



# Pepper Power

Animal assisted activities (AAA)  
in a UK secondary school

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# Pepper FAQ

1. Pepper is not trained as a therapy dog
2. She works for 3 days per week, and no she is not paid
3. My research was narrow - there is huge scope
4. During the research there was no specific intervention
5. That smell is not me!

# Job description

- Reading mentor
- Specialist in behaviour
- Mediator
- Distributer of calmness and smiles
- Tear wiper
- Motivator
- Cleans up after lunch
- Occasional member of SLT



# How we make it work

- She is based in the Inclusion Faculty
- Health and safety (snooze!)
- Timetable
- Barriers (cultural, allergies and fear)



'The children adore her  
and want to read to her'

'The class is so much  
calmer when she is here'

'X behaves perfectly  
when she is in his class'

'I feel so much happier  
when she is here'



# The benefits of Animal Assisted Activities (AAA)

1. The power dynamics can change for the better
2. Comfort levels can be increased
3. Positive activities



Pichot and Coulter (2006)

A hormone and is commonly known to be released in new mothers whilst lactating in order to strengthen the connection with their new born baby.

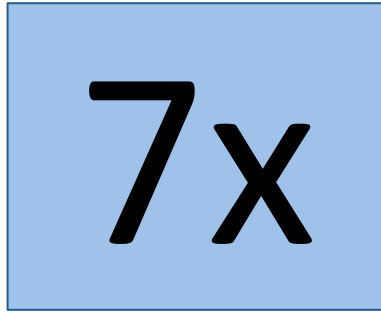
Creates social bonds and makes people feel calmer by lowering the heart rate and stress hormones, shutting down the body's 'fight or flight' system.



Replaces that anxiety with inquisitiveness, trust and gregariousness.

Friendly interactions between dogs and humans result not only in the lowering of blood pressure, but caused the levels of Oxytocin to double in both humans and dogs alike.

# MA dissertation research model



Taught by the same teacher

Taught in the same room

Similar ability profile (low levels of literacy on entry)

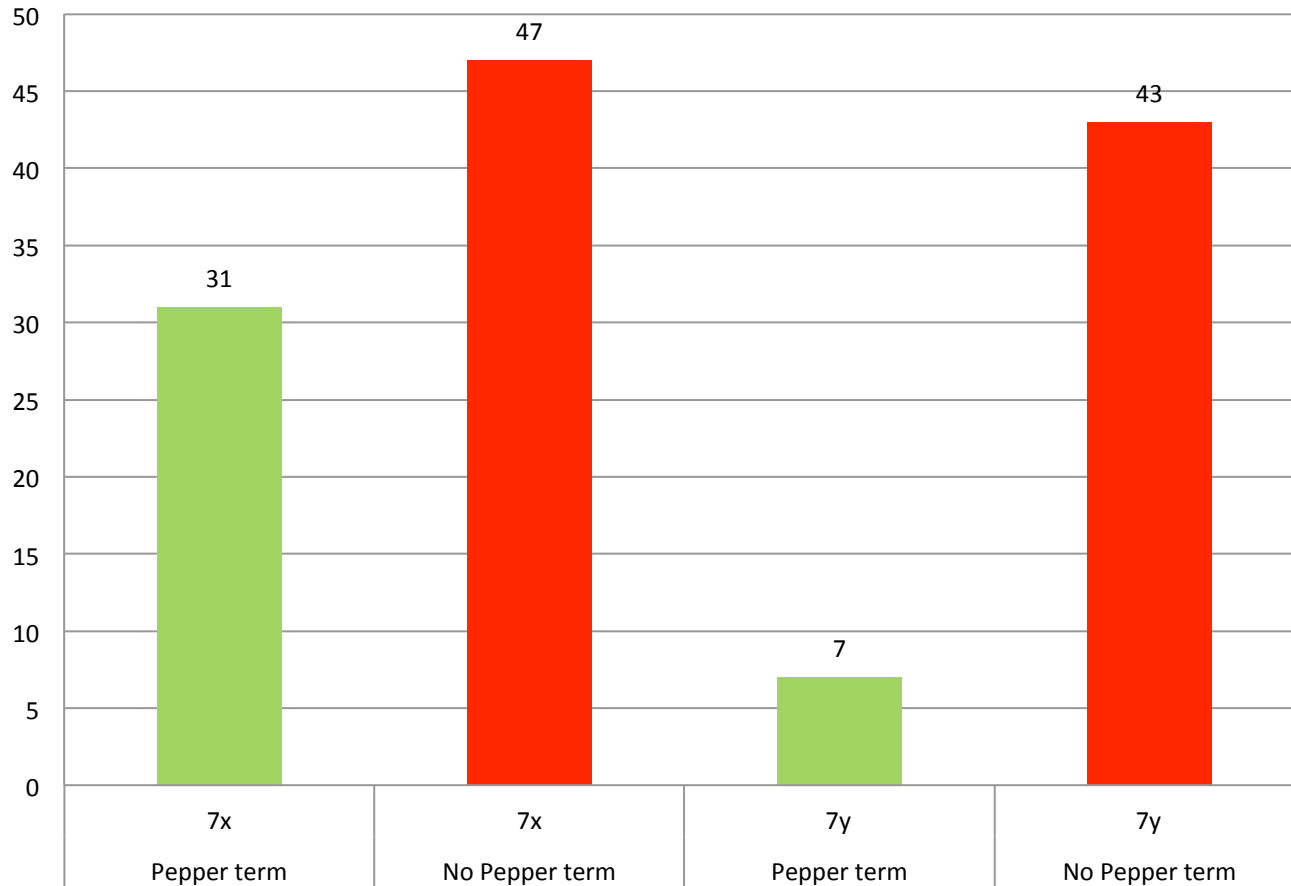
Progress data in reading and writing was collected over 24 weeks

Behaviour strikes were recorded over 24 weeks

**12 weeks with Pepper and 12 weeks without Pepper**

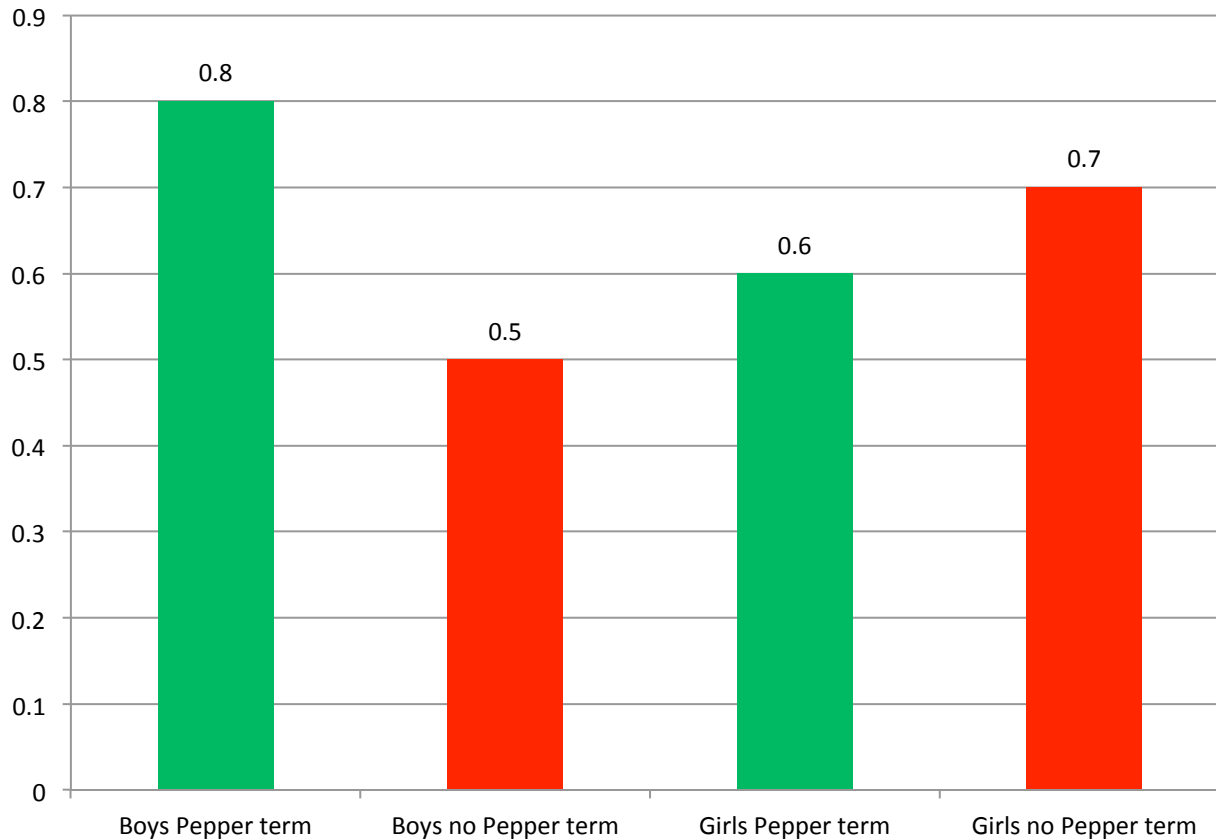


# Impact - Behaviour



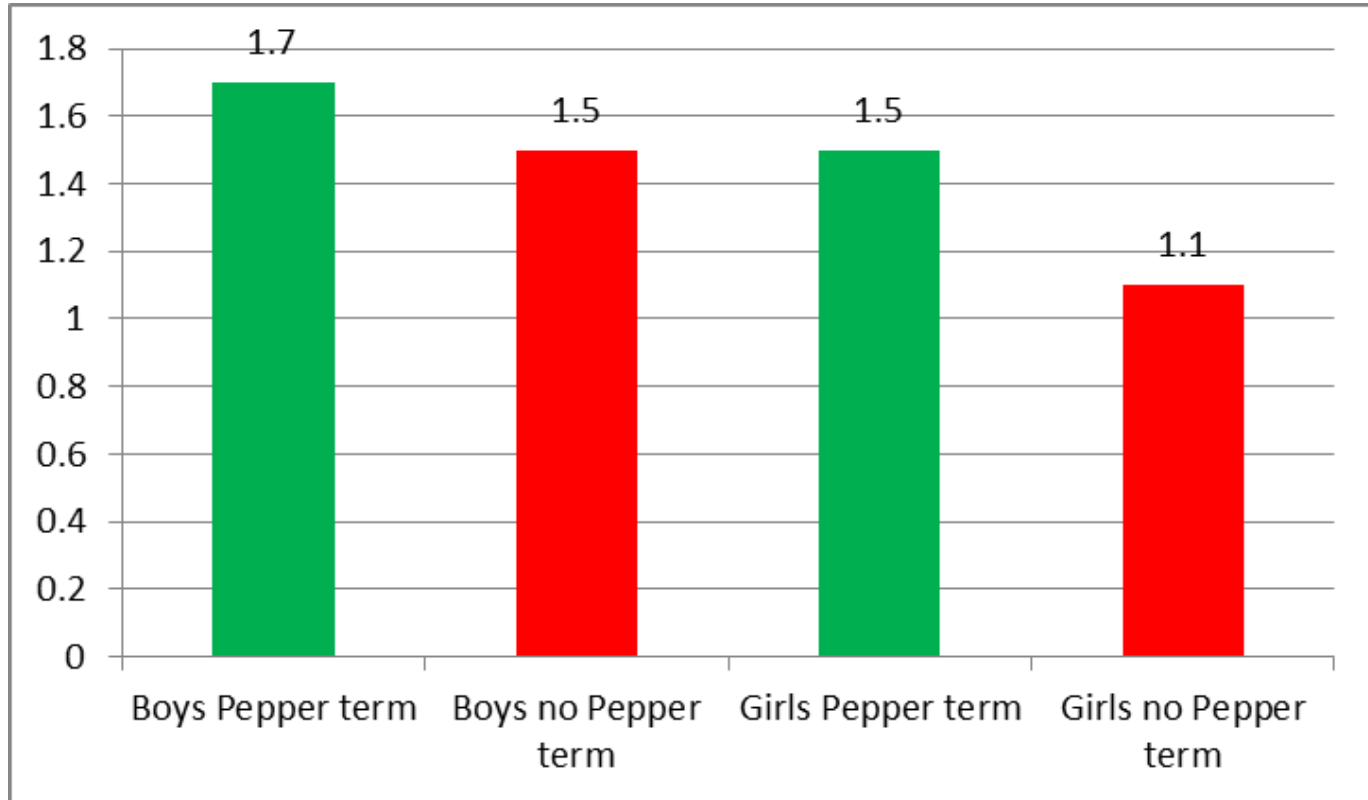
A bar chart showing 7x and 7y's behaviour patterns (**strikes**) over the term as a class

# Impact - reading



A bar chart showing the boys' and girls' average reading **sub level** progress over a term

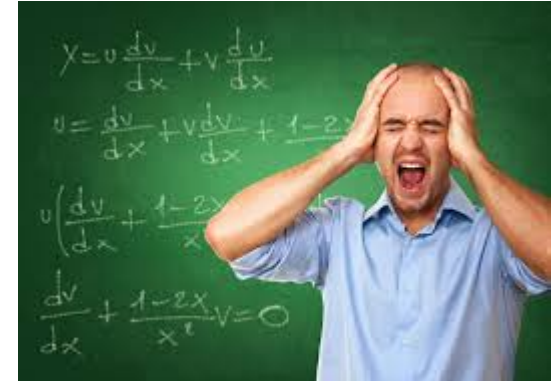
# Impact- writing



A bar chart showing the boys' and girls' average writing **sub level** progress over a term

# Heart rate and teacher misbehaviour!

A human's heart rate is a direct stress indicator, therefore a higher heart rate could be attributed to an increase stress levels (Beck 1983)



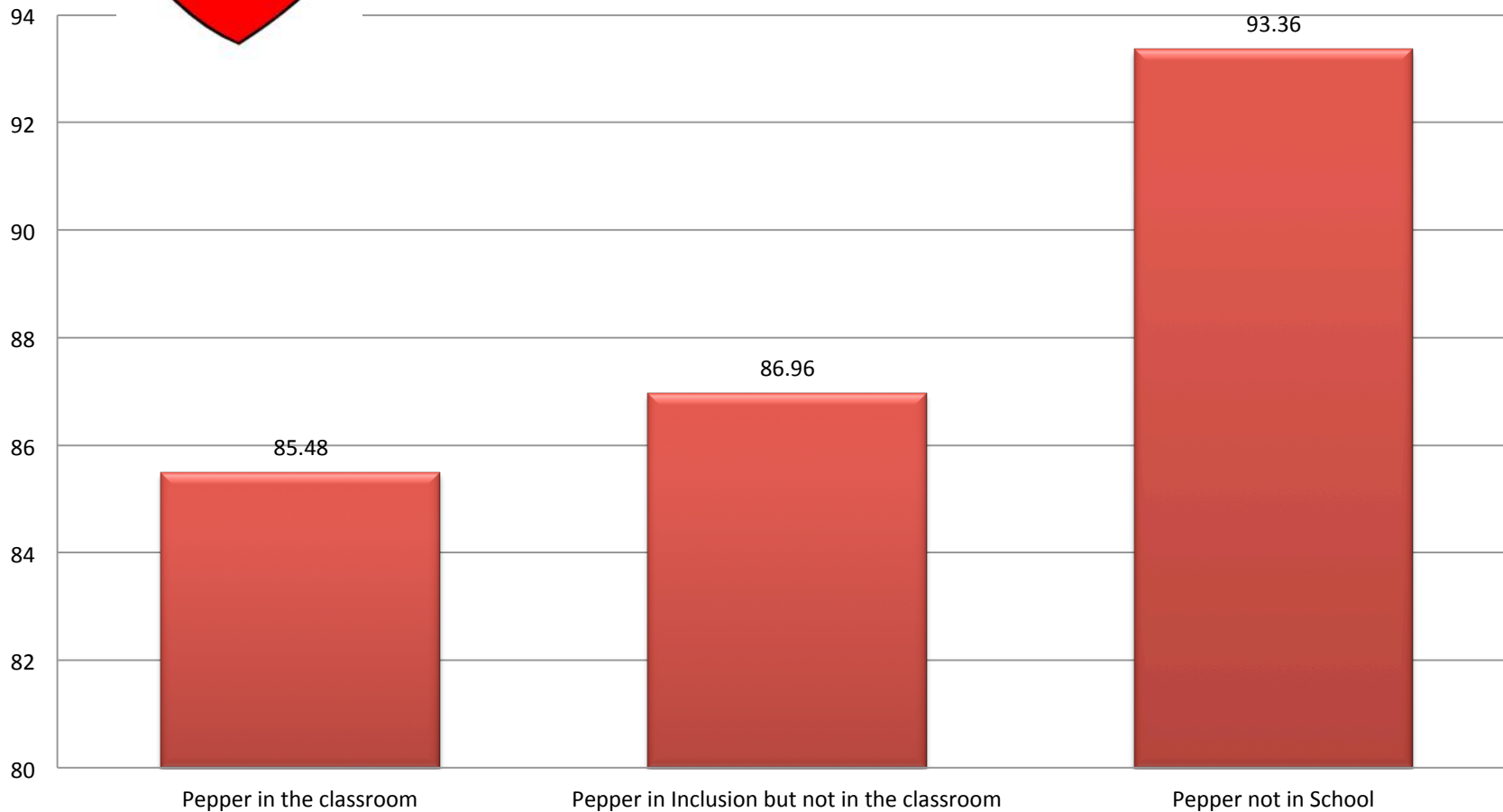
Turner et al (as cited in Sutton (2009) stated that the hallmark of an effective teacher

- positive emotions
- humour
- calmness as opposed to negative emotions and stress

100% of the classes felt Miss W was calmer with Pepper



# Shirley's heart rate



# Student well being

“ I like Pepper because when I am frustrated after lunch she calms me down.

When I am doing work I can concentrate more. It's like more comfortable when she's in the room. She's good altogether.

Year 8 boy (CLA)

“I like Pepper because she likes listening to me read and it helps me to concentrate. She makes me happy when I am sad because she always sits next to me when I am reading”

Year 8 girl



# Where next...

An Infant School were able to evidence that four out of five students with EAL made at least one reading sub level of progress over a six week period by reading to a dog for 20 minutes a week.

Sitting with the child was a Teaching Assistant (TA) who would listen, prompt and ask questions regarding the text. (Knowsley, 2013).

Do you have EAL students who need additional support with the development of their English?

# Where next...

Evidence from this case study suggests the boys were able to accelerate their progress in both reading and writing in the term that they were taught with Pepper, compared to the term when she was not present. Therefore, narrowing the achievement gap between boys and girls.

Do you have groups of underachieving boys?





# Where next...

Katcher discovered that 'friendly' dogs were able to 'charm' Autistic children. The children he studied would play and talk to the animals and humans when the dog was present during therapy sessions, however when the dog was removed they would revert to no social contact and 'hand flapping'.

Autistic children usually have half of the amount of Oxytocin in their blood compared to most children.

Psychiatrists have been able to prove that adults with Autism that were provided with recurring doses of intranasal Oxytocin were able to reduce their 'cold' and repetitive behaviours (Olmert, 2010) .

Do you teach students with Autism?



# Where next...

Students away from home for the first time indicated that a pet therapy program could temporarily fill the absence of previous support systems and be a catalyst for establishing new social relationships.

Adamle (2009) suggests that a dog can reduce attachment related stress.

What is the retention rate of your students?



# Where next...

Finally, important research has begun regarding the merits of using reading assistance dogs with children with Down Syndrome.

Often children with Down's read well but do not seem to advance easily past a reading level of an eight year old. Possibly because they become reluctant learners or possibly due to their reading comprehension and verbal production (Rockweasle, 2011).

Does this sound like any of your students?

