



Clifton Hills Primary Dogs on School Premises Policy

(ratified by School Board September 2021)

INTRODUCTION: *This policy applies to the approved school dogs only. It does not affect the school's right to prohibit other dogs on school property in accordance with our Dogs in School Policy.*

A variety of animals, including dogs, are becoming an ever-popular and worthwhile addition to schools across the country. Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

At Clifton Hills Primary School, we value the development of children's well-being along with their social education as highly as we value academia. We believe a school dog will be a unique way to enrich all areas of the children's wider education, skills and well-being.

POLICY: This policy outlines the guidelines for the school dogs being in the school and for his/her care and care of the students and staff. By following the guidelines of this policy we believe that the risk to having a dog on the premises is minimised.

AIM: To provide guidelines for dogs in the school, their use, suitability and well-being, and

To provide students with applied learning opportunities and the companionship of an animal in the school grounds.

RATIONALE: There are numerous benefits to having a dog in school, including but not limited to:

- The presence and care of a school dog enables children to put our school values into practice: Courtesy, Honour, Integrity, Perseverance and Safety;
- Children with low attendance can be encouraged to come to school with the incentive of a meet and greet from the school dog;
- With the Australian pet dog population around 4.8 million (RSPCA, 2018), children and adults are bound to come in contact with dogs at various points in their lives. Children without pet dogs have the opportunity to learn valuable life skills at school about how to safely interact with dogs when they are out in the community;
- With a dog to care for, children may be more mindful of their behaviour. Disruptive behaviours may be reduced; with children generally more aware of the impact of their behaviour and choices;
- We prioritize assisting children to develop a growth mindset: to be resilient learners who are not afraid to make mistakes and persevere to acquire new skills. A dog is an excellent role model for this as training dogs takes time and repetition;
- Reading programs with dogs are becoming more prevalent and successful. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even adults are likely to be less scared to read to a dog. It might be less stressful for a child to read aloud to a dog than to a teacher or a peer. Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practice reading aloud and reluctant writers to read aloud what they have written;
- With the presence of a calm and well-trained dog, students may find increased social support and peer interaction;
- As a focus or context for learning, the school dog can provide an excellent resource and tangible motivation for children in all subject areas;
- The presence of a school dog may also be seen as an incentive for personal growth and achievement -with time caring or playing with the dog seen as a reward;
- A dog may give confidence to children as they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. The dog can work with students on a one-one basis and will especially help those students who are feeling vulnerable, have suffered trauma, or are going through upsetting/difficult times;
- Students may develop increased empathy through a connection with an animal, and

- Several Western Australian schools are using dogs in the school, students have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Involving students in the daily care of school dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The use of a dog for a learning activity at the school when students are in attendance, must meet the following requirements:

- The teachers/trainers will have accessed the Department of Education Animal Care policies to ensure that they have met the requirements.
- Approval must be sought from the Principal before using a dog for educational purposes, or bringing it to the school.
- It must be deemed that a dog is necessary for the educational outcomes of the activity.
- The dog must be clean and groomed, including being free of any parasites such as fleas and be wormed.

The dog must be able to demonstrate a 'novice' level of obedience, consisting of:

- Walk calmly–on-lead, where the dog walks next to the owner.
- Sitting and dropping on command from the owner.
- Standing or sitting for examination, which involves having its head, back, feet and rump touched.
- Recalling to the owner from a distance of 10 metres.
- The dog must be kept in a secure location and have access to water and a comfortable resting area.

PROCEDURES

The dog will go through a familiarization induction with students.

The approved dogs will be introduced to all students making sure that students are aware of how to behave in and around a dog. The school will regularly host the appropriate agency—such as Responsible Pet Ownership—to teach students about how to treat dogs and to remain safe around dogs.

Care of the dog during school

The dogs will always remain in the charge of a designated staff member and will not be left solely in the presence of students, staff or visitors without that staff member taking responsibility for the dog. Our preference will be for that supervising staff member to be the dog's owner/carer.

Dog obedience

The approved dogs will need to be placid in nature and to have attended dog education training.

Dog tasks

It is hoped that the dogs will be able to take part in activities throughout the schools so that all students have opportunity to meet the school dog and to have him/her interact with them. This will be a gradual process for some students who may not have had exposure to a dog in their homes or for some reason may have had a unpleasant experience with a dog in the past. There may also be cultural differences affecting a young persons exposure to dogs.

Areas of need

The teacher responsible for the dog throughout the day will liaise with staff in charge of well-being to ensure that those students who would benefit most from this interaction are included in the dogs day.

NOTE:**Dog**

The dog will not be permitted at school if he/she is unwell

Vet costs and general expenses are paid by the owner

Dog may be kept on a lead when moving between rooms/classrooms during high traffic times

Will be monitored at all times

Will have a safe area where he/she can rest away from students/staff.

Will be well cared for, fed and watered during the day

Will only use appropriate toileting areas away from student access areas and any excrement will be disposed of appropriately

Will have a school coat to ensure he/she is recognised as an authorised dog on the school premises

Students:

Won't have sole responsibility for the dog

Will be reminded of appropriate behaviours around dog with each contact

Will always be reminded to respect the dog and always remain calm around them

Will be gentle and not make sudden movements or attempts to physically contact the dog when unsupervised

Will always approach dog standing

Will always approach the dog in a calm slow manner

Will not disturb the dog while he/she's eating, drinking, or sleeping

Will never feed the dog

Will continue to develop understanding of the dog through the dogs' development

Will demonstrate respect for dogs' role within the school community.

All those at school:

- To abide by the rule that 'we don't hurt the dog'.
- Are to wash their hands after handling the dog.
- If the dog is hurt or injured (accident or by student or staff member or community member or visitor). Dog will be removed calmly from the situation by the owner or staff member in charge. Dog to be taken to safe area.
- Owner or responsible staff member to take dog to the vet.
- Parents informed if harm caused by student
- Follow up investigation by owner and Principal or her delegate using Department Incident protocols.
- Owner/Principal notified immediately.
- Parents notified immediately.
- Seek medical attention if required.
- Inform all staff of the incident via email
- Follow up investigation by Principal or their delegate.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

The dog's owner will ensure that there is a dog pack containing excrement bags, rubber gloves and hand sanitizer with the dog at all times.

Any dog excrement is to be cleaned and disposed of appropriately by the person in charge of the dog- (will be a staff member)

Where possible—external gates to the school are to remain closed for student safety and to contain the dog when he/she's on site.

ASSISTANCE DOGS

Disability **Discrimination Act** 1992 (WA) 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 including those who are being trained by Clifton Hills Primary staff who are undertaking an accredited assistance animal program (such as Seeing Eye Dogs Australia).

Our 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. Clifton Hills 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.

K9CARE PROGRAM

Research indicates the benefits can be remarkable, not just with mental health but with improved student learning outcomes. A school dog can become entrenched in the pedagogy and bring powerful impacts to students, staff, and families.

What are the benefits of having a school dog?

- Evidence shows that just by being near a dog when stressed can reduce anxiety. In one survey, 92% of students said they felt more relaxed during teaching and learning time when there was a dog in the classroom. We all know when children are more relaxed and less stressed, they are going to learn more.
- There is increasing evidence about how a well-trained dog can help in a complete range of settings. Scientific evidence shows that being near a dog can reduce stress and anxiety and decrease the heart rate.
- For children, animals can help with emotional regulation, social connection, and communication. They can help engage students in many curriculum areas by supporting children in feeling less self-conscious than they may feel around teachers and peers.
- Dogs can help with trauma, anxiety, the escalation cycle, leadership, and communication. They can build empathy, awareness of others and self, increase social regulation and decrease reactivity.

The benefits of the K9Care program

Culture: The program makes the learning community feel more supportive, connected, positive, nurturing, and welcoming.

Engaging: This program merges the instinctive love that people and animals have toward each other, providing comfort in a modern society rife with stress and anxiety.

Connectedness: Disconnect turns into strong connection on many levels. This connection flows through the entire community, not just through direct interaction with the dogs.

Supports Wellbeing: Of students and staff as they deal with the many challenges modern society presents

Enables Growth: The program is backed by strong scientific theory and a wide range of evidence so that personal and professional growth is supported and planned for with confidence and competence.

Why does Clifton Hills need K9Care?

- Having a school wellbeing dog can help with attendance, behaviour, social connection, and emotional regulation.
- Attendance -Students experience a greater willingness to be active in the school environment when there is a school dog. Evidence demonstrates attendance rates improve as children looked forward to seeing the dog and interacting with them.
- Communication- A dog in school gives students have a shared interest with other members of the school community. This helps them interact and build connections that they may have struggled to do otherwise. Wellbeing dogs can even be used with literacy programs as children may be less self-conscious reading to dogs than teachers or their peers.
- Leadership - A school dog can give students a sense of responsibility. They learn how to take care of the dog and how to delegate care which can help grow their leadership skills.
- Behaviour - Students can see the impact of their actions on their wellbeing dog. This helps them understand how their behaviour impacts people around them. As a result, children learn to be more empathetic and understanding.
- Students dealing with trauma - We can build programs for the school bringing connectedness and ways to manage trauma and anxiety in conjunction with existing strategies and community links.
- They can assist students who have a trauma, anxiety, communication issues and resilience.
- A wellbeing dog can assist with leadership, behaviour, emotional regulation and the escalation cycle.
- They can also help with sensory processing, stress management and emotional literacy.

Research papers on the Classroom Canines Programs

[Faculty of Health, Medicine, Nursing and Behavioural Sciences - Deakin University](#)

[Barbara Fisher - Avondale College of Higher Education](#)

[Dr Reesa Sorin - James Cook University](#)

Lloyd, J. & Sorin, R. (2014) "I liked that you can pat the dog and interact with it and read to it" – Engaging the imagination: The effect of the Classroom Canines™ program on reading and social/emotional skills of selected primary school students. 2014 Imaginative Education Research Group (IERG) 9th International Conference on Imagination and Education - Imagination: The Great workhorse of learning, July 2-4, 2014, <http://ierg.ca/how-we-can-help/conferences/conference-proceedings/> pp.1-5, Vancouver, Canada.

STORY DOGS

Story Dogs is based on the successful American literacy program, Reading Education Assistance Dogs (R.E.A.D.). The R.E.A.D program was launched in 1999 in Utah, USA, as the first comprehensive literacy program built around the appealing idea of children and young adolescents reading to dogs. Reading sessions take place in a quiet area of the school grounds, such as the library or outside the classroom.



A reading session is approximately 20 minutes long, where each child is one-on-one with the dog team. Books are chosen to suit the student's reading level.

During the session, the handler often speaks through the dog, such as "Sam doesn't understand what is happening on this page, could you help him out?" The child becomes the teacher as they help the dog understand, and their confidence soars.

Which children are chosen for the program?

The children are usually Year 2 students, who are chosen by the school.

Story Dogs does not assess the children in any way, as the sessions are designed to be as fun and non-threatening as possible. They rely on assessment results taken by the school.

Parental consent is required before a child can participate in the program.

The volunteers

Story Dogs handlers are volunteers trained to help emergent readers. The handler will not judge the child and will help in a non-threatening way. We are fully insured, and our handlers have Working with Children Checks as per our State's regulations.

PET DOGS

Clifton Hills Primary School is not a public place, and our principal has the authority and responsibility to permit or decline entry to school grounds and impose conditions of entry to ensure the safety of the community. Whilst Clifton Hills Primary School values the role dogs play in our community and the many benefits of family dog ownership, we also need to ensure that our school remains a safe and inclusive place for everyone. Dogs are not permitted in on school grounds nor in classrooms or other school buildings unless approval has been granted by the principal.

STRAY DOGS

Unaccompanied or stray dogs sighted at our school should be reported immediately to the school office. School staff will contact City of Armadale Rangers for assistance in managing and removing a stray dog from school grounds, and ensure staff and students remain safe at school.

Related Legislation/Guidelines

- Use of Animals in Public Schools Policy (Education Department of WA)
- Animal Welfare Act 2002 (WA)
- Animal Ethics Committee of Western Australia Guidelines Related Policies Care and Use of Animals Policy
- Child Code of Conduct Policy
- Code of Conduct Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy.

APPENDIX 1

Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Will the dog be a distraction? The dogs will be kept in with their owners and will be on a leash most times. The dogs will not become a distraction due to the management of the animal by staff. The dog will also have a space to spend time in classrooms, the library and in the garden where children can interact safely. The dog will also attend meetings with staff to support further socialization, following consultation with staff beforehand.

Has a risk assessment been undertaken? Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog and a vet. Who is responsible for training? The dog's owners, will be responsible for its training. The dog has been assessed as a Suitable Dog by professionals via a Companion Animal Behaviour Practitioner who is an Approved Agility Instructor.

How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all? If s/he does need to be toileted they will be taken out for short walks in the grounds. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed. Our policy of no dogs in the playground is still applicable as we are unable to put effective control measures in place that guarantee temperament and safety when children come into unsupervised contact with unknown dogs.

How will the dog's welfare be considered? The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. Parents will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to be able to walk with a member of staff and the dog during that time. This will also be used as a behaviour reward, in line with our behaviour policy. The dog will be carefully trained over a period and will have unlimited access to food and water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered.

How will this be managed where children have allergies? Children will not need to touch the dog, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for children and adults that are allergic to dogs. Individual needs will always be met and we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies.

My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this? Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with it unless permission for this has been given. We hope to work closely with parents of children who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.

Do all classes have access to the dogs? All classes will have access to the dogs. Teachers will use their discretion as to the frequency and the dogs' role within the classroom.

What if the dog hurts a child? If the dog injures a child, the dog will be immediately removed from contact with the children until a thorough investigation and risk assessment is undertaken. The child will be immediately given first aid and care as required and the parents will be informed. If the risk assessment determines it was an accident, the child and dog may have time to reconnect, if that is suitable, in a quiet area. If the risk assessment determines there is cause for concern of the dog's behaviour or responses to children, the dog will be excluded from the K9Care program until further training and suitable assessments are undertaken.



APPENDIX 2 Reasons to have a dog in school: In summary, academic research has shown that dogs working and helping in the school environment can achieve the following:

- 1) Improve academic achievement.
- 2) Increase literacy skills.
- 3) Calming behaviours;
- 4) Increase social skills and self-esteem.
- 5) Increase confidence.
- 6) Teach responsibility and respect to all life.
- 7) Help prevent truancy.
- 8) Motivate children who are often less attentive.

The following information has been taken from a range of sources to provide further detail about the benefits of having a dog in school:

Behaviour: In some schools, dogs are making a difference in the behaviour of pupils. Researchers report that students can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel. It was found that violent behaviour in participating students declined by 55%, and general aggression went down 62%. Behaviour problems occur in school, and these can interfere with learning. Some schools are using dogs to improve behaviour problems by promoting positive behaviour in students. In a controlled study, students were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Students' behaviour improved toward teachers, and students also showed more confidence and responsibility. Additionally, parents reported that children seemed more interested in school as a result of having a dog at school.

Education: Reading programmed with dogs are doing wonders for some students. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even adults are likely to be less scared to read to a dog. "It might be less stressful for a child to read aloud to a dog than to a teacher or a peer. Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practice reading aloud. With the presence of a calm and well-trained dog, pupils find social support and peer interaction. Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have pupils read to them or join a group of children in the library whilst they are having a book reading session. Dogs give unconditional acceptance, as they are non-judgement, which is especially crucial to struggling, emerging readers. The dogs also provide confidence to children, as they do not make fun of them when they read, but above all they are making amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. Research has proved that students who read to dogs shown and increase in reading levels, work recognition, and desire to read and write and an increase in intrapersonal skills.

Social Development: Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching students' social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help older students build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Older students use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower students. With a dog in school, students have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving students in the daily care of classroom dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The students also learn about responsibility, caring, and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school.

As a reward: Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the students. Those students who have performed incredibly well during the week or those who have made progress in a certain subject, or those who have achieved tasks set for them, will be rewarded with spending time during lunch or break to interact with these dogs. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities students will be allowed to undertake. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem. Support Dogs can work with students on a one-one basis and will especially help those students who have been bullied, abused, going through upsetting/difficult times or even scared/phobic of dogs. The dog will bring much joy and help to all the students they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the students they are spending time with. Students who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

APPENDIX 3

Appendix 3
Parents' Withdrawal From K9Care

I do NOT want my child _____ in room _____ to have contact with the school K9Care Dog.

My reasons for this are:

Signed

Date _____

APPENDIX 4

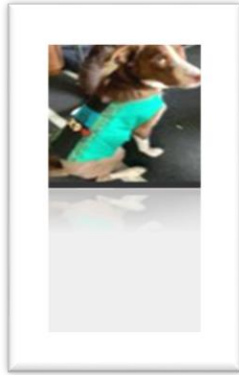
Meet the Team

Mrs Ritchie – Jessie



**Cookie
Ms Della Franca**

Ms Bail - Mike



**Hudson
Ms Della Franca**

**Mrs Joss -
Rubin**



**Zoe
Ms Della Franca**

