



Help for Non-English Speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact Kalinda Primary School on (03) 9876 3289.

DOGS, PETS AND ANIMALS AT SCHOOL POLICY

PURPOSE

To explain to the Kalinda Primary School (Kalinda PS) school community the rules and procedures we have in place in relation to dogs and other pets attending our school grounds.

A variety of animals, including dogs, are becoming a popular and worthwhile addition to schools across the country. Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

At Kalinda PS we value the development of children's well-being along with their social education as highly as we value academia. We believe a school dog will be a unique way to enrich all areas of the children's wider education, skills and wellbeing.

There are numerous benefits to having dogs in schools, including but not limited to:

- the presence and care of a school dog enables children to put our school values into practice: Kindness, Resilience, Respect
- children with low attendance can be encouraged to come to school with the incentive of a meet and greet from the school dog
- with the Australian pet dog population around 5.1 million (RSPCA, 2020), children and adults are bound to come in contact with dogs at various points in their lives. Children without pet dogs have the opportunity to learn valuable life skills at school about how to safely interact with dogs when they are out in the community
- with a dog to care for, children may be more mindful of their behaviour. Disruptive behaviours may be reduced, with children generally more aware of the impact of their behaviour and choices.

We prioritise assisting children to develop a growth mindset:

- to be resilient learners who aren't afraid to make mistakes and persevere to acquire new skills.

A dog is an excellent role model for this as training dogs takes time and repetition:

- Reading programs with dogs are becoming more prevalent and successful.
- Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even adults are likely to be less scared to read to a dog.
- It might be less stressful for a child to read aloud to a dog than to a teacher or a peer. Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud and reluctant writers to read aloud what they have written
- With the presence of a calm and well-trained dog, students may find increased social support and peer interaction.



- As a focus or context for learning, the school dog can provide an excellent resource and tangible motivation for children in all subject areas.

The presence of a school dog may also be seen as an incentive for personal growth and achievement - with time caring or playing with the dog seen as a reward:

- a dog may give confidence to children as they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love
- the dog can work with students on a one-one basis and will especially help those students who are feeling vulnerable, have suffered trauma or are going through upsetting/difficult times
- students may develop increased empathy through a connection with an animal
- numerous local schools are using dogs to help students build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. They are reporting that dogs help with communication, teach kindness, and empower students
- with a dog in the school, students have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Involving students in the daily care of school dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care.

Further information regarding research in this area can be found in this 2018 article published by The Conversation and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) at [here](#).

DEFINITIONS

Assistance dog

A dog 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.

Assistance (Wellbeing) dog

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

Handler

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.

Pet dog

Any dog that is privately owned in the community for companionate reasons, rather than as a support function that requires specific skills or training.

Stray dog

Any dog that is not accompanied by their owner.

POLICY

Duty of Care and Other Legal Obligations

At Kalinda PS we aim to foreseeable identify the risks of harm associated with having a assistance (wellbeing) dog at school and take reasonable steps to fulfill their duty of care, and other legal obligations.

Occupational Health and Safety

The Kalinda PS Principals have a legal responsibility to provide a healthy and safe environment for staff and others on the premises in accordance with the legislative requirements of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007*.



This means that the school will need to consider the needs of staff members and students in relation to the assistance (wellbeing) dog and should consult with staff and the parent community to ensure there are no safety concerns that you should take into account.

Kalinda PS will therefore undertake reasonable steps to verify that the animal has undergone adequate behavioural training (for example, by engaging a professional wellbeing dog trainer) and is properly restrained around staff and students to avoid injuries.

Liability in the Event of Attack or Injury

Under section 29 of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, the person 'in apparent control' of the dog at the time that a dog attacks or bites any person (or even if the dog 'rushes at or chases any person') is guilty of an offence, **whether or not they are the owner of the dog.**

Various penalties can be imposed under the section, and a court may require the payment of compensation if a person is found guilty. Any staff members responsible for the supervision of a dog on school premises should be made aware of these obligations and the school should ensure they feel comfortable with this responsibility and managing the dog.

Wellbeing Dogs

Kalinda PS has two wellbeing dogs (Roxie and Melon, both Cavoodles) who support our students' mental health and engagement. Our wellbeing dogs are suitably trained and integrated into the school community.

The dogs' health and well-being are prioritised along with that of the children and staff. The dog will be insured. All vaccinations, worming treatments and vet checks will be up-to-date and paid for by the dog's owner. If the dog is ill, it will not be allowed into school.

The 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).

Student activities in which the wellbeing dog may engage 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, Kalinda PS will only engage with low-allergen wellbeing dogs. Kalinda PS 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 two 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/carer(s) and ensure appropriate steps are implemented to minimise health risks.

- The wellbeing dog will be appropriately identified while on school grounds by wearing a colour jacket and being on-lead with a Principal or designated staff member.
- 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/carer(s) at the beginning of the year in the school newsletter, and on student enrolment. In these communications, parent/carer(s) 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.

Assistance Dogs

Kalinda PS 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 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. Kalinda PS 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.

The decision to allow an assistance animal at Kalinda PS rests with the Principal.

Pet Animals and Other Animals

Kalinda PS is not a public place, and the Principal has the authority to permit or decline entry to school grounds and impose conditions of entry of any pet or animal.

Whilst Kalinda PS understands that many families in our school community keep dogs, cats and a variety of other animals as pets, to ensure that our school remains a safe and inclusive place for everyone, **pet animals are not permitted on school grounds**, except with express permission of the Principal.

The Kalinda PS community is diverse. There are students, staff and community members that are allergic to or uncomfortable around dogs, cats and a variety of other animal pets. We are also conscious of the health hazards that may be posed by many animals.

Whilst Kalinda PS understands that many families in our school community keep animals 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 families to follow if they wish to bring their pets to Kalinda PS.

If a pet animal is brought to Kalinda PS:

- we ask they be safely tethered outside school grounds if possible
- the animal must be restrained at all times and in the control of a responsible adult
- the animal must not be tied up on school grounds or left unaccompanied.



Families with dogs or other animals that exhibit signs of aggressive behaviour or jump may be asked to leave to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students and staff.

The Principal has the Statutory Authority to prohibit dogs and other animals from school grounds to ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff, students and members of our school community.

Stray Dogs or Other Animals

Unaccompanied or stray dogs or other animals sighted at our school should be reported immediately to the main Administration Office.

School staff will contact municipal authorities and/or Victoria police for assistance in managing and removing a stray dog or other animals 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 (or insert other online parent/carer/student communication method)
- Included in staff induction processes and staff training
- Included in staff handbook/manual
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- 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

- Duty of Care Policy
- [Teaching with Animals](#)

RELATED LEGISLATION

- [Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act \(1986\)](#)
- [Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations \(2008\)](#)
- [Wildlife Act \(1975\)](#)
- [Wildlife Regulations \(2013\)](#)

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	March 2023
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	March 2026