

## **1. Rationale:**

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 Greenvale Primary School, 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. This policy applies to the approved and trained school therapy dog only.

## **2. Aims:**

- A therapy dog is a dog who has been individually trained, evaluated and registered with its handler to provide animal assisted activities, animal assisted therapy and animal assisted interactions within the school.
- With the presence of a calm and well-trained dog, students may find increased social support and peer interaction
- The school dog can work with groups of students or on a one on one basis and will especially help those students who are feeling vulnerable, have suffered trauma or are going through upsetting/difficult times.
- 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.

## **3. Implementation:**

- 3.1 Authority for a school therapy dog rests with School Council;
- 3.2 The Assistant Principal and staff are responsible for the supervision of the school dog;
- 3.3 Accreditation as a Therapy Dog must be attained annually;
- 3.4 The welfare of the dog must be a priority at all times and appropriate measures taken for 'timeout' and health needs of the dog;
- 3.5 At the start of each school year, information about the School Therapy Dog program will be in the school newsletter. Parents are able to inform the school if they do not wish their child/children to have direct contact with the school dog, whether on medical grounds (such as allergies) or fear of dogs;
- 3.6 Notices will be displayed to inform students, staff and visitors of the dog's presence;
- 3.7 The Assistant Principal will be responsible for managing student access to the school dog;
- 3.8 There will be appropriate adult supervision at all times when the dog is present with students;
- 3.9 The Assistant Principal will be responsible for setting clear expectations and guidelines on how to interact with the dog;
- 3.10 All classes where possible will have regular access to the school dog;
- 3.11 Students can attend Lunch Club dog play or dog training sessions;
- 3.12 Students will be instructed to wash/sanitise their hands after handling the dog;
- 3.13 Any dog waste will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately;
- 3.14 All other costs, including appropriate vaccination, worming and other animal health considerations will be met by the owner of the dog.

## **4. Evaluation:**

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's ongoing policy and process review cycle.

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## **References and Related Documents:**

- Lead the Way Institute – Therapy Dog Training <https://leadthewayinstitute.com.au/home/>
  - Therapy Dog benefits -<https://theconversation.com/therapy-dogs-can-help-reduce-student-stress-anxiety-and-improve-school-attendance-93073>
- Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1986)
- Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations (2008)

***This policy was ratified by School Council in May 2021***