



Therapy Dog Policy

2021

PURPOSE

To explain the rationale and arrangements Hopetoun P-12 College for taking on a School Therapy Dog to augment our Wellbeing Program at the school.

RATIONALE

The benefits to younger children of a school Therapy Dog are well documented, and include:

- A calming effect on students;
- Improved behaviour and concentration;
- Improved self-esteem;
- Promotes for the children a sense of belonging and acceptance;
- Increased participation;
- Encouraging a sense of responsibility and respect;
- Helping children develop confidence in reading.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all students, staff and visitors at Hopetoun P-12 College.

DEFINITIONS

Therapy Dog – a dog which has undergone approved training to be safe in schools.

Owner – the person, or school, who owns the dog.

Handler – the person who has undergone training with the Therapy Dog.

Supervising staff – staff members who take responsibility for having the School Dog available to students. This includes in classrooms, in the school building, in the school grounds or on approved excursions and trips.

School Dog- the therapy dog when it is being supervised by someone who is not its Handler.

POLICY

- Therapy dogs must complete Therapy Dog training before being allowed on school premises regularly. Evidence must be provided to School Council of the completion of appropriate professional training;
- School Council will allocate funds to contribute to any further, higher level training if required and insurance.
- The handler is responsible for the supervision of the Therapy Dog, in the first instance, when on HP12 premises. This responsibility is delegated to supervising staff members where the School Dog is scheduled to be with other staff members.
- The welfare of the Therapy Dog must be a priority at all times and appropriate measures taken for 'timeout' and health needs of the dog;
- Information about the School Therapy Dog program will be included in the Start of School Year Forms folder. The form will allow parents to be able to inform the School if they have concerns about their child/children to have direct contact with the Therapy Dog, whether on medical grounds (such as allergies), fear of dogs, cultural or religious reasons;
- The Principal will be responsible for ensuring student access to the Therapy Dog;
- The Therapy Dog Handler will be responsible for setting clear expectations and guidelines on how to interact with the dog;
- All staff will be responsible for the welfare of the Therapy Dog whilst on school grounds;

- All supervising staff are responsible for the provision of water, walking the dog and ensuring appropriate toileting arrangements;
- Toileting accidents by the Therapy Dog must be cleaned up immediately and disposed of appropriately.
- Any cases of aggressive behaviour by the school Therapy Dog to a student, member of staff, parent/carer or visitor to the school must be reported to the Principal, Handler and Owner;
- Any cases of aggressive or inappropriate actions towards the Therapy Dog by a student will be managed through the school disciplinary process;
- Staff will be given the opportunity to request the Therapy Dog stay out of their classroom whether on medical grounds (such as allergies), fear of dogs, cultural or religious reasons;
- All living costs, including veterinary bills and vaccinations, will be met by the Owner of the dog;
- Therapy Dogs are not allowed in the school **cafeteria** or **food technology room** or other areas that would be deemed unsafe/inappropriate by the Therapy Dog Handler and Principal.

REVIEW

This policy was last approved by School Council on 11th August 2021 and is scheduled for review in 2024.