed days
 |
| Dog excrement and urine  | Ill-health, slips and falls | * Dog to be wormed on a regular basis
* Any excrement, or urine (on occasion this may happen indoors) will be cleaned up immediately and thoroughly disposed of responsibly and hygienically by …. or at the time of the incident. The immediate area will be sprayed with disinfectant spray, which the …… will supply.
 |
| Hygiene/ Infection | Ill-health | * Adequate provision for hand-washing
* Following contact with the dog, children will be advised not to touch any part of their face with their hands before hands are thoroughly washed
* Children will be reminded to wash their hands after spending time with the dog
* All wounds on exposed skin are suitably covered
 |
| Walks in the school grounds |  | When outside in the school grounds on walks during the day, the dog will be on lead where there are multiple classes outside in an area. *Where there are fewer children outside….* *Other factors such as dog at play e.g. how the dog responds when off lead playing fetch.* |
| Bites, cuts and scratches | Ill-health | There will be no unsupervised contact with children. Dog closely supervised, kept under control and on a lead at all times during school day hours when moving within the school building between 7:50am – 4:15pm.….. will have hold of the lead at all times when walking in the school building during core hours (see above). *An additional lead can be attached so that children may ‘help’ to walk … for a short time which will be fitted once outside so as to not cause a potential trip hazard.* Pupils and staff will be made aware of the procedures of meeting and handling the dog:* *Always remain calm around the dog*
* *Don’t make sudden movements*
* *Don’t stare into a dog’s eyes as this could be interpreted as a threat*
* *Don’t put your face near the dog*
* *Always approach the dog standing up*
* *Do not disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating*
* *Don’t eat close to the dog and never feed the dog your food or other food/treats without permission*

First aid kit held in ….. office.…… will ensure the dog is not abused or over petted to avoid any incidents.If the dog appears anxious or over-stimulated, the dog will be removed to a different environment, or the visiting session may be cut short. |
| Potential trip hazard | Staff/pupils fall / knocked down | Dog closely supervised, kept under control and on a lead at all times during school day hours when moving within the school building between 7:50am – 4:15pm.At the beginning of a school day when the school dog and … arrive on site…..At the end of a school day…Staff/pupils who are nervous around dogs…The dog will be on their lead during any staff meetings . |
| Allergic reaction to dog | Ill-health | * All parents/carers and members of the school community will be informed via the website, prospectus, newsletters and letter home that there will be a dog on site and asked to inform the school if they or their child has an allergy to dogs or severe fear of dogs
* Parents/carers of children chosen to regularly work with the dog will be contacted individually
* ….. will bring a dog blanket/bed to each session for the dog to lay on
* Areas where dog visits will be kept well ventilated
* Dog first aid kit held in …. office
* Pupils known to be allergic to dogs will not be allowed access to the dog
* Those thought to be highly allergic to dogs will have a statement included in their care plan/class teachers and school office to be made aware of this information
* Visitors to the school will be informed on arrival that there is a dog on the premises via the sign on the main office door
 |
| Noise, barking | Anxiety | The dog is sociable & will not be left with children unsupervised at any time.The dog may bark when ….If problems occur, dog will be removed from the situation/school by …... |
| Fire drill and evacuation | Dog left in the building in an emergency | …… will be responsible for safely leading the dog from the building to a place of safety, this will always be on lead. Wherever possible, when …. is not present to do this, the dog’s harness must be on to evacuate as this is the best way to keep the dog safe in a challenging situation.If a fire evacuation happens when …. is teaching or not with the dog, they will get back to the dog asap or deputise for the day to someone who is able to evacuate the dog safely in their absence. |