

# SENDIASS

## Southend



**Special Educational Needs & Disability  
Information, Advice & Support Service**



Mid and South Essex  
Health and Care  
Partnership



**Southend**

Clinical Commissioning Group

SENDIASS and Mid and South  
Essex Health and Care Partnership

# Robo Pets in Southend Schools Project

Summer Term 2021









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*When I make the right choices,  
I am allowed to spend time with the cat.*

## Background

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In the spring term 2021, SENDIASS piloted a programme in a range of Special Schools and Special Educational Needs (SEN) resource bases within Southend, providing robotic pets to be used to support children and young people in their settings.

Following overwhelmingly positive feedback, the CCG were approached to seek support to expand the trial and to provide at least one 'Robo Pet' to every key stage 1 setting (aged 4-7yrs) and specialist provisions for adult learners with learning disabilities (up to 25yrs) within the borough of Southend. During this time, CCG were supplying Robo Pets to care homes within Essex and were interested to work with SENDIASS to evaluate the impact in educational settings.

Sixty 'Robo cats and dogs' were provided to settings during the summer term and used in a range of ways as a resource to support children and young people. Every setting who received a pet were asked to provide feedback to evaluate their impact.

Schools welcomed their 'Robo pet' with enthusiasm, introducing them to their children, holding votes and competitions to decide their pets name and delivering pieces of classwork to incorporate their pets.

Initial feedback showed that schools were using them successfully as a tool to support their work with children who had a range of needs including social communication, self-regulation and sensory processing difficulties. The pets provide valuable sensory feedback vibrating softly as they purr, responding to touch through a range of head and body movements, facial expressions, by meowing, and interacting with the children. The function to mute them can also be



*He is not real, OMG he knows how I am feeling, he is talking to me!*



## Feedback Survey

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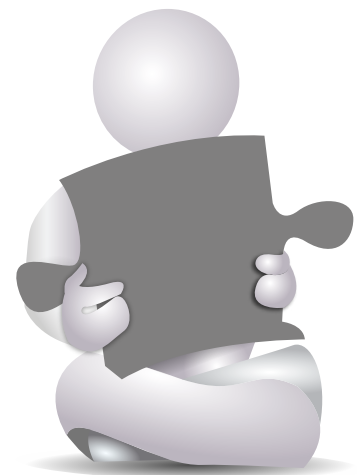
used where children may be hyper-sensitive to sudden sounds.

Teachers reported the pets aided communication, provided sensory input which supports self-regulation and encouraged and supported social communication. They were also being used to support play therapy and development of speech in some of the settings.

Several settings reported that they were also being used in the classroom with children and young people who did not have special educational needs and or disability (SEND), to support anxiety, bereavement and to encourage them to talk about their thoughts and feelings.

Following the distribution of an online survey at the end of June, we obtained feedback from 100% of the settings who had taken part in the project. Only one school reported they had not used their 'Robo pet' during the summer term due to the support bubbles within their setting. However, they said they intended to use it when restrictions on children moving between bubbles was eased.

The feedback also included examples of the children's drawings of their 'Robo pets', photos of their interactions with them and quotes from the children, young people, and their teachers. See figure 1 on the following page.





*I love stroking Rona;  
she helps me to be calm.*

## Feedback response types (Fig 1)

| Name of Setting                      | Key Stage   | Professional comments / examples | Child/Young people's comments | Images/ drawings |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Barons Court Primary                 | KS1-2       | *                                | *                             |                  |
| Blenheim Primary                     | KS1-2       | *                                | *                             | *                |
| Blenheim Autism Resource Base & Qube | KS1-2       | *                                | *                             | *                |
| Bournemouth Park Academy             | KS1-2       | *                                | *                             | *                |
| Bournes Green Infants                | KS1         | *                                |                               |                  |
| Chalkwell Hall Infants               | KS1         | *                                |                               |                  |
| Darlinghurst Academy                 | KS1-2       | *                                | *                             |                  |
| Earls Hall Primary                   | KS1-2       | *                                | *                             | *                |
| Eastwood Primary                     | KS1-2       | *                                | *                             |                  |
| Edwards Hall Primary                 | KS1-2       | NA                               | NA                            | NA               |
| Fairways Primary                     | KS1-2       | *                                | *                             | *                |
| Fairways Speech & Language Base      | KS1         | *                                | *                             | *                |
| Friars Primary                       | KS1-2       | *                                | *                             |                  |
| Greenways Primary                    | KS1-2       | *                                | *                             |                  |
| Hamstel Infants                      | KS1         | *                                | *                             | *                |
| Hamstel Autism Resource Base         | KS1         | *                                | *                             | *                |
| Heycroft Primary                     | KS1-2       | *                                | *                             | *                |
| Hinguar Primary                      | KS1-2       | *                                | *                             |                  |
| Jigsaw Development & Play Team       | EYS         | *                                | *                             |                  |
| Kingsdown (Special) School           | KS1-3       | *                                | *                             | *                |
| Lancaster (Special) School           | KS4-Post 16 | *                                | *                             | *                |
| Leigh North Street Primary           | KS1-2       | *                                | *                             |                  |
| Milton Hall Primary                  | KS1-2       | *                                | *                             | *                |



*Mrs. S has helped me because she is nice to have around and if you stroke her enough, you can give her a belly rub.*



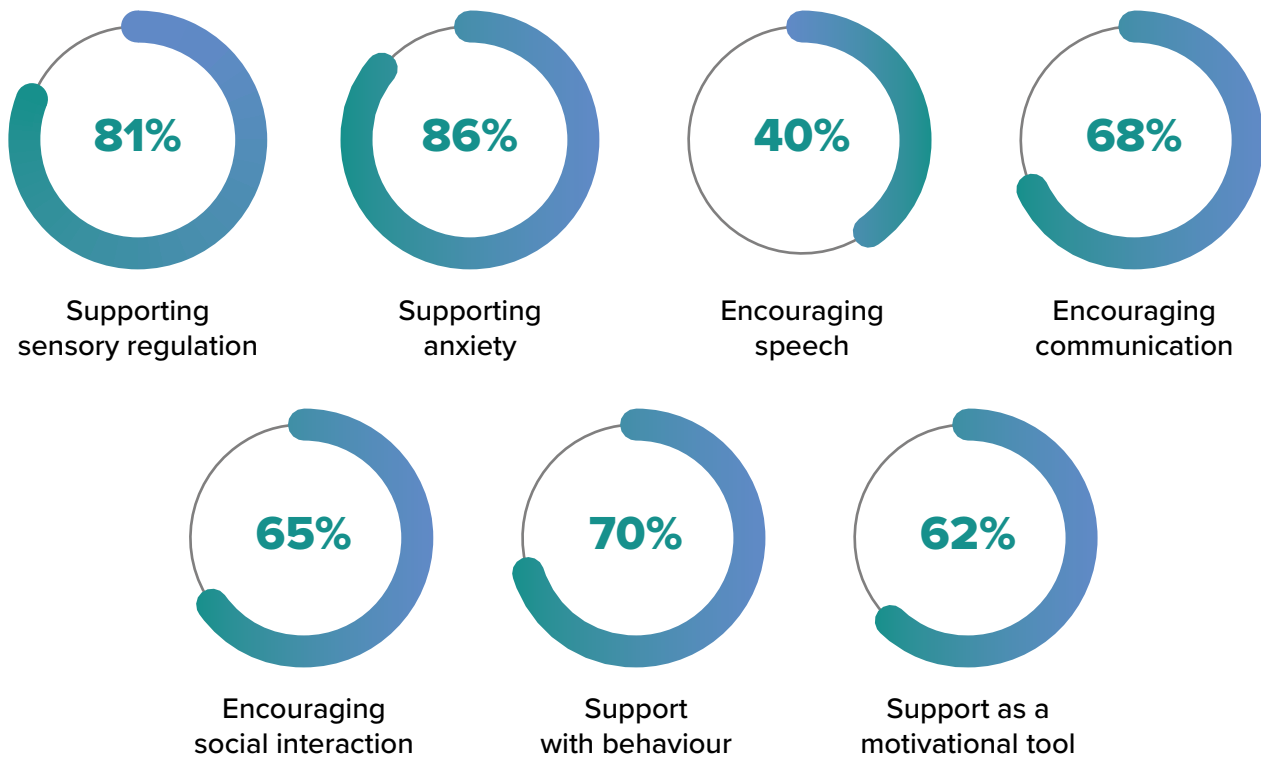
| Name of Setting                      | Key Stage | Professional comments / examples | Child/Young people's comments | Images/ drawings |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary | KS1-2     | *                                |                               | *                |
| Porters Grange Primary               | KS1-2     | *                                | *                             |                  |
| Prince Avenue Primary                | KS1-2     | *                                | *                             |                  |
| Richmond Avenue Primary              | KS1-2     | *                                | *                             |                  |
| Southend Adult Community College     | Post 16   | *                                | *                             |                  |
| Sacred Heart Catholic Primary        | KS1-2     | *                                |                               |                  |
| St Georges Catholic Primary          | KS1-2     | *                                |                               | *                |
| St Helens Catholic Primary           | KS1-2     | *                                | *                             | *                |
| St Marys CofE Primary                | KS1-2     | *                                |                               |                  |
| Sutton House Academy                 | KS1-4     | *                                | *                             |                  |
| Temple Sutton Early Years            | EYS       | *                                | *                             | *                |
| Temple Sutton Primary                | KS1-2     | *                                | *                             | *                |
| Temple Sutton Autism Resource Base   | KS1-2     | *                                | *                             | *                |
| The St Christopher (Special) School  | KS1-4     | *                                | *                             | *                |
| Thorpedene Primary                   | KS1-2     | *                                | *                             |                  |
| Victory Park Academy                 | KS1-4     | *                                | *                             | *                |
| West Leigh Infants                   | KS1       | *                                | *                             |                  |
| Westborough Primary                  | KS1-2     | *                                | *                             |                  |
| Westcliff Centre                     | Post 19   | *                                | *                             |                  |

Key stage ages: EYS 3-5yrs, KS1 5-7yrs, KS2 7-11yrs, KS3 11-14yrs, KS4 14-16yrs

## In answer to the question:

*'Which of the following impacts have you observed within your setting with the use of your Robotic pet?'*

Respondents said that they had seen positive impacts in the following areas:



Other positive observations were reported:

- Encouraging reading
- Supporting grief
- Supporting bereavement
- Supporting school attendance
- Resolving conflict

**100%** of respondents who were using their pets reported they had had a positive impact within their setting.

**86%** reported that their Robo pet has been used as a provision for specific pupils within their setting.

As detailed in the feedback response chart (fig1), many settings shared quotes, short examples and case studies detailing how these pets are being used to support children and young people, both with and without special educational needs and or disabilities (SEND).





*Having Whisper to talk to was just like having a new friend that you can tell everything to and who loves you.*



## Voice of the child and young person

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Respondents were asked to provide some quotes from children or young people in their setting about how their Robo Pet helps them.

*"I think she's really cute and I like stroking her"*

*"I look forward to spending time with Smokey"*

*"The cat sits with me while I play at lunchtime."*

*"I love stroking Rona; she helps me to be calm"*

*"When I make the right choices, I am allowed to spend time with the cat."*

*"I like to rub their belly"*

*"I have made a bed in a basket for the cat."*

*"I like to stroke it, it's soft and furry"*

*"I love to stroke and brush the cat"*

*"I like it when it purrs and turns its head"*

*"The cat makes me feel calm"*

*"Mrs. S has helped me because she is nice to have around and if you stroke her enough, you can give her a belly rub"*

*"He is magical"*

*"Can we keep him here forever he helps us all"*

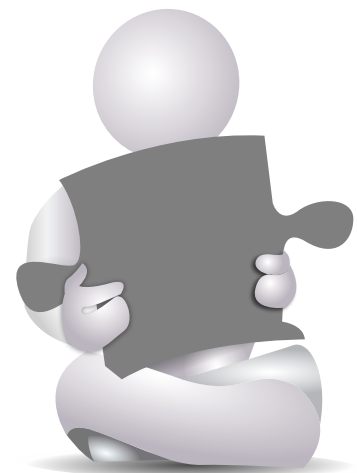
*"He is not real, OMG he knows how I am feeling, he is talking to me!"*

*"The fur is so soft, and he moults like my cats at home."*

*"It's calming when I stroke its fur"*

*"I wish I could have one at home"*

*"She makes me feel relaxed"*



“

*The cat made our teacher smile when it meowed when the class was quiet. We talked about why it wanted us to know it was there.*

*“Mrs. S is good at keeping you company”*

*“I don’t like cats, but I am a fan of Robocat”*

*“I like the cats in little Rays’*

*“I like brushing the cats”*

*“Is your name fluffy”*

*“Rosa keeps meowing at me”*

*“Rosa always watches me to keep us safe”*

*“Rosa moves when I walk past”*

*“The cat helps me feel calm.”*

*“I love our new pet.”*

*“Matthew listens when I talk to him”*

*“I like to brush Star”*

*“I like to hear Star meow”*

*“She is really friendly”*

*“It rolls over”*

*“When I feel the cat shake on my tummy it helps me breathe.”*

*“Having Whisper to talk to was just like having a new friend that you can tell everything to and who loves you”.*

*“I love the way he purrs.”*

*“He makes me feel so relaxed”*

*“If Shadow is very good then everyone is happy, if Shadow is naughty then everyone is sad.”*

*“Socks is my hero”*

*“I like him, he makes me smile and feel good”.*

*“I like stroking and looking after silver when I’m feeling sad”.*

*“The cat made our teacher smile when it meowed when the class was quiet. We talked about why it wanted us to know it was there.”*

*“Stroking the cat makes me feel calm”*

*“I love it when he meows,  
I think he is talking to me”*

*“This cat reminds me of my pet at home”*





*I like stroking and looking after silver when I'm feeling sad.*



## Feedback from professionals

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Comments provided through the survey from the teachers/professionals have been detailed below demonstrating how Robo pets are being used in settings within Southend to support the four broad areas of SEND. (Note there may be overlap in the areas, but these are unedited to maintain context.)

### Communication and Interaction

*"The cat was used to support a child with selective mutism- to encourage her to talk with peers and adults more confidently. The cat was shared between friends and lovely language was used. It took the emphasis off her and allowed her to talk more freely."* (KS1&2)

*"One of our children with speech and language difficulties and ADHD has been using it as a motivational tool. He now asks to see the cat as a reward."* (KS1&2)

*"The pet is used to engage children in conversation with staff, discussing their thoughts and feelings on how things are going for them."* (KS1&2)

*"The Robotic pet was introduced to the family and all three children of varying ages and additional needs spent time petting and stroking the pet."*

*"The pet helped to create interest in interacting with each other. It helped to draw attention away from hand-held electronic devices."* (Dev & Play Team)

*"The children that have interacted with our robo cat have enjoyed talking to her and spending time brushing and stroking her."* (KS1&2)

*"For some children this has encouraged them to talk about their home life and difficulties."* (K1&2)



*When I feel the cat shake on my tummy it helps me breathe.*



*"The cats have been a big success, seeing the delights on the faces of pupils (often reluctant to communicate) (and staff!) when they hear a purr, meow or see them stretch for a tummy rub has been so rewarding. The cats have been used in very different ways depending on the activity and the intervention." (KS1)*

*"One has been used in our Speech and Language Resource Base to help children communicate and talk around the cat." (KS1 SLRB)*

*"The students loved the idea of naming the 2 cats and each class submitted a name for each cat and winners were chosen. We ended up with Shadow and Winter. The classes really engaged in the communication around what the names should be and why. After names were given classes played with the cats and teachers reported that this prompted communication, conversation, and discussion about whether the cats were real (some students thought they were, because they meowed) and what made them work. Then we used them with individuals who are struggling with controlling their behaviour and managing the cats was a focus for these two students - and in fact, a distraction from the issues they were facing. This worked well for these two students." (KS4-Post16 Special)*

*"Having the cat in my room has generated conversations with lots of children walking past that would not, ordinarily, have the opportunity to do that." (KS1&2)*

*"We can see the benefits of using them to help as a communication aid with all of our students. They will help in developing communication/ speaking and also in developing social skills and empathy in a safe 'structured' way." (KS1-4 Special)*

*"Our cat has help develop social interaction and communication between the children." (KS1&2)*

*"To hear our children speak about different things at home while having the cat and watching them regulate themselves in new ways is really refreshing." (KS1&2 ASD base)*

*"Star has help develop social interaction and communication between the children." (KS1 ARB base)*

## **Cognition and Learning**

*"We have used it for a variety of resources from class stimulus for pupils in literacy, helping pupils who don't want to come into school, behaviour, calming down" (KS1&2)*

*"Our cat Rona has been used in a class of Year 2 children to support their writing development - as a subject for the story." (KS1&2)*



*"We use our robotic therapy cats in our nurture base and KS2 classrooms. They are making a such an improvement to our children's attention and calmness in the classroom."*

*"The cats have supported children who can present with behavioural challenges. Using the cats has resulted in improvements in children's behaviour and have been used in various PSHE sessions to promote speaking and listening."*

*"They have also been used to promote caring for animals and people and showing empathy."*

*"The cats have also supported children's learning as they have been used to sit on tables or laps to support concentration and promote good listening. We are feeling very positive about the impact this will have on all our children."* (KS1-4 PRU)

*"The children sit and read to the cat in our reading corner, this has really helped some of our less confident readers"* (KS1&2)

*"Some of the younger children found it a great incentive to coming to school which helped them settle back into routine."* (KS1&2)

*"We read 'Dear Zoo' first of all and then wrote to the 'Zoo Keeper' to send us a pet. The cat then "arrived" in a box with a letter about how to take care of her. She has her own bed and lives in our reading area. We told the children she loves stories, so they sit and read to her- they also love stroking her too."* (KS1&2)

### Physical and/or Sensory

*"One of our cats (known as Miao Miao) lives in our ASD friendly classroom. The children who use the room have very high level of*

*need. Our staff have used the cat in a number of ways. For one child it has provided another option for sensory feedback, for others it has been a means of encouraging communication and turn-taking."* (KS1&2)

*"The cat has had a calming reaction on the children."* (KS1 ASD base)

*"Our cat is used daily to help children who may be struggling with the routine of the day or to regulate their emotions. The brushing is very stimulating and therapeutic to them."* (KS1&2 ASD base)

*"Children welcome the chance for a cuddle when they were feeling sad or poorly. In one class the children made cards at home to welcome Mittens and even made some little toys for it."* (KS1&2)

### Social, Emotional and Mental Health

*"In the mainstream school it was particularly useful for a young child with a physical disability who is starting at our school and came to visit the children she will be with. She found this overwhelming, and we invited her to the SENCo's room and introduced her to the Robo cat. This relaxed her and put her at ease and brought a wonderful smile to her face."* (KS1&2)

*"One of the pupils has a phobia of cats so we are working with her to help her to address her phobia."* (KS1&2)

*"We have used our cat with a number of students in a variety of ways, including support for children with behavioural difficulties."* (KS1&2)

*“Children often come to have 5 minutes with the cat as a reward for completing tasks/ displaying positive behaviour/ to support self-regulating” (KS1&2)*

*“One child in particular who could previously take up to an hour to calm down, now takes only a few moments when given the cat” (KS1&2)*

*“The cat has been an excellent tool in supporting vulnerable pupils with anxiety and behaviour.” (KS1&2)*

*“The children have been asking for the cat when feeling upset, unsettled, angry – such a positive impact on the school across both KS1 and KS2.” (KS1&2)*

*“The RoboCat is being used within our setting to support with children coming into school if they are displaying anxiety. It also helps children who need support to self-regulate and if children are struggling with behaviour, this resource calms them down and helps them to express their feelings.” (KS1&2)*

*“She has been used to support regulation of behaviour and encouraged supportive social interaction. The younger children find this more beneficial than the older children.” (KS1&2)*



*“The robo pets have had a very positive experience on the children, particularly with children who suffer with anxiety. One particular child in EYFS often likes to ‘visit’ our cat wiggles when she is really upset or distressed. Whilst stroking him she begins to relax and appear less upset. After a few minutes she becomes happier, more animated and chatty. She is then able to return to her class and access the learning environment.” (KS1&2)*

*“Our two cats have been used to support a child when she was feeling sad and overwhelmed with family illness. She came to collect Mrs. S (cat 1) and would sit on the sofa cuddling and stroking her.*

*“One has been supportive for a particular child, and she is engaging more with her friends and going outside to play. She will come in and ask for Mrs. S when she needs her.” (KS1&2)*

*“On the day that the first robot cat was brought into school one pupil was having a difficult moment in the corridor. As soon as he saw the cat his whole demeanour changed, and he immediately calmed. He was later seen completing some work with the cat on his lap. The pets have had a massive positive impact on the whole of the primary school. We were then lucky enough to also receive a dog.” (KS1-4 Special Provision)*

*“The cat was used in our specialist provision which is accessed by pupils with complex learning needs, many of whom have significant communication and emotional needs. The children’s reactions when robo cat was introduced to them was wonderful and they immediately enjoyed the sensory experiences it provided through its soft fur and the movements it made when they touched*

*it. One child insisted on keeping her voice low so that the cat was not scared and spent time comforting the cat. One pupil entered the classroom and was struggling with her emotions. She sat with the cat quietly and it soothed her and noticeably improved her mood. Since having robo cat it has been particularly effective in soothing children when they have been struggling with their emotions. One child has also enjoyed reading to the cat on a regular basis.” (KS1&2)*

*“The Robo Pet has been a huge benefit to a child who is struggling with their anxiety due to transitioning to their secondary school. This child has Autism and ADHD, and the Robo Pet has gone with them to meetings and also provided them with a chance to self-regulate in school.” (KS1&2 ASD base)*

*“The pets have had huge impact on the emotional wellbeing of our pupils. Pupils who found it difficult to talk about their feelings are actually telling the cat and dog about their worries. We have seen very troubled children open up to the pets! The pets also have a very calming effect on pupils.” (KS1&2)*

*“The Robotic Cat has been a fantastic addition to our school, it has been used to support a huge variety of children and has been very successful in supporting children’s emotional wellbeing. It has definitely helped to make school a more enjoyable, comfortable place for many.” (KS1&2)*

*“One particular child has found it helpful to reduce anxiety and calm down and she has named the cat Lily, found a box and cushion for her, brushes her and has made a collar with her name on.” (KS1 SLRB)*

*“It has been really lovely having the robo cats in school. Our children love them. We have had some anxious avoidant children this term, returning back after covid. The robo cats have helped to keep these children calm and have encouraged children to interact with staff.” (KS1&2)*

*“We have used the cats with individual children. They have really responded positively and has particularly helped with regulating their emotions.” (KS1&2)*

*“The robotic pets were a really useful tool to enhance the social, emotional and mental health outcomes for pupils. When children wanted to access their safe space, they often asked if they could use the robotic cat, which we had named Barry to make the cat more relatable to the children. Their anxiety visibly eased when they had the opportunity to pet the cat. It was mainly used by children in Reception and Year 1. However, the robot dog was really successful in the upper year groups. So, although the pilot was for KS1 settings, it should be noted it had a positive impact despite the age group.” (KS1&2)*

*“The cats and dogs have become part of the college life and family. Adults and young people with higher and additional needs have found joy, a sense of security and support through heightened times of anxiety and loss. Our students have gained confidence in eating with others when they can take one of the pets with them. They have learnt about being kind and gentle through the use of the pets during their day.” (Post 19 Special & College)*

“

*I like stroking and looking after silver when I'm feeling sad.*

## Featured Settings

### Kingsdown Special School (KS1-3) – ‘How we use our robotic pets’

Kingsdown School has children from 4 to 14 years old with severe, profound, and multiple learning difficulties. Many have very complex needs, and in response to this we have to be extremely creative in the way we approach teaching and learning. The robotic cats and dogs have been a great addition to our school and have been used in a variety of different ways for different purposes. Here are some examples.

One of our pupils was particularly anxious at home time and going on the school bus. He is a child who has a loving family but are experiencing extremely challenging times. He finds it difficult to talk about these difficulties and understand what is happening and on one occasion was refusing to go home. The robotic cat came to the rescue with him being given the responsibility to look after it for the night. This enabled the child to feel less anxious and focus more on looking after the robotic cat rather than his family difficulties. The following morning the child returned to school happy,



and keen to tell his friends that his real cat didn't like the robotic cat!

To ensure the robotic cat and dog were accepted as part of our Kingsdown family the children were asked to vote on names for our new friends, and then a final decision made through the school council. This supported the pupils with giving their opinions and understanding a democratic society.

The robotic dogs and cats are frequently used as motivational items to encourage the pupils to complete their learning. the pupils love them so promising them time with them really



“

*I don't like cats, but  
I am a fan of Robocat.*

does encourage the pupils to work that little bit harder.

One of our pupils is struggling to come into school each day. They now know that Snuggles and Socks are waiting for them which has worked beautifully as a transitional aid to support the pupil with their anxiety.

One of our pupils has been finding it difficult to accept they will be leaving Kingsdown School this year and moving to Lancaster School. They found it very hard when Lancaster School teachers came to visit to talk to them about learning at their new school. This made our pupil particularly anxious to the extent that he was refusing to engage. He was given Socks to 'pet' during this transitional activity. This had the effect of reducing the



child's anxiety, and even enabling them to ask the Lancaster teachers some questions.

Our pupils speech and their confidence to speak has developed since having Snuggles and Socks. The pupils can often be found visiting 'their friends' in my office and chatting to them without realising. The stroking of a robotic cat or dog makes our children feel relaxed and secure so that they naturally start talking to them in their own way and world.

Our pupils really do love our new friends to the extent that they check I'm looking after them!

## Hamstel Infants School (KS1&2) – ‘Meet our Robo cats’

# Hello, meet our Robo-Cat

We call her  
'Star'



In Starlight the children really enjoy having 'Star' in class.

The children like to comb and stroke her fur.

Thank you SENDiASS for  
sharing 'Star' with our school.



## Meet our Robo – Cat

His Name is Fluffy

In Rainbow the children take care of Fluffy.



They make sure his fur is well kept as they brush his coat during the day.

The children like to hear him purr and move when he is stroked.



A 'happy to see you today' cuddle is always nice!

## Temple Sutton Early Years (EYSFS) – ‘Look who’s joined our nursery’

Look who's joined our Nursery!

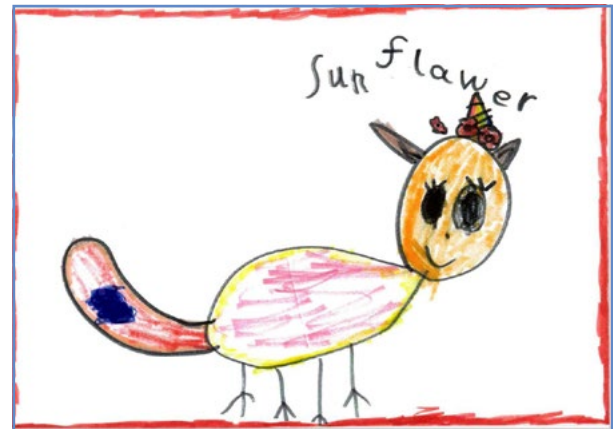
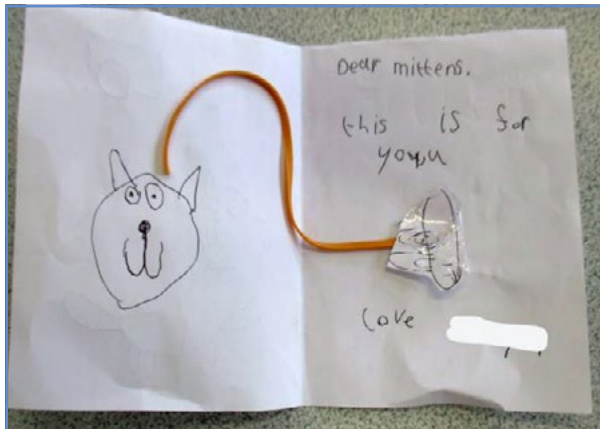


We have new robotic interactive pets. SENDIASS, kindly donated a cat and a dog and now we have four! The children seem to love them. We have not named them as yet but the children have some lovely ideas. If you have any suggestions, please add them to Tapestry, thank you.





## St Georges Primary (KS1&2) – ‘Drawings of our new cat’





*Rosa always watches me to keep us safe.*

## Other comments from professionals

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*“It’s been an absolute pleasure to test drive something so new and intuitive so thank you for including us. This has allowed children to really understand the different tools out there to help them regulate and settle in a daily classroom setting. Rosa (our cat) is always at the front of the classroom during the day. Children come up and take turns to stroke her as they sign themselves in each morning on the register.*

*“The cat continues to be a great tool for us to use with the children even after a few months of use.” (ASD KS1&2 base)*

*‘Our robot cat was an instant hit with the group of learners in on SEN base. The group have a particular interest and fondness of cats so the excitement when he first arrived was amazing. The initial buzz was incredible; we spent weeks speaking, writing, drawing, making things for our new friend. Soon our Robotic pet became the most comforting pet for the children. One boy in particular who finds communication challenging, would be encouraged to join in with his friends with the support of his feline friend, who sits close by*

*and provides a reassuring purr. We also use our robot cat for sensory breaks - he is always available to sooth when the children need him.’ (KS1)*

*The Robo-Pets have been used in our SEN Provision and ARB. In the classes there are children from Reception to Year 6 who have different needs. The Robo-Pets have been accessible by all years and abilities, they have provided support to children who struggle with their SEMH needs and have been a good distraction when developing their confidence in talking about their feelings. They have also supported children who have difficulty managing their sensory needs and who need help when feeling overwhelmed. They have allowed children who are struggling to stay focussed and calm to feel regulated. This has meant they are then able to access their learning successfully. The Robo-Cats are a great success and wonderful addition to our classes.” (ARB KS1&2)*

*“The children all love our cat, so do the staff!” (KS1)*





*Matthew listens when I talk to him.*



*“The impact of these amazing robotic cats has been phenomenal, thank you.” (KS1)*

*‘The pets are having an amazing impact on our pupils.’ (KS1&2)*

*“The pets seem to be having a powerful effect on the children’s emotional wellbeing.*

*“I think some of it is the fact that they’ve been unable to hug or touch for such a long time that it’s comforting for them to be able to stroke and touch without being told it’s not allowed.” (KS1&2)*

*“Our children with SEN, particularly SEMH and anxiety have taken a shine to it and I have been sharing with the children who are having difficulty attending school. They love the unpredictable meows and think it’s hilarious when it rolls over!” (KS1&2)*

*“We have identified a small sample group of children with differing needs to work with the cat within their intervention programme’. (KS1&2)*

*“The robotic pets were received with enthusiasm and as a nursery we wanted the greatest impact so purchased 2 more. This enabled us to allow much more access to them.*

*“We have 2 cats and 2 dogs and the children chose names for the pets. The names were*

*put in a hat and we now have Betsy and Elsa the dogs and Margo and Skye the cats. The pets spend time in the room bases and can be used in a variety of ways. The children love receiving the pets in their rooms.” (EYFS)*

*“The arrival of the cat was met with much enthusiasm from staff and pupils.” (KS1&2)*

*“Although we have used our pet positively with KS1 & 2, we have seen a greater impact with KS2 children.” (KS1&2)*

*“We have a timetable for the cat to be used from year 3 downwards but it is also used regularly with one of our Year 5 pupils.*

*“The cat, Mittens, has been spending time in each class to get to know them. The children were encouraged to come up with a name and this encouraged a lot of creativity. The children can cuddle the cat during story time etc as a reward for improved focus and perseverance.” (KS1&2)*

*“When the cats entered our setting, they had an immediate calming effect - on both staff and children. It has been used as a whole class support, with small groups and individuals at different points in the KS1 classes. Thank you!” (KS1&2)*

*“We have used our cat in various situations, and it is loved by all our children.” (KS1&2)*

# Summary

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The feedback shows that this successful project has had a positive impact on each of the four of the broad areas of SEND, not only within the settings who responded, but also across a wider age group than initially targeted.

The Robopets have proven to be a valuable resource in a range of settings with children and young people of all ages, regardless of their academic ability or special educational needs.

This project has opened communication and willingness from settings for the opportunity for further work in the local area in relation to sensory and social emotional mental health needs, with 100% of respondents saying they would be interested in taking part in future projects with SENDIASS and Health.

# Acknowledgements

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SENDIASS Southend would like to express thanks to all of the staff who embraced the project, found creative ways of using their pets for the benefit of their pupils and provided us with feedback.

Special thanks to those who took part in the initial pilot, The St Christopher Special School, Temple Sutton Early Years, Fairways Primary SLRB, Blenheim Primary ARB, Temple Sutton ARB, Kingsdown Special School, Jigsaw Development & Play Team.

Of course, we wish to thank the children and young people who have welcomed their Robo pets and who care for them. Their comments are wonderful.

We would also like to thank our colleagues in Health for supporting the project and in particular Michelle Angell and Sharon Earl who shared our passion in making this project happen.











## Special Educational Needs & Disability Information, Advice & Support Service

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