

Therapy Dog Policy



Rationale:

This is a pilot program at Parktone Primary School which relates directly to Staff and Student Wellbeing. This policy governs the program, ensuring the program maximises its full potential. This policy covers all aspects of having a dog in a school environment; careful management abiding by this policy ensures there is a very low risk of harm.

Our therapy dog will work within the school environment. She will come to work each day and when jacketed is working with students with anxiety, anger issues, as well as with student learning and communication skills.

Aims:

K9 Support 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

Implementation:

Information about the Therapy Dog:

Pip is an Australian Cobberdog, which considered a pure breed of Labradoodle. A Labradoodle is a Labrador X Poodle. Pip has been trained by K9 Support 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 office 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.

Context

- Pip is owned by Genevieve Casonato, Parktone Primary School's principal.
- Pip is an Australian Cobberdog.
- Pip will be based in the principal's office in 2020.
- 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.
- Will be kept on lead at all times except when having free time in the yard by herself.
- 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 Genevieve Casonato or her delegate in emergencies.
- Will have a safe area inside the office and classroom.
- Pip will wear a training vest 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
- Only Assistance Dogs (eg Seeing Eye, Hearing, etc) allowed on school premises unless other arrangements made with Principal

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

- Dog will be removed by Genevieve Casonato or delegate calmly from the situation if required
- Dog to be moved to her safe area
- Genevieve to take Dog to the Vet if required: Aspendale Gardens Veterinary Hospital
- Parents informed if harm caused by students and Progression of Consequences followed.
- Incident protocols enacted
- Genevieve 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 DET

Support for policy

- K9 Support. Therapy Dog Training. Tessa Stow. 31 Davies Rd, Warrenbayne, Vic. 57632471. <http://www.k9support.com.au/>
- Greencross Vets
- School Therapy Dogs <http://www.schooltherapydogs.org/>
- Dogs in the classroom <http://www.creativeteachingsite.com/dogs/dogs.html>

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.

This policy was ratified by School Council – March 2021