

Dogs on School Grounds / Reading Dog Policy

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 Jolimont 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 reading dog will be a unique way to enrich all areas of students' wider education, skills and wellbeing.

POLICY:

This policy outlines the guidelines for the school reading dog to be 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 opportunity to read to a dog on school grounds.

RATIONALE AND BENEFITS:

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

- 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. Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practice reading aloud and reluctant writers to read aloud what they have written.
- Attendance - Students experience a greater willingness to be active in the school environment when there is a school dog.
- Communication - A dog in school gives students a shared interest with other members of the school community. Story dogs are used with reading programs as students may be less self-conscious reading to dogs than teachers or their peers.
- Behaviour - The presence of a school dog may also be seen as an incentive for personal growth and achievement.

ASSESSMENT & IMPLEMENTATION:

The integration of a dog as a support to school programs must meet the following requirements:

- Approval must be sought from the Principal before a dog may enter school grounds.
- The teachers/trainers will have familiarised themselves with the Department of Education 'Use of Animal in Schools' policy.
- It must be deemed that a dog is necessary for the educational outcomes of the activity.
- The dog must be clean, groomed, wormed and be free of any parasites such as fleas.
- All dogs will have been successfully assessed for sound nature, interaction with children and other dogs, as well as being in general good health before being allowed on school grounds. Dogs must have undergone specific training for this role.

INDUCTION:

Approved dogs will go through a familiarisation induction with students. Such dogs will be introduced to the students ensuring that they are aware of how to behave when they are around a dog.

STORY DOG PROGRAM:

The Story Dog program is primarily designed for students with reading challenges; however, students may be chosen by the classroom teacher to participate in the program as a reward or as an alternative reading activity.

Identified students will spend a reading session of approximately 20 minutes with the dog once per week. In these sessions each student works one-on-one with the dog.

At Jolimont we have Hugo, a Labrador/Spaniel, currently coming in twice a week with the principal. He is undergoing further training with WA Assistance and Therapy Dogs.

How the program will work:

- Books are chosen to suit the student's reading level.
- Year 2 and above students receive one on one time, approx 20 mins, with a trained dog.
- All reading sessions are outside of the classroom in a quiet space nearby.
- The dog will visit on the same day at the same time each week, seeing the same 4 – 6 students.
- Parent consent forms (see attached) must be sent and received for all students involved.

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

CHOOSING THE TARGET STUDENTS FOR THE PROGRAM

The classroom teacher will choose the children who will benefit most from reading to the dog. Students who benefit most from the program are children who do not get reading practice at home or help from other in-school reading support programs. The participating child should be in the program for at least two terms.

RESPONSIBILITY:

Care of the dog on school premises will be responsibility of a designated staff member/handler. The dog will not be left solely in the vicinity of students, staff or visitors without the nominated staff member being present. The designated staff member will ensure the dog:

- is kept in admin during break times and during high traffic times and monitored at all times
- has access to water and a comfortable place to rest away from students/staff
- does not come to school if he/she is unwell
- is kept on a lead when moving around the school
- be older than 12 months
- is well cared for, fed and watered during the day
- is regularly taken to an appropriate location for toileting and any scat is disposed of appropriately
- a 'dog pack' containing excrement bags, rubber gloves and hand sanitizer will always be with the dog, and
- is always treated with care and respect for its health and well-being.

NB: Vet expenses are paid by the owner and will not be the responsibility of the school at any time.

Teachers and other school staff will ensure the students:

- don't have sole responsibility for the dog
- are reminded of appropriate behaviours around the dog with each contact
- are regularly reminded to respect the dog and always remain calm around them, and
- are encouraged to be gentle and caring when interacting with the dog. In the event of accident or injury all normal school operational and notification procedures will be adhered to.

ASSISTANCE DOGS

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (WA) 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.

The principal can lawfully ask a person to produce evidence that an animal:

- is trained specifically to assist a person to alleviate the effects of a disability (e.g., seeing eye dogs), and
- 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. Jolimont 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.

PET DOGS:

Jolimont Primary School is not a public place, and the 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 Jolimont 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 on school grounds, in classrooms or other school buildings unless specific 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 Subiaco Rangers for assistance in managing and removing a stray dog from school grounds to ensure staff and student safety.

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

Additional Information:

If you require any additional information, please contact the school.

'OPTING-OUT' OF THE PROGRAM:

If your child has allergies, or cannot have contact with dogs for any other reason, parents/caregivers have the option to notify the teacher and we can ensure their child does not come into close proximity of the dog/s. No child will be expected to interact with any dog if they do not wish to do so.

PARTICIPATION PERMISSION SLIP

Dear Parent/Carer,

The dog reading program is a fun and unique reading support program that improves children's reading and communication skills by children reading to a trained dog and staff member.

The program is primarily designed for students who have reading challenges, however students may be chosen to participate as a reward. Completion of this form will allow them to participate.

Students will spend approximately 20 minutes with the dog once per week, reading books which are appropriate to their reading level.

During the session, the dog will be on its lead at all times and the staff member will be with the dog and student at all times.

Although the dog is immaculately groomed, fully wormed with flea protection, children with dog allergies are recommended not to be involved with the program.

Context

The reading dog is only on school grounds by the permission of the school principal.

Risk Minimisation

The location of the reading sessions within the school, are chosen to ensure staff are not alone and out of sight with your child.

All permission forms and other information are held by the school. We welcome feedback and contact with parents and caregivers to continue to improve our program.



Story Dogs Permission Slip

I (print your name)..... do / do not give permission

for my child (their name).....of class.....
to be part of the reading dog program.

My child does not have known allergies that that will be triggered by contact with a dog.

Signature of Parent/Carer.....

School to keep this slip on file.