



## Dogs at School POLICY

### PURPOSE

To explain to our school community the rules and procedures we have in place in relation to dogs attending our school grounds.

### POLICY

#### Assistance dogs

Stawell Primary School understands its obligations under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) and the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic) and will make reasonable adjustments for members of our school community with a disability who require an 'assistance animal' to help alleviate the effects of their disability. Assistance animals are permitted to attend our school with their handler. Our school Principal can lawfully ask a person to produce evidence that an animal:

- is trained specifically to assist a person alleviate the effects of a disability (eg seeing eye dogs)
- meets standards of hygiene and behaviour appropriate for a school environment.

We understand that in some circumstances, students may require an assistance animal to attend school to help them to participate in their educational program. Stawell Primary School will consider a request by a student with a disability to allow an assistance animal to attend school with them on a case-by-case basis. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact Scott Rathgeber – Acting Assistant Principal – 5358 1255.

#### Therapy dogs

Stawell Primary School endorses the use of trained therapy dogs on site. These animals must be certified and evidence of this training should be provided to the school principal on arrival at Stawell Primary School. Prior permission should be sought from the principal before the therapy dog attends on site. The school principal is lawfully able to refuse a therapy dog entry to Stawell Primary School.

There are numerous benefits to having a trained therapy dog in school, including:

- The therapy dog allows students to put our school values of PRIDE into practice
- Increased incentive for children with low attendance to attend school
- Students without pets can build skills around safe behaviours with animals and how to care for them
- Having a therapy dog present makes students more aware of their behaviour choices and can reduce disruptive behaviour
- Reading programs – students who suffer anxiety around reading out loud often feel more comfortable reading to a therapy dog and this can increase confidence and reading fluency
- Therapy dogs are excellent role models through showing resilience in their training and behaviour
- Therapy dogs can provide a sense of comfort, friendship and love, especially those students who are feeling vulnerable and are going through a difficult time
- Students develop a greater sense of empathy

Parents/carers will be informed of the intention to use a therapy dog at school. Parents and carers will hold the right to withdraw consent for their child to have any contact with the therapy dog. Any such wishes will be respected and upheld. There will be appropriate adult supervision whenever the dog is present with pupils.

Stawell Primary School will take reasonable care to avoid contact with the dog for those who notify the risk of an allergic reaction. However, the notification of such risks are the responsibility of staff, visitors and parents/carers. Staff will monitor each allergy as a case by case basis. Anyone with a fear of dogs will be respected and never forced to interact with the therapy dog.

The dog's health and wellbeing are prioritised as well. All vaccinations, worming treatments and vet checks will be up to date. If the dog is ill, it will not be allowed into the school.

### **Pet dogs**

Stawell Primary School is not a public place, and our Principal has the authority to permit or decline entry to school grounds and impose conditions of entry.

Whilst Stawell Primary School understands that many families in our school community keep dogs as pets, to ensure that our school remains a safe and inclusive place for everyone, pet dogs are not permitted on school grounds under any circumstances.

Our school community is diverse, and may include people that are allergic or uncomfortable around dogs. We are also conscious of the health hazards that may be posed by dogs. We ask that families please leave their pet dogs at home or safely tether them outside school grounds when attending our school or school events.

### **Stray dogs**

Unaccompanied or stray dogs sighted at our school should be reported immediately to the school office on 5358 1255. School staff will contact municipal authorities and/or Victoria police for assistance in managing and removing a stray dog from school grounds, and ensure staff and students remain safe at school.

## **POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL**

Policy last reviewed	28/03/2023
Consultation	School Council
Approved by	Principal/School Council
Next scheduled review date	March, 2025