DOGS ON SCHOOL GROUNDS POLICY

Policy last reviewed	August 2026
Consultation	Consultation is not required for this policy
Approved by	Acting Principal - Christine Forrest
Next schedule review date	August 2029

Help for non-English speakers
If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the school office to arrange an interpreter.

Purpose

To explain to our school community the rules and procedures we have in place to dogs attending our school grounds. This includes the procedure for our wellbeing dog program to support student engagement and mental health.

Policy

School dog

The school dog is the only dog permitted on the school ground. All other dogs must not enter the school grounds unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog, and the Principal has given prior consent.

Pet dogs

As Wodonga Primary School is not a public place, our Principal has the authority to impose conditions of entry.

Whilst Wodonga 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, this includes school drop-off and pick-up times.

Our school community is diverse, and may include people who are allergic or uncomfortable around dogs. We are also conscious of the health hazards that may be posed by having dogs in the grounds. We ask that families leave their pet dogs at home or safely tether them outside the school grounds when entering our school grounds. Owners or a designated family member, must remain with their dogs, outside the school boundaries, at all times. Owners are entirely responsible for the dog's behavior and for cleaning up any mess left by the dog, in line with local Council regulations.

Stray Dogs

Unaccompanied or stray dogs on school grounds should be reported immediately to the school's Administration office.

If the dog is wearing an identification tag with a contact number, and the dog is deemed safe to approach by a responsible adult, office staff will call the owner. In the event the owner is uncontactable,

they will proceed to contact Council officials.

Where possible and if safe to do so, the dog will be contained in an area away from students to await collection by the owners or Council officials.

Exceptions

Wodonga 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. Guide dog)
- 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. Wodonga 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 the school Principal for further information.

Wodonga Primary School engages an Education Support dog to facilitate student well-being at school. Responsibilities and processes relating to the school dog are outlined in Appendix A.

Communication

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in staff handbook/manual
- Reminders in our school newsletter
- Discussed at student forums
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

Related policies and Resources

- Wodonga Primary School's Duty of Care and Visitors policies
- DET Care and Use of Animals in Victorian Schools
- DET Teaching with animals

Review cycle

This policy will be reviewed on a 3-year cycle.

APPENDIX A: Education Support (ES) Dog at School

Definitions

Owner - person deemed responsible for housing and caring for the school dog outside of school hours.
Dog Handler - trained staff member, responsible for the dog's timetabled activities

Rationale

WPS has a wellbeing dog who supports our student's mental health and engagement. Our wellbeing dog is suitably trained, and children can benefit educationally and emotionally through contact with a dog, by increasing their understanding of responsibility, and developing empathy and nurturing skills. In addition to these benefits, children can take great enjoyment from interacting with a dog.

Dogs offer unconditional love and support. They do not judge; they give children the ability to talk and just be themselves!

Risk

There are small risks involved with having an educational support dog onsite These are categorized as low risk and will be managed by the Principal/Owner.

A thorough risk assessment will be carried out by Wodonga Primary School and is included with this document (see Appendix C).

The Dog

The WPS Education Support dog is an integral part of our ES program and is trained to gently interact with children and staff. The dog's breed is Groodle, chosen for ….

- its known intelligence and quick responsiveness to training
- its known mild temperament known to be good with children
- its known capacity to shed little hair
- its known sociability and friendliness.

…. and will be governed by the following guidelines:

- Appropriately trained staff (dog handlers) will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact the school dog is having within the school environment.
- The school's Administration staff will be provided with a timetable outlining the dog's whereabouts

and who the dog handler is on any particular day.

- The school dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of the Owner or Handler.
- The school dog's health is a priority. It will be registered with the local council, de-sexed, vaccinated, insured, attend regular vet checks and receive treatment when needed.
- Melrose Animal Hospital has sponsored our current dog Barkley and have/will provide C5 vaccination, heartworm injection, consultations, nail trims and worming at no cost.
- Council Registration will be at the owner's expense, based on the local council of the

owner's residence.

- Insurance will be arranged by the current owner and will be in the current owner's name. The expense will be reimbursed upon receipt of Confirmation of Insurance and Paid Invoice. A copy of this Insurance will be held on file.
- Integrated into the school community through Dog Education Center, delivered under the Departments Mental Health Initiative.
- All other associated costs will be invoiced to the school.
- The school dog will not be permitted onsite if it is unwell. The owner is responsible for making this judgement in consultation with the Principal.

Ownership

The dog remains the property of Wodonga Primary School. In the event the current owner takes extended leave (more than 4 weeks) or ceases employment at Wodonga Primary School, the Principal will reallocate the dog, either temporarily or permanently, to another suitable employee who holds 'Ongoing employment' status at Wodonga Primary School. All efforts will be made to uphold the wellbeing of the dog at all times and as such, a suitable transition will be followed. The subsequent owner will ensure they partake in all relevant training.

Community Interaction

- Staff, parents and students will be informed in writing, if a dog will be engaged at school. Parent/carers have the right to withhold consent for their child to interact with the dog (refer Appendix B).
- The school will post notices at school administration entry points advising the school has a dog onsite.
- All visitors will be informed about the dog and related protocols on arrival at school, and Administration staff will relay visitor issues to the Owner of the School Dog or Principal class.
- Staff, visitors and students known to have allergic reactions are advised to stay clear of the dog.
- The school dog will be kept on a leash when moving between classrooms or on a walk, and will be under the full control and supervision of a dog handler.
- Students must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Students should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog.
- The dog handler placed in charge of the dog, should ensure the dog is not placed in any situation that may cause nervousness or agitation (eg. surrounded by large numbers of students). In this instance, the dog should be quietly removed from the situation.
- Dogs express their feelings through their body language.
    - Growling or bearing of teeth indicate that the dog is feeling angry or threatened.
    - Flattened ears, tail lowered or between their legs, hiding behind their owner, whining or growling are signs that the dog is frightened or nervous.

If the dog displays any of these warning signs, they should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.

Correct etiquette for handling the dog is provided in Appendix C. Dog Education will be provided to students through a PowerPoint that will be shared in class. This education will also be provided during assemblies and one-on-one with some students as required, to reinforce best practice.

- Students should be careful to pat the School Dog on their body, chest and back, and not on their face or top of head.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by the Dog Handler in charge.
- Any persons with a fear of dogs will be respected and never forced to interact with the dog.
- Any persons with a fear of dogs can be coached in a controlled environment to overcome the fear, if decided by the student and parents/carers.
- Appropriately trained staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact the school dog is having within the school environment.

Student Expectations

Students are expected to:

- remain calm around the dog
- not put their face near the dog
- not stare into the dog's eyes
- not make sudden movements around the dog
- not eat near the dog
- put rubbish in the bins so that the dog does not try and eat scraps
- leave the dog alone if it is sleeping or eating
- approach the dog while standing upright
- not play rough with the dog
- only approach the dog when given permission
- only approach the dog in small numbers (two students at a time)
- observe best hygiene practice after handling the dog including hand washing.

Actions

If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to the Principal or an Assistant Principal as soon as possible.

Dog Maintenance

The dog will have a quiet resting spot in the Wellbeing office where it can sleep and take a break from interaction. During this time, the dog is not to be disturbed.

Staff will ensure the dog has regular toilet breaks throughout the day. All waste must be picked up immediately by the dog handler and put into an appropriate waste receptacle. Stringent hygiene practices must be followed including hand protection and sanitizing immediately after waste disposal.

For the first stage of training, the dog will always be on leash, outside or inside. As it trains and learns, it'll move to no leash in the classroom. The dog must always be on leash when outside or walking between rooms.

The dog will be groomed regularly, including wash and hair trim, to maintain acceptable hygiene levels.

APPENDIX B: Educational Support Dog - Opt Out Form

This form should be completed if a parent/carer wishes to remove their child from interacting with the school's Education Support dog. A separate form should be completed for each child at school. For further information/clarification, please contact the school's Owner or Principal.

Student Name: Class:

Does your child have an allergy that will impact on their involvement with a support / therapy dog at school? If yes, please list allergy:	❑Yes ❑ No
Does your child have a fear of dogs? If yes, please clarify: _____	❑Yes ❑ No
Would you be comfortable with your child being introduced to the school dog under adult supervision, to pat and socialise with the dog at school, in order to alleviate any fears? If yes, you will be contacted by the ES Dog Coordinator to gauge your level of consent and discuss the process.	❑Yes ❑ No
As a parent/carer, I choose to withdraw my child from interaction with the school's ES Dog for personal reasons.	❑Yes ❑ No

□ By withdrawing my consent for interaction with the school dog, I acknowledge that my child may be placed in an adjoining classroom to facilitate this request, when the dog is being used in their regular classroom.

Parent Name (PRINT):

Parent Signature: Dated: / /

If you change your mind after submitting this request, please contact our Dog Owner/Principal at school.

APPENDIX C: Risk Assessment

Definition

Dog Handler - a school designated adult who has undertaken dog handling training.

Hazard	Risk	Risk Category 1-5	Likelihood 1-5	Controls in Place
Students / staff approaching the dog	Dog pulls away Dog shows signs of anxiety, eg. puts tail between leg Dog acts aggressively Dog jumps up Dog is approached without permission	1-2	2	• Students and staff will be educated on how to behave around the dog via a school produced PowerPoint. • Dog to be approached only with verbal permission sought from the dog handler eg. Can I pat the dog? • Students and staff must approach from the front of the dog with the interacting person gently holding their hand out in front of them and lowering their body down to dog height (when physically possible). If dog raises hackles, growls or has tail between legs, do not proceed to pat. Follow dog handler's instructions. If dog appears relaxed and wags tail, proceed to calmly and slowly pat the dog. • Dog must be in direct supervision of the dog handler at all times. The dog can be restrained in a crate in the school's office if required. • Dog is not to be fed unless under direct supervision of dog handler. • Dog will be on leash when moving about the school. • Dog to be sitting or standing calmly when students first approach.
Dog getting over-excited when interacting with children.	Student scratched by dog Student bitten by dog	3 4	2 2	• Our School dogs will always be under supervision of a responsible adult who will has received dog handling training. • Students are not left with the dog, unsupervised. • Our school dog will always be on a leash when out of the Wellbeing Space or Administration Office • The school dog will be trained by experienced trainers. • Students will be, and will continue to be, taught the impact of their actions when

				interacting with the dog. Dog Education will continually be given to students, and often to the whole school, during assemblies and class time. • Students will be taught how to prevent over-stimulating or upsetting the dog, and how to remain calm around it. This will include education around only having two people at a time with the dog. • Our school dog will receive ongoing formal training, socialising and conditioning within the school environment (using staff from The Dog Education Centre, a reputable dog behaviourist company) • Students and adults will be reminded not to touch the school dog's mouth, head or rear end. • If the School Dog jumps up, please turn around and say "No" • ALL staff given permission to handle the School Dog will be given strict instructions to follow and appropriate training. • The School dogs will attend the vet regularly to ensure good health.
The dog gets loose from its designated space or from its leash.	Child scratched, or bitten by dog Dog runs away	1	2	• The dog's crate will be kept in the Wellbeing Space and can be used to keep the School Dog safe. • The dog will be permitted to roam free in the (which office) office. Staff will be alerted with signage and students only allowed in, with supervision. • Students and staff are taught not to tease or taunt the dog through the window or doors. • If the dog does get loose, the Administration staff or designated handler will call for support from trained staff who will assist with retrieving and restraining the dog. • The school dog will always be on his leash when moving around the school or when trained adults are in strict supervision. • Use the dog's name to encourage his return and using the 'marker' word to lure the dog back.

Hazard	Risk	Risk Category 1-5	Likelihood 1-5	Controls in Place
Dog hair causing allergies	Staff and students have allergic reactions	1	1	• Parents have been asked to inform the school of any known allergies prior to introduction of the dog to school. A record of these is kept with the ES Dog coordinator, and on each student's file. • Parents of students with known allergies are able to opt out of interaction. • Children will have the opportunity to interact with the School Dog as they wish. • Children will be taught appropriate hygiene in regards to dog handling which includes washing hands after active participation with the dog.
Children getting germs from the dog	Children/staff will contract diseases that can be carried by dogs	1	1	• Should the dog defecate on the school site, a member of staff will clear this up immediately and dispose of it in an appropriate and safe manner. • All immunisations are the responsibility of the Owner who will keep accurate records and make vet appointments when vaccinations are due, in consultation with the Principal. • Flea and worming treatments will be carried out at appropriate intervals as recommended by the vet. • The dog will be washed frequently. • The dog will not be permitted into any food preparation area.
Dog toileting	Hygiene Stressed Dog	1	1	• All solid bowel movements must be picked up in plastic bag by an adult, disposed of appropriately, and hand hygiene practices implemented. • Dog to be provided with the opportunity to go to the toilet in a quiet area in the school away from students. • Dog handler to take dog for toilet breaks.
Dog resting	Startled dog reacts in an unpredictable way Dog not given adequate rest time	1	2	• The dog's rest time will be in Wellbeing Space away from students and staff in a crate. • During the dog's rest time, staff and students are not to interact with the dog. All interactions between the dog, staff and students must be supervised by the dog handler.

Student/Staff interacting with the dog (Play)	Dog gets excited during interactive play like fetch or receiving a treat	1	2	• No tug-of-war games to be played at any time. Initially, access to balls and ropes for games with students and dogs are restricted. In strictly supervised situations only, some games of fetch may be played in a safe space, under full supervision of the dog handler. • Staff and students to follow instructions of dog handler during play at all times.
Dog moving about the school	Dog is startled or spooked Dog jumps Dog refuses to go where intended	1	2	• Dog to remain on leash and wear a vest at all times when moving about the school. • Dog to be led not dragged. If reluctant to move, dog handler will need to investigate reason. Stop, settle the dog with gentle reassurances and pats, and then move on.