

CONCORD SCHOOL POLICY

DOGS AT SCHOOL



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact 9467 3972.

PURPOSE

To explain to our school community the rules and procedures we have in place in relation to dogs attending our school grounds.

POLICY

Definitions

An **assistance dog** is trained and certified by a registered organisation to perform tasks or functions that help a person with a disability to alleviate the effects of the disability.

A **wellbeing dog** is a dog that has been suitably trained to provide animal-assisted wellbeing programs under the control of his/her handler.

A **handler** is a volunteer in the school who is responsible and in control of a wellbeing dog while on school grounds and when facilitating the animal wellbeing program.

A **pet dog** relates to any dog that is privately owned in the community for companionate reasons, rather than as a support function that requires specific skills or training.

A **stray dog** is any dog that is not accompanied by their owner.

Assistance Dogs

Concord 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 (e.g., 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. Concord School will consider a request for a student with a disability to allow an assistance animal to attend school with them on a case-by-case basis.

Wellbeing Dogs

Concord School has a wellbeing dog who supports our student's mental health and engagement. Our wellbeing dog is suitably trained and integrated into the school community.

Recognised benefits from working or visiting with a wellbeing dog include:

- reduced stress and anxiety, including decreased learner anxiety behaviours
- improved physical and emotional wellbeing
- improved self-esteem, empathy and interpersonal skills
- improved relationship building and ability to pick up on social cues
- improved attendance (for disengaged students or students at risk of disengaging).

Examples of activities students may engage in with the wellbeing dog include:

- petting and/or hugging the dog
- speaking and reading to the dog
- giving the dog commands that the dog is trained to respond to.

Where possible, Concord School will only engage with low-allergen wellbeing dogs. Concord School will take care to avoid, where possible, contact between the wellbeing dog and students, staff, and visitors where the school is aware they have allergies to dogs.

Staff, students and visitors are requested to notify the school of any health or safety concerns about the wellbeing dog. We are committed to consulting with students and parent(s)/carer(s) in relation to any such health or safety concerns so that appropriate arrangements can be made on a case-by-case basis.

Wellbeing dog standards and procedures

- There will be a maximum of one school wellbeing dog at any given time.
- When the wellbeing dog is on school grounds they will be under the supervision of a handler or staff member. The wellbeing dog will not be unsupervised or alone with students. A safe area separate to the school classrooms and offices will be allocated to the wellbeing dog and their handler where they will spend time when they are not working with students.
- The handler will ensure that the wellbeing dog does not pose a health and safety risk to any student, employee, or other person at school and that the wellbeing dog is brought to school only when properly groomed, bathed, free of illness or injury and of the temperament appropriate for working with the school community. In the event the school is made aware that the dog triggers a student's health condition (for example, allergies or asthma), the school will notify the student's parent/carers and ensure appropriate steps are implemented to minimise health risks.
- No student or staff member will be required to interact with the wellbeing dog. If a student indicates that they wish to overcome any fear of dogs, they can be supported to do so with coaching in a controlled environment with the wellbeing dog and their handler.
- The wellbeing dog program will be communicated to parent/carers at the beginning of the year in the school newsletter, and on student enrolment. In these communications, parent/carers will be given the opportunity to 'opt out' of the program for their child, raise any concerns or update student medical information (such as allergies or asthma) which may be triggered by a visit from the wellbeing dog.

Expenses

Concord School will meet the costs of:

Purchase and delivery

- Training for the Wellbeing Dog and owner as needed and agreed to by Assistant Principal
- Immunisations
- Registration
- Pet Insurance cover (mid level or equivalent cost)
- All other expenses including vet fees not covered by pet insurance and gap costs to be met by the owner.

Daily management of the Wellbeing Dog

- Not allowed in school if unwell.
- Will be kept on lead or direct control when moving between classrooms.
- Be under the supervision of her owner or delegated staff member at all times.
- Continue to be trained in obedience, including release time inside the school grounds.
- Be up to date with all vaccinations, worming and grooming.
- Will not be taken off the site without her owner or nominated staff.
- Will have a safe area within the school.
- Will wear training vest to ensure she is recognised as a Wellbeing Dog.

Student expectations

- Will not have sole responsibility for the Wellbeing Dog.
- Will be reminded of appropriate behaviours around the Wellbeing Dog.
- Will always be reminded to respect the Wellbeing Dog and remain calm around her at all times.
- Always approach the Wellbeing Dog in a calm slow manner.
- Not to disturb the Wellbeing Dog while she is eating, drinking or sleeping.
- Never to feed the Wellbeing Dog.
- Will abide by the rule '*we are kind to the Wellbeing Dog*'.

Health and Safety

- All persons should always wash their hands after handling the Wellbeing Dog.
- Any Wellbeing Dog excrement to be cleaned and disposed of appropriately by owner.
- Where possible - external gates to the school to remain closed at all times while the Wellbeing Dog is onsite.

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

- The Wellbeing Dog will be removed by her owner calmly from the situation if required.
- Owner to take the Wellbeing Dog to the Vet if required.
- Child's Parents informed if harm caused by student.
- Follow up investigation by owner and Assistant Principal.

Pet Dogs

Concord School is not a public place, and our principal has the authority to permit or decline entry to school grounds and impose conditions of entry.

Staff require approval from the Principal to bring their dog onto school grounds.

Whilst Concord 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, we have in place a number of rules that we expect all staff or families to follow if they wish to bring their pet dog onto school grounds:

- pet dogs must be leashed at all times and in the control of a responsible adult
- pet dogs must not be tied up on school grounds or left unaccompanied
- families that bring dogs to school that exhibit signs of aggressive behaviour, bark, or jump may be asked to leave.

The principal has the authority to prohibit certain dogs from school grounds or modify this policy to ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff, students and members of our school community at any time.

Stray Dogs

Unaccompanied or stray dogs sighted at our school should be reported immediately to the Concord School office. School staff will contact municipal authorities and/or Victoria police for assistance in managing and removing a stray dog from school grounds, and ensure staff and students remain safe at school.

COMMUNICATION

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

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in staff induction processes and staff training
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Reminders in our school newsletter
- Discussed at student forums
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

RELATED POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Risk Management: S:\MANAGEMENT\OH & S\POPPY

Memorandum of Understanding: S:\MANAGEMENT\OH & S\POPPY

Concord School Duty of Care Policy

Concord School Visitors Policy

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	May 2024
Consultation	Staff – April 2024 School Council – May 2024
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	May 2028