



College council will review this policy annually

Date approved: August 2019

Date of next review: 2020

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to the College community around working with a School Dog to enhance wellbeing and engagement. The Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies which can be developed through having a School Dog are linked to Victorian Curriculum standards, and are addressed in Discovery under the Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships Program (RRRR). This policy also outlines the College's responsibility in ensuring the wellbeing of the school dog and minimizing the risk of harm. See attached 'Risk Assessment' table. **(Appendix 1)**

Ownership and Costs

The College does not own the dogs as they are a family pet. The dog owner is responsible for:

- purchase of dog
- medical costs outside of pet insurance including excess
- food

The school will be responsible for the following:

- pet insurance
- 2 x grooming per year
- further training

The College will engage the services of a trained professional to assess the behaviours and welfare of the dogs, and provide advice regarding strategies to improve their skills, health and wellbeing.

In the case of more than one dog, owners will negotiate to not take leave at the same time if possible. There may be the opportunity to involve other staff members in the training process and this would enable them to also take over the role of handler and carer if the owners are on leave. If an owner leaves the school, the School Dog will also leave as they were purchased by the owner and are a family pet. A new School Dog could then join the program if needed.

Selection and Training

School pets used for classroom and environmental enrichment do not require approval from the Victorian Schools Animal Ethics Committee (VSAEC). However, the primary concern of the school must be the welfare of these animals at all times, including the provision of care during weekends and school holidays (if applicable) and veterinary care when needed.

When selecting dogs, they will be chosen for their mild temperament, intelligence and their hypoallergenic non-moulting coat. All dogs must have completed basic obedience training and be able to walk on a loose lead. Other qualities should include:

- Friendly
- Confident
- Gentle
- Ease in all situations
- Enjoy human contact

Training of the School Dog is specific and ongoing as they work towards the standards within the public access test. Training and testing will include a range of experiences such as temperament test, ramps, traffic, schools (both familiar and unfamiliar), entering buildings, stairs, off lead recall with distraction, and basic commands.

A 'safe spot' will be allocated to the dogs where they will spend time if they are not working with students.

Health

The School Dog will meet medical and vaccination requirements. This will be maintained for their lifetime. They will be regularly groomed and washed as part of their program at school.

The school dogs will work for a maximum of three days per week.

Daily management

Dogs will:

- only attend school if they are healthy
- be kept on lead during times of high human traffic and activity
- be allowed off lead when in a controlled and contained environment
- only be taken off site without the designated person in case of emergencies
- be put on lead and returned to its safe space and/or owner if the dog shows any signs of stress* or unwanted behaviors

* see **Appendix 2** for signs of distress behaviors.

Members of our community will be provided with information regarding appropriate behaviours around the dog and hygiene practices. A handler's code of conduct will outline the expectations associated with being the designated supervisor.

In the event of an accident or injury (School dog or member of the school community)

Accident or Injury

In the event of an accident or injury (School dog or member of the school community)

Dog will be removed from the immediate area and taken to their safe area by the designated person if required

- Parents and Owner informed of the incident
- Medical attention will be sought if required
- Incident investigated

Related legislation and regulations

- *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1986)*
- *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations (2008)*

Further information

- School Therapy Dogs. <http://www.Schooltherapydogs.org/>
- Dogs in the classroom <http://creativeteachingsite.com/dogs/dogs.html>

Appendix 1 (Risk Assessment)

Risk	Level	Risk	How do we minimise risk	Review		Responsibility
				Yes/No	How often	
Infection Control (e.g. hygiene, disease, infection)						
Hand Hygiene	Low	Attendees are encouraged to wash their hands after interacting with the dog.	Organisers to reinforce good hygiene protocols. Organisation to provide access to areas to wash hands or non-water based products for cleaning of hands.	Yes	Ongoing.	School
Transfer of Disease	Low	All dogs in the program are fully vaccinated (C5).	Handler to provide evidence that their dog has been fully vaccinated.	Yes	Annually/2 yearly/on request.	OWNER / HANDLER
		A health check is performed on the dog at assessment and reassessment.	Handler to provide evidence that their dog has undertaken a full health check with their vet (health screening protocols of Delta).	Yes	Annually/2 yearly.	OWNER / HANDLER
		All dogs are required to be on flea/tick and heartworm preventative medications.	Handler to provide evidence that their dog is on a flea/tick and heartworm preventative regime.	Yes	Annually/2 yearly/on request.	OWNER / HANDLER
Allergies	Low	Attendees who have a known allergy to dogs to alert the College	School to identify through School Dog Consent Option (Opt out) if any attendees have known allergies to dogs, and discuss with them their participation	Yes	School Dog Consent Option (Opt out) has been communicated at the beginning of each school year.	SCHOOL

Risk	Level	Risk	How do we minimise risk	Review		Responsibility
				Yes/No	How often	
Dog interactions						
Fear of dogs	Low	Attendees with a fear of dogs need to be identified before the visit occurs.	If it is identified that an attendee is fearful of dogs, the dog will not visit the classroom/leave the classroom. This will be communicated during a presentation to students about the dogs, and during classroom visits	Yes	School Dog Consent Option (Opt out) has been communicated at the beginning of each school year.	SCHOOL
Dog Bites	Low	All dogs have been temperament tested to ensure their suitability for the program.	Dogs are temperament tested using a strict set of protocols to ensure they are suitable for the program.	Yes	Temperament testing protocols are reviewed in line with the policy review timeframe.	OWNER / HANDLER
			Dog bites are covered under Education Department Public liability	Yes	Annually.	OWNER / HANDLER
Scratch	Low	The handler provides advice to the attendees on how their dog likes to be approached and interacted with.	Dogs are temperament tested using a strict set of protocols to ensure they are suitable for the program. (Therapy Animals Australia)		Temperament testing protocols are reviewed every 2 years.	OWNER / HANDLER
				Yes	Provided at training. Updates and refresher topics communicated via email or phone.	OWNER / HANDLER

Risk	Level	Risk	How do we minimise risk	Review		Responsibility
				Yes/No	How often	
Cleanliness	Low	Attendees are encouraged to pat the dog in a low risk environment	Dogs are required to be groomed and tidy at all times.	Yes	Weekly or fortnightly or when required.	OWNER / HANDLER
		Handlers are required to toilet their dogs on a regular basis	The handler carries poo bags to clean up after their dog at all times.	No	It is standard practice for handlers to carry poo bags when in the school grounds.	OWNER / HANDLER

Appendix 2 (Signs of distress)

Risk	Level	Risk	How do we minimise risk	Review		Responsibility
				Yes/No	How often	
Injury to the Dog – Signs of distress Signs and symptoms that will be monitored: Disinterest in participation Avoidance Lack of appetite Abnormal behavior Panting / Yawning / Agitation Physical signs of injury	Low	The dog's wellbeing is paramount to the program.	Handlers are trained to identify stress as well as how to avoid injuries whilst on the school grounds. Handler, if they identify stress in the dogs, will stop the visit immediately and remove their dog from the building / school yard.	Yes	Provided at training . Updates and refresher topics communicated via emails and phone contact.	OWNER / HANDLER