

# DOGS AT Carlton North Primary School

## PURPOSE

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

## POLICY

### Therapy Dogs

Carlton North Primary School has Therapy Dogs. These dogs come to school each day under the supervision of their owners/handlers. The [role of therapy dogs](#) at CNPS is to react and respond to our students and their environment, under the guidance and direction of their owners and other CNPS Staff working as their handlers. Therapy Dogs work at CNPS to support students with [social and emotional](#) learning needs. For example, an individual might be [encouraged to gently pat or talk to a dog](#) to teach sensitive touch and help them be calm.

Therapy Dogs increase motivation for learning, resulting in improved outcomes. [Research](#) into the effects of therapy dogs in schools is showing a range of benefits including:

- [increase in school attendance](#)
- [gains in confidence](#)
- decreases in learner anxiety behaviours resulting in improved learning outcomes, such as [increases in reading](#) and [writing levels](#)
- positive changes towards learning and [improved motivation](#), and
- enhanced relationships with peers and teachers due to experiencing trust and unconditional love from a therapy dog. This in turn helps students learn how to [express their feelings](#) and enter into more trusting relationships.

The following rules are enforced when Therapy Dogs are working at school:

- If the Therapy Dogs are present in a learning space or the playground with their owner or another CNPS staff member they are officially working. They are available for pats and cuddles, but we try to limit this to two children at a time and only under our supervision.
- If the Therapy Dogs are working with a CNPS staff member who is supporting an individual student or small group of students, then other students must adhere to the 'no touch, no talking' with the dogs both in the playground and when they enter the classroom.
- Rest areas have been set up for the Therapy Dogs in the School Office and Library so they can have some time out – the concentration they need when they are working means they get quite fatigued and need a rest!

- The dogs need a number of 'second handlers' (older students and staff) who understand the basic commands and can take the dogs from their primary handler if required.

### **Certification**

The Therapy Dogs and their owners have completed Certified Training for Handlers and Dogs through Lead the Way

Institute <http://leadthewayinstitute.com.au/services/therapy-dog-training-and-certification/>.

In order for the dogs to work at CNPS, their owners must adhere to:

- Therapy Dog Grooming Guidelines
- Therapy Dog Veterinary Health Screening including Immunisation Requirements and
- OH&S and Risk Assessment Requirements.

### **Dog Therapy Opt Out**

We understand that there may be some families who do not want Kramer and Jacob to work directly with their child. Please email your opt out notification to [carlton.north.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:carlton.north.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au)

*Carlton North Primary School acknowledges the support of Lead the Way Institute, School Focused Youth Services and the Victorian Government.*

<http://leadthewayinstitute.com.au/>

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

### **Assistance Dogs**

Carlton North Primary School (CNPS) School 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. CNPS 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. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact Assistant Principal, Jane Bilby.

### **Pet dogs**

CNPS is not a public place, and our Principal has the authority to permit or decline entry to school grounds and impose conditions of entry.

Whilst CNPS understands that many families in our school community keep dogs 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 pet dog onto school grounds:

- pet dogs must be leashed at all times and in the control of a responsible adult
- pet dogs must not be tied up on school grounds or left unaccompanied
- families that bring dogs to school that exhibit signs of aggressive behaviour, bark, or jump may be asked to leave.

The Principal has the authority to prohibit certain dogs from school grounds or modify this policy to ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff, students and members of our school community at any time.

### **Stray dogs**

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

### **RELATED POLICIES AND RESOURCES**

- Duty of Care policy
- Visitors policy

### **REVIEW PERIOD**

This policy was last updated on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021 and is scheduled for review in April 2023.