

Therapy Dog Policy

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to the Wurruk Primary community around working with a School Therapy 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 Wurruk Primary Schools responsibility in ensuring the wellbeing of the school dog and minimizing the risk of harm. See attached 'Risk Assessment' table. (Appendix 1)

AIMS

Therapy dogs become a unique part of helping with:

- Empathy
- Kindness towards others
- Reading
- Responsibility
- Control
- Lowering of instances of anger
- Lowering anxiety
- Meltdowns
- Communication
- And much more

POLICY

Implementation: Information about the Therapy Dog:

Pip is an Australian Kelpie. Pip has been trained by Australian Therapy Dogs to become a Therapy Dog. This is different to a service dog. Pip has a natural ability to refocus students who may be feeling upset for a variety of reasons. Pip will have a space in the classroom where she will spend time if she is not working with students. This will be her 'safe spot'. Her interactions to begin with will be based around showing students how to behave with Pip and practicing that interaction. Pip's training is ongoing. She has been thoroughly temperament tested and has been exposed to a range of experiences such as farm animals, attending netball/football, traffic, schools (both familiar and unfamiliar) and other dogs. Throughout the testing she has demonstrated a highly appropriate temperament for ongoing training and work as a Therapy Dog. Pip is completely up to date with all medical and vaccination requirements. This will be maintained for their lifetime. She will be regularly groomed and washed as part of the program at school.

BROAD GUIDELINES

Ownership and Costs

Pip is owned by Wurruk Primary Schools Lead Teacher Amy Glover, the School does not own the dog as she is a family pet.

The dog owner is responsible for: purchase of dog, medical costs, food

The school will be responsible for the following: Yearly, assessment ongoing with Therapy Dogs Australi

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Overview

Pip is an Australian Kelpie.

Pip will be based in Amy Classroom

Students will be educated in appropriate behaviour around Pip and other dogs and develop increased responsibility with handling and managing Pip.

Visitors to school will be informed of the dogs presence at the school reception, they will receive a small leaflet explaining Pip's roles and requirements

Daily management of Pip

Not allowed in school if unwell.

Be under the supervision of a trained handler at all times.

Continue to be trained as a therapy dog. This is ongoing.

Be up to date with all vaccinations, worming and grooming.

Will not be taken off the site without Amy Glover

Will have a safe area inside the office and classroom.

Pip will wear an Australian Therapy vest or bandana to ensure she is recognised as a therapy support dog when working in the classroom setting.

Student expectations

- Will never have sole responsibility for the dog or be left unsupervised around the dog
- Will be reminded of appropriate behaviours around the dog with each contact
- Will always be reminded to respect the dog and remain calm around her at all times
- Be gentle and not make sudden movements or attempts to physically contact the dog
- Not to stare into the dog's eyes
- Request permission before touching the dog
- Not to put their face near the dog
- Always approach the dog in a calm, slow manner and not touch the dog until it is sitting and calm or directed by handler.
- Do not disturb the dog while eating, drinking or sleeping
- Never to feed the dog

Health and Safety

- All persons should always wash their hands after handling the dog.
- Any dog excrement to be cleaned and disposed of appropriately.

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If Dog is hurt or injured (accident or by student)

- Dog will be removed by Amy Glover or delegate calmly from the situation if required
- Dog to be moved to her safe area
- Amy to take Dog to the Vet if required: Legacy Vets Longford • Parents informed if harm caused by students and Progression of Consequences followed.
- Incident protocols enacted
- Amy to be notified immediately, documentation required
- Parents to be notified immediately
- Seek medical attention if required
- Inform all staff of the incident via email
- A full investigation from Principal and DE

Support for policy

<https://therapydog.com.au/>

School Therapy Dogs <http://www.schooltherapydogs.org/>

Dogs in the classroom <http://www.creativeteachingsite.com/dogs/dogs.html>

Related legislation and regulations

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1986)

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations (2008)

FAQ:

My child is allergic to dogs. Dogs will be well groomed and bathed regularly. Which will help, but no child who is allergic to dogs has to have contact with the dog, and the school will monitor this closely.

Will the dog disrupt the classroom? No, the dog will be with her handler at all times and is not permitted to wander around the school unattended. When in class she will be settled on her mat in a down stay, unless otherwise directed by his handler.

How healthy is the dog? The dog is fully vaccinated and up to date with all worm and flea treatments. If for any reason the dog is unwell, she will remain at home. We understand that there may be some families who do not want Pip to work directly with their child. All parents need to complete a consent form for their child. If the form is not completed, the child will have no contact with the school dog.

Evaluation: This policy will be reviewed annually as part of the school's review cycle unless an issue arises which requires review.

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[FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES](#)

[REVIEW CYCLE](#)

This policy was ratified by School Council – 2023