

Flemington Primary School

Dogs in School Policy



1. PURPOSE AND RATIONALE:

This policy aims to ensure the safety and well-being of all members of the Flemington Primary School community.

The School acknowledges the important role that pets, dogs in particular, play in our community and the positive impact dogs can have on family life. For many community members, dogs are an important part of the family. The School also acknowledges the benefits of walking to and from School in a family group with a dog.

Recently there has been an increase in the amount of dogs being brought onto School grounds, which has the potential to increase the risk of injury to children caused by dogs (e.g. bites and scratches) through dogs reacting adversely to unexpected noise and/or movement of children.

2. POLICY STATEMENT:

- For the safety of children to be the first priority at Flemington Primary School
- For dog owners to carefully consider the risks involved in bringing a dog into an environment where there are lots of young children, some of whom are unfamiliar and /or allergic and/or afraid of dogs
- For dog owners to carefully consider the necessity and risks of bringing a dog onto the School grounds
- For dog owners to keep their dogs at home if there is any risk of their dog becoming aggressive at School towards humans or other dogs
- To outline how therapy dogs are used within Flemington Primary School

3. DEFINITIONS:

- A **therapy dog** is a dog that has been individually trained, evaluated and registered with his/her handler to provide animal assisted therapy
- A **handler** is a volunteer who owns a therapy dog and who has been individually trained, evaluated and registered with his/her therapy dog to provide animal assisted therapy

4. ACTION GUIDELINES:

4.1 Dogs in School Grounds

Dogs are allowed on School grounds under the following conditions:

- Dog owners are requested to always be mindful that children are the first priority in a School environment and that some children are unfamiliar and/or allergic and/or afraid of dogs
- All dogs entering the School must be on short leads (not extendable leads) that are controlled by an adult, not by a child
- Dogs must be on leash at all times when on School grounds, not just during School hours

- Dog owners are requested to assess the demeanour of their dog before entering the School grounds and are requested not to enter the School grounds if the demeanour of the dog is not suited to an environment where children are present
- Dog owners are requested to leave dogs at home during School events, such as, family gatherings and fetes
- Dog owners must be familiar with their legal responsibilities and be aware that the School takes no responsibility for the behaviour or actions of their dogs
- Staff can request that dog owners remove their dog from the School grounds
- Incidents involving dog bites or injuries to children, adults or other animals will be reported by the School to the City of Moonee Valley
- Dog owners must remove and dispose of dog excrement
- Dog owners must abide by the City of Moonee Valley on leash laws, as follows:
 - A Council order, made under the Domestic Animals Act 1994, requires dogs to be kept on a leash at all times when in public places
 - This law does not apply to a Declared Dangerous, Menacing or Restricted Breed Dog or a greyhound, which must meet the restraint requirements, specified under the Domestic Animal Act 1994
 - The order also prohibits dogs from being within 15 metres of any children’s playground, public barbeque, shared path or exercise equipment area

4.2 Use of Therapy Dogs at Flemington Primary School

The School supports the use of therapy dogs for the benefit of its students subject to the conditions of this policy. Benefits from working or visiting with a therapy dog include reduced stress, improved physical and emotional well-being, lower blood pressure, decreased anxiety, improved self-esteem and normalisation of the environment, increasing the likelihood of successful academic achievement by the student.

Examples of activities that students may engage in with a therapy dog include petting and/or hugging the dog, speaking to the dog, giving the dog simple commands that the dog is trained to respond to and reading to the dog.

Therapy Dog Standards and Procedures

- A therapy dog is the personal property of the handler and is not the property of the School. The handler assumes full responsibility for the therapy dog's care, behaviour and suitability for interacting with students and others in the School while the therapy dog is on School grounds
- The handler is responsible for ensuring the therapy dog does not pose a health and safety risk to any student, employee, or other person at School and that the therapy dog is brought to the School only when properly groomed, bathed, free of illness or injury and of the temperament appropriate for working with children and others in the School
- The handler and therapy dog shall wear appropriate identification while on School grounds
- The handler shall be solely responsible for the supervision and humane care of the therapy dog, including any feeding, exercising, and cleaning up after the therapy dog while the therapy dog is in a School building or on School property. The handler shall not leave the therapy dog

unsupervised or alone on School property at any time. The School is not responsible for providing any care, supervision or assistance to the therapy dog

- The handler shall remove the therapy dog to a separate area as designated by a staff member in such instances where any student or School employee who suffers dog allergies or aversions is present in an office, hallway or classroom
- The handler shall not take any photographs of students or staff without first obtaining a photo release

4.3 Stray Dogs

Unaccompanied or stray dogs sighted at the School should be reported immediately to the 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.

5. MONITORING, REPORTING AND REVIEW:

Matters in breach of this policy should be confidentially recorded by the Principal or Vice Principal.

Any noted deficiencies in this policy document will be brought to School Council for review and update as appropriate.

6. RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS:

- Child Safe Standards
- First Aid

7. REFERENCES:

- The following Moonee Valley City Council website outlines local council regulations regarding dog ownership
<http://www.mvcc.vic.gov.au/for-residents/animals/dog-ownership.aspx>
- The following Victorian Government website provides more information and outlines legal requirement of dog owners:
<http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/pets/dogs/legal-requirements-for-dog-owners>
- The following article provides more information on Therapy Dogs:
<https://theconversation.com/therapy-dogs-can-help-reduce-student-stress-anxiety-and-improve-School-attendance-93073>

8. REVISION HISTORY:

This policy was ratified by School Council on Monday the 25th of November 2019.

It will be reviewed as determined by School Council or every 3 years.