

DOGS IN EDUCATION POLICY



Help for non-English speakers - If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact the office on (03) 9439 9374 or email eltham.ps@education.vic.gov.au.

BELIEFS

At Eltham Primary School, our values drive us to:

- Have a duty to develop and model practices where teaching and learning can be linked to the love, care, and connection of our school dog.
- Draw on the skills and knowledge of the school, Dogs Connect staff, and the wider community and enter into practices that are mutually beneficial to all community members.
- Implement effective decision-making practices in collaboration with the School Executive, Dogs Connect staff, school staff and where appropriate the wider community.

AIM

We aim for the responsible implementation of a structured program through which a school wellbeing dog/s will be used to assist the school community in experiencing connectedness, developing links to learning throughout the school community, and helping to develop students who are socially adept, respectful, just, and appreciative of diversity.

PRACTICES

This vision is enacted through the following procedures/systems:

- Reflection on current teaching and learning practices and student data.
- A thoroughly considered and gradually implemented program involving the school dog interacting with staff and students on many levels.
- Documentation and review of current risk assessment, agreed practice, and implementation schedule.
- Alignment of Agreed Practice with current pedagogy and student/staff needs.

- Reflection and evaluation to guide future action/implementation to ensure suitability of all practices.
- Clearly signed notification that dogs are not allowed on school grounds, unless previously authorised.

DOGS IN EDUCATION AGREED PRACTICE

Introduction

In alignment with the aims of our Dogs in School Policy, we agree to implement, manage, and evaluate the practices and processes used so that we maintain safe and meaningful interactions between dogs and all other members of our school community. To achieve these standards, we have the following agreements and practices in place.

Responsibilities of Leadership

The responsibilities of leadership are as follows:

- Ensure that all staff have access to and have had opportunities to read and review related policy.
- Ensure communication with the broader school community regarding related programs and processes.
- Continue to assess, evaluate, and implement actions as recommended through consulting specialists and school community.

Responsibilities of Employees

The responsibilities of employees are as follows:

- Become familiar with Dogs in School Policy and Agreed Practice documents.
- Become familiar with Risk Assessment documents and adhere to related recommendations.
- Suggest amendments to above mentioned documents if deemed necessary through observation or reports from students or caregivers.
- Become familiar with the International Standards for Animals Assisted Education.
- Always ensure that students are actively supervised when interacting with the dog.
- Demonstrate and explicitly teach safe interaction options to students – this refers to walking on lead, general interactions, and sanitising after handling.
- Always allow time for the dog to wake up, avoid sudden awakening.
- The dog will always be led by attachment to lead when students and/or staff are walking with him/her unless deemed safe and appropriate by staff with responsibility for him/her.
- People move slowly and in a predictable manner when walking with the dog on lead.
- Consider that the dog needs to be in the classrooms and school buildings and make decisions on where the dog can play, roll, run, frolic based on this consideration.

- Be proactive when considering or having awareness of potential hazards or dangers to the dog – make decisions based on the priority being safety for the dog.
- Exercise caution and base decisions about managing the dog during any given scenario on common sense and safety.
- Never allow the dog to 'feed' or have bones or similar in classrooms or around students.

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

POLICY LAST REVIEWED	APPROVED BY	NEXT SCHEDULED REVIEW DATE
August 2023	This policy will be reviewed annually or as necessary due to changes in regulations or circumstances	August 2025