

Rationale

Increasing interest in animal assisted educational interventions and activities eg Lewis and Grigg (2020).
Potential benefits for cognitive, behavioural, social, emotional and physical development eg Purewal et al (2017)

Key Research Questions

Are schools involving dogs in their practices?
If so, how, why and with whom?
If so how is this managed and what are the implications?
If not, why not?



Method

Online questionnaire (Qualtrics).
Piloted then refined
Variety of question types.
Branching options.
Distributed via social media and existing networks.
Open to all working in educational contexts.
Ethical approval from University

Part of a larger mixed methods project which explored how, when and why teachers decide to involve animals in their classroom practices

Findings

607 responses, from 23 countries

School dogs & the pandemic

Dogs

A wide range of animals involved.
Dogs the most popular (43%).
Breed, age, gender, background varies.
Preparation, training and practice varied.

Global Appeal

Dogs involved in classroom practices around the world.
Dogs involved in classrooms in rural, urban and metropolitan schools.
Dogs involved in classrooms with learners of all ages.
70% say mainly to support pupil wellbeing.
Part of the 'classroom family'.



Innovative ways to involve dogs during the pandemic included remote lunches, online reading clubs social media accounts, talking pet apps, catch up walks and 'crafting with dogs'.

These brought benefits to their pupils, colleagues, and the animals themselves during uncertain times - *'his wagging tail and unconditional love starts all our days in a positive way.'*

Dogs 'brightened moods', bringing calm and normality.
'Reassurance, positivity, routine'
Communication, engagement and comfort



'Paws' to consider

Thorny issues:

During Covid eg touch
12% dogs no specific training
57% dogs in school 5-7 hours a day
16% no specific training for staff
12% dogs less than 12 months old
Minority of respondents mentioned wellbeing or enrichment of dogs.

Professional learning conversations?

44%: dogs should start in school as puppies
65%: some breeds 'hypoallergenic' so more suitable
91%: children and dogs have a special relationship
Levels of preparation very varied, and in many cases limited.



Sentience?

'can be used as a tool'
'third thing in the room'

References:

Lewis, H., Grigg, R. (2020) Tails from the classroom: learning and teaching through animal-assisted education. Carmarthen: Crown House
Purewal, R., Christley, R., Kordas, K., Joinson, C., Meints, K., Gee, N., & Westgarth, C. (2017). Companion animals and child/adolescent development: a systematic review of the evidence. International journal of environmental research and public health, 14(3), 234.

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