



INVERLEIGH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Honesty ~ Self-discipline ~ Responsibility

03 5265 1340

Therapy Dogs at Inverleigh Primary School

PURPOSE

To explain to our school community the rules and procedures we have in place in relation to therapy dogs attending our school grounds.

POLICY

A variety of animals, including therapy dogs, are becoming an ever-popular and very worthwhile addition to schools across Australia. Research informs us that students can benefit educationally, emotionally and, increase their understanding of responsibility. Therefore, developing empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a therapy dog. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interacting with a therapy dog. At Inverleigh Primary School, we value each child's academic, social and emotional development. We believe a school therapy dog will be a unique way to enrich all areas of our student's wider education, skills and well-being.

This policy applies to the approved school dog only – Lottie, a 2 year old, Blue and White Border Collie.

Rationale:

There are many benefits to having a therapy dog in school, including but not limited to:

- The presence and general care of a therapy dog enables children to put their school values of Resilience, Confidence, Persistence, Organisation and Get Along into practice.
- Children with low attendance can be encouraged to come to school with the incentive of a meet and greet from the school therapy dog.
- With the Australian pet dog population approximately 4.8 million (RSPCA, 2018), children and adults are bound to come in to 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. Research suggests 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 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 her: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-03-20/therapy-dogs-can-help-reduce-student-stress-anxietydepression/9564120>

<https://theconversation.com/therapy-dogs-can-help-reduce-student-stress-anxiety-and-improve-school-attendance-93073>

<https://www.therapydogs.com/therapy-dogs-classrooms-campuses/>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/canine-corner/202110/do-dogs-suffer-stress-in-animal-assisted-therapy-sessions?fbclid=IwAR1909Pc8ON5J1nwIM-yLXLJZ318YMFtY2Q0E28wQ44IwkS7MuvJB9tB534>

<https://www.petsintheclassroom.org/dogs-in-the-classroom-educational-program-research/?fbclid=IwAR1dOHeCDnvMocMF1-wrFrN3EpcFVITvytmyohirQLaDt-Ee57xEpn3f40o>

https://phys.org/news/2021-10-dogs-word-boundaries-human-infants.html?fbclid=IwAR2J8iFCJ0diQ0Uw4JD3CwxDvSxyD_46Kf01FHaaKttv3Ypj-NULK3V3sIA

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/canines-kids-and-kindness/202106/interaction-canines-builds-childrens-confidence?fbclid=IwAR0CrHDPytBsnuDZzQwBZNkU75pHmHYrX4mT26HaLh57ZGD6qo-E2mu6Kzg>

REVIEW PERIOD

This policy was last updated on June 2022 and is scheduled for review in June 2023