



**Introducing a School Dog -  
enhancing communication, social skills and wellbeing**



**Ottie has arrived**

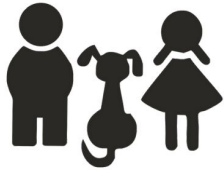
# The Dog Mentor



School Dogs Improving Educational, Social,  
Emotional and Therapeutic Outcomes  
Through Targeted Interventions



**in collaboration with the Dog Mentor**



Over the past 8 years, The Dog Mentor programme in 550+ Primary and Secondary schools in the UK (including 100 SEN schools) has proven to have a significant impact on many children's lives. These positive impacts follow the premise that improving communication within schools will improve behaviour. This, in turn, will provide an improved outcome for staff, parents and more importantly pupils.

Introducing a dog into your school is an important commitment which should be carefully planned and understood. The Dog Mentor prides itself on the seamless integration of an amazing programme that inspires and changes the lives of your whole school community. We provide your school with all the necessary training, guidance and support to successfully embed this programme in your school.

## **The Dog Mentor programme -**

providing children with positive experiences with dogs that can help them educationally, developmentally, emotionally and socially

# The Dog Mentor Family

Covers the entire UK and has branched into Europe.

Implemented directly on-site in many state and private educational settings including:

- Nursery
- Infant/Primary
- Secondary
- SEN/SEMH support provisions
- Boarding schools
- Children's residential homes



**550+** Schools  
**1400+** Staff trained  
**650+** Dogs

## What is The Dog Mentor Programme?



- The Dog Mentor is an end-to-end service providing everything you need to be able to introduce a dog into any educational setting
- It covers dog training and assessment for suitability to be in school
- Full staff training in all types of intervention, learning theories, insurance, risk management and lots more
- Full ongoing support and access to online resources
- Monthly newsletters and CPD training which are a combination of both dog training or education related

- Established by Jenny Duckworth in 2013
- Jenny, with a teaching background, previously managed a Pupil Referral Unit
- Trained as a dog instructor through the Institute of Modern Dog Trainers
- Certified as a Pets As Therapy Assessor
- Collaborated with local schools, incorporating dogs in pupil interactions
- Responding to high demand, devised a training programme enabling teachers to introduce dogs in schools through The Dog Mentor initiative
- Studied Neuro-Linguistic Programming and captured the reasoning behind how intrinsically linked dog presence and the positive development of an individual
- The programme mitigates the difficulties of having dogs in schools while improving curriculum wide educational outcomes
- Jenny leads the initiative to promote best practices for integrating dogs in schools
- Jenny promotes modern learning theories
- The programme is recognised by the University of Lincoln for research on childhood development in educational settings



# Research – The University of Lincoln



<https://lead.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/>

The Dog Mentor is collaborating with the University of Lincoln's academic research team to explore the benefits of school dogs in educational settings. By combining practical experience with scientific research, the partnership aims to capture how school dogs positively impact students' emotional well-being, learning, and behaviour. Through this collaboration, the initiative seeks to provide evidence-based insights into how canine companionship can enhance the school environment and support the holistic development of children.

The research programme kicked off in October 2024 and the results will be presented at the ISAZ 2025 conference in Canada.

# How it works

School identifies the need to implement the programme and makes contact

Suitable member of staff (with or without current dog) identified

Face to face course run in school in order to focus in each individual working environment, focusing on three tiers:

- **Bronze** – Dog Assessment for suitability to work in school
  - **Silver** – Staff training on all course modules
- **Gold** – Programme implemented across the organisation



# What's included

School identifies the need to implement the programme and makes contact

Suitable member of staff (with or without current dog) identified

Face to face course run in school in order to focus on each individual working environment, focusing on three tiers:

- **Bronze** – Dog Assessment for suitability to work in school
- **Silver** – Staff training on all course modules
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## Each organisation is provided with:

- Attendee resources
- Two types of intervention work booklets
- Pet welfare record book
- Staff Wellbeing Resources
- The Dog Mentor Licence
- Personalised coat
- Bandana, collar and lead
- Full Risk Assessments
- Ongoing support after training for all members of the educational community
- Access to private Padlet site with over 600 pupil resources, parental and staff communication collateral Padlet has booklets



## Education & Curricular Benefits

The Dog Mentor Programme supports children's education in many ways:

- It provides children with the opportunity to work alongside the school dog in lessons to improve their concentration and engagement.
- The programme supports teaching and learning with a wide range of curriculum resources for all subject areas.
- The school dog also provide learners with an 'authentic audience' - meaning children have a real-life purpose as an outcome for their learning.
- *Example video from a school:* [Dog Mentoring - Bella and Ruby](#)

## The Dog Mentor programme -

providing children with positive experiences with dogs that can help them educationally, developmentally, emotionally and socially

## **1. Social Interaction & Relationships**

Working with a dog provides children with the opportunity to develop a unique experience whereby they can return empathy, learn to share and understand to consider the needs of the dog before their own.

By creating trust through their relationship with the dog they develop the skills to help towards building better relationships with peers and adults.

**The Power of a school dog**

## 2. Attention & Behavioural Difficulties

Attention difficulties are often associated with ADHD, but they can also be caused by other things, including anxiety, depression, learning disorders, sensory problems and trauma. Studies have shown the presence of a trained therapy dog has helped:

- Increased children's attention and concentration performance
- Provide an outlet for excess energy
- Provide a non-judgmental companion
- Provide social interaction opportunities
- Encourage routines, decrease stress
- Offer a healthy distraction

**The Power of a school dog**

### **3. Anxiety Reduction**

A variety of anxiety problems can be addressed by the presence of a dog as it creates a calming influence helping to decrease blood pressure and stress responses. Children also become less self-conscious of themselves as their attention is focused on the dog instead.

**The Power of a school dog**

# The Power of The Dog Mentor Programme



THE POWER OF THE DOG MENTOR PROGRAMME

Formulating a rapport and relationship with a dog provides children with a sense of having a protector. With their protector by their side children feel empowered to work towards overcoming their fears. The companionship provides a platform for children to develop self confidence and resilience.

## DESENSITISATION



THE POWER OF THE DOG MENTOR PROGRAMME

## SOCIAL INTERACTION & RELATIONSHIPS

Working with a dog provides children the opportunity to develop a unique experience whereby they can return empathy, learn to share and understand to consider the needs of the dog before their own. Creating trust through their relationship with the dog they develop the skills to help towards building better relationships with peers and adults.

THE POWER OF THE DOG MENTOR PROGRAMME

## STRESS COPING STRATEGIES

Some children find it difficult to handle stress levels in a healthy way. Play naturally releases stress, combine this with interacting with a dog and you provide a child with a relaxation experience unprecedented to any other. Through cuddling, petting, grooming and playing with the dog, children can focus on the present moment and set aside their worries and fears.



the power of the dog mentor programme

## ATTENTION AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES

ATTENTION ISSUES AND DISORDERS ARE MOST COMMONLY ASSOCIATED WITH ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD), BUT THEY CAN ALSO BE CAUSED BY OTHER THINGS, INCLUDING ANXIETY, DEPRESSION, LEARNING DISORDERS, SENSORY PROBLEMS AND TRAUMA. STUDIES HAVE SHOWN THE PRESENCE OF A TRAINED THERAPY DOG HAS HELPED:

- INCREASE CHILDREN'S ATTENTION AND CONCENTRATION PERFORMANCE
- PROVIDE AN OUTLET FOR EXCESS ENERGY
- PROVIDE A NON-JUDGMENTAL COMPANION
- PROVIDE SOCIAL INTERACTION OPPORTUNITIES
- ENCOURAGE ROUTINES
- DECREASE STRESS
- OFFER A HEALTHY DISTRACTION



THE POWER OF THE DOG MENTOR PROGRAMME

## ANXIETY REDUCTION

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The Power of the Dog Mentor Programme

## communication and social anxieties

Children with social communication disorder have difficulty using language in social situations. Studies have shown play with a dog encourages children to communicate verbally by telling stories and comfortably being able to share any worries. It always encourages non-verbal communication through use of hand signals, body posture, petting and grooming...



# Ofsted reports praising the positive impact of school dogs at Dog Mentor schools

*"Leaders have introduced Stella, a school dog, under the Dog Mentor scheme. This initiative has had a very positive impact on pupils."*

*"The school invests in the professional learning of all staff. Staff value these opportunities. They swiftly apply their learning to support pupils. Staff are proud to uphold the nurturing ethos of the school. Morale is buoyant. Staff appreciate leaders' support for their workload and well-being. They, along with pupils, enjoy spending time with Jasper, the school's emotional support dog."*

*"All pupils are proud of Max, their well-being dog. They enjoy having him in lessons, taking him for walks and stroking him. Pupils say that Max promotes respect, calmness, focus and resilience when they work."*

# International Society for Anthrozoology

At ISAZ 2024, Jenny presented her emerging trend abstract, “The Dog Mentor: School Dogs Improving Educational, Social, Emotional, and Therapeutic Outcomes Through Targeted Interventions.” Her presentation highlighted how school dogs positively impact students. The University of Lincoln’s team supported her submission by offering expertise in developmental psychology, human-animal interactions, and educational interventions, ensuring a strong, evidence-based presentation. This collaboration emphasised the growing role of canine interventions in enhancing children’s learning and emotional well-being.



650+

# BBC Radio Kent

In November 2024, Jenny appeared on BBC Radio Kent to talk about The Dog Mentor with Dog Mentor Lucy.



PARAYHOUSE SCHOOL  
LANGUAGE AND LEARNING FOR LIFE



**Speech and Language Therapy  
in partnership with our school dog Ottie**

# 1. Communication & Language activities

Encouraging verbal and non-verbal communication:

- Walk and talk sessions
- Reading sessions - assisting literacy programme and being a reading companion
- Storytelling and narrative sessions
- Role play and imaginary play sessions
- Speech and language practice in interactive games
  - expanding vocabulary
  - giving clear instructions & requesting
  - understanding & following instructions

**Speech and Language Therapy  
in partnership with our school dog Ottie**

## 2. Social communication skills & emotional regulation:

- Interactive games: turn-taking with a ball or toy to encourage social skills
- Building Confidence: non-judgmental nature of a dog reduces pressure to perform
- Building relationships and trust: What do you need to do to form trust with the dog (The Trust Triangle)?
- Social communication and inference skills training: making observations about the dogs body language and understanding the dogs needs; reflecting this to the students' needs
- Enhancing empathy: understanding the dog's needs encourages perspective-taking
- Exploring emotional regulation through the dog's body language
- Calming presence and emotional regulation support
- Social interaction training: following rules, setting boundaries, creating and respecting space

**Speech and Language Therapy  
in partnership with our school dog Oattie**

### **3. Functional & life skills activities:**

- Caring for an animal
- Safely touching, walking, feeding and grooming a dog
- Learning about the importance of routine & creating timetables
- Sensory play - grooming, creating food games
- Indoor voice vs. outdoor voice - adjusting the volume & tone of the voice effectively

**Speech and Language Therapy  
in partnership with our school dog Ottie**

## Literature review:

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- Campanini, M. (2019) *The Benefits of a Therapy dog in a School Setting*. [The benefits of a therapy dog in the school setting](#)
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- Khan, S. (2018) *Therapy dogs can help reduce student stress, anxiety and improve school attendance*.  
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# Evidence Based Practice

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- Millan, C., & Peltier, M. (2017) *Cesar Millan's lessons from the pack: Stories of the dogs who changed my life*. *National Geographic*.
- Ngai, J., Yu, R., Chau, K. & Wong, P. (2021) *Effectiveness of a schoolbased 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), Article 0249033. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0249033>
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# Evidence Based Practice

## Other useful links:

- University of Lincoln's research page: LEAD project [Lincoln Education Assistance with Dogs](#)
- [How Therapy dog's help children with speech difficulties](#)
- [Using animal assisted therapy in speech therapy - Dogs Today Magazine](#)
- [Introducing a school therapy dog](#)
- [A Day in the Life of a Speech Therapy Dog: How Delta Spends Her Time at a Pediatric Speech Therapy Clinic — Speech Dogs | Animal-Assisted speech therapy — Therapy dogs and animal-assisted interventions for SLPs](#)

**Evidence Based Practice**

## FAQ

Questions and concerns are inevitable when it comes to introducing a new and perhaps perceived radical programme into a school:

- Dog mentor (therapy dog) + staff training programme
- Legal Implications and Liability
- Allergic Reactions
- Risk Management (Supervision, animal maintenance, hygiene, fear of dogs)
- Cultural perceptions
- Costs

**FAQ answered by  
Pia Lucas (SaLT) & The Dog Mentor team**