



3.7 ANIMAL THERAPY POLICY

PURPOSE

The aim of this project is to improve wellbeing and engagement across the school and assist with literacy for identified students. This will be achieved through improving socialisation and self-awareness skills that are a part of the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies. These competencies are linked to Victorian Curriculum standards and it is expected that all teachers cover these learning outcomes and are able to assess them, as per expectations related to the entire Victorian Curriculum. The program will be implemented school-wide on a trial basis.

The objectives of this project are to improve teaching and learning practices related to SEL competencies, and to gather evidence to show improvement in student outcomes. If this project is successful we expect to see improvements in student engagement to be clearly reflected in the data.

POLICY OVERVIEW

This is a pilot program in place relating directly to Staff and Student Wellbeing. This policy governs the program, ensuring that the program maximises its full potential.

ABOUT THE DOGS

Archie is a Spoodle (Cocker Spaniel x Poodle) and Sid is a Labradoodle (Labrador x Poodle). Archie and Sid have been trained by K9 Support to become Therapy Dogs. This is different to a service dog. Archie and Sid have a natural ability to refocus students who may be feeling upset for a variety of reasons. Archie and Sid will have a space in the Student Wellbeing office where they will spend time if they is not working with students. This will be their 'safe spot'. Their interactions to begin with will be based around showing students how to behave with them and practicing that interaction. Archie and Sid's training is ongoing. They have been thoroughly temperament tested and been exposed to a range of experiences such as chickens, wheelchairs, ramps, traffic, schools (both familiar and unfamiliar) and other dogs. Throughout the testing they have shown very low arousal, suggesting a highly appropriate temperaments for ongoing training and work as Therapy Dogs. Health: Archie and Sid are completely up to date with all medical and vaccination requirements. This will be maintained for their lifetime. They will be regularly groomed and washed as part of their program at school.

RISKS IN HAVING A DOG IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

This policy covers all aspects of having a dog in a school environment; careful management abiding by this policy ensures there is a very low risk of harm.

CONTEXT

- Archie is owned by Carol Ann Clifford
- Sid is owned by Natalie McMahon
- Archie is a Spoodle.
- Sid is a Labradoodle.
- Archie and Sid will be based in the Student Wellbeing office
- Students will be educated in appropriate behaviour around the dogs and develop increased responsibility with handling and managing the dogs.
- Visitors to school will be informed of the dogs at the school reception, they will receive a small leaflet explaining Archie and Sid's roles and requirements.

DAILY MANAGEMENT OF ARCHIE AND SID

- Not allowed in school if unwell
- Will be kept on lead at all times
- Be under the supervision of Carol Ann or Natalie or delegate at all times
- Continue to be trained as a therapy dog. This is ongoing.
- Be up to date with all vaccinations, worming and grooming
- Will not be taken off the site without Carol Ann or Natalie or his delegate in emergencies.
- Will have a safe area inside the Student Wellbeing office.
- Archie and Sid will wear training vests to ensure they are recognised as therapy support dogs.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

- Will never have sole responsibility for the dog or be left unsupervised around the dog
- Will be reminded of appropriate behaviours around the dog with each contact
- Will always be reminded to respect the dog and remain calm around him at all times
- Be gentle and not make sudden movements or attempts to physically contact the dog
- Not to stare into the dog's eyes
- Request permission before touching the dog
- Not to put their face near the dog
- Always approach the dog in a calm, slow manner and not touch the dog until it is sitting and calm
- Do not disturb the dog while eating, drinking or sleeping
- Never to feed the dog
- Continue beneficial learning into the dog's development

- Demonstrate collaboration of the dog's role with the whole school community, including; staff, parents, students, family members

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- All persons should always wash their hands after handling the dog
- Any dog excrement to be cleaned and disposed of appropriately by Carol Ann or Natalie or their delegate
- Only Assistance Dogs (eg Seeing Eye, Hearing, etc) allowed on school premises unless other arrangements made with College Principal

IF DOG IS HURT OR INJURED (accident or by student)

- Dog will be removed by Carol Ann or Natalie or delegate calmly from the situation if required
- Dog to be moved to his safe area
- Carol Ann or Natalie to take Dog to the Vet if required: Black Rock Animal Hospital, Balcombe Road, Black Rock.
- Parents informed if harm caused by student and Progression of Consequences followed.
- Incident protocols
- Carol Ann or Natalie to be notified immediately, documentation required
- Parents to be notified immediately
- Seek medical attention if required
- Inform all staff of the incident via email
- A full investigation from Principal and SC
- Resolution of personalities protocol
- Safe comfort buffer zone perimeter provided between the dog and the other party of 3 meters

SUPPORT FOR POLICY

- K9 Support. Therapy Dog Training. Tessa Stow. 31 Davies Rd, Warrenbayne, Vic. 57632471. <http://www.k9support.com.au/>
- Vet – Karingal Veterinary Hospital, 328 Cranbourne Rd Frankston. Ph: 9789 3444
- School Therapy Dogs <http://www.schooltherapydogs.org/>
- Dogs in the Classroom <http://www.creativeteachingsite.com/dogsogs.html>

*Ratified by School Council August 2018
Next Review Date 2021*