



# Aurora School

## Dogs at School

### PURPOSE

To explain to our school community the rules and procedures we have in place in relation to dogs (or other animals) attending our school grounds.

### SCOPE

### POLICY

#### Definitions

An **assistance dog** is 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.

A **pet dog** relates to any dog that is privately owned in the community for companionate reasons, rather than as a support function that requires specific skills or training.

A **stray dog** is any dog that is not accompanied by their owner.

**Occupational Health and Safety:** 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, for example, that the school will need to consider the needs of staff members and students in relation to a dog onsite, and should consult with staff and the families and community to ensure there are no safety concerns that you should take into account.

**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.

Schools should adapt this sample risk management template to reflect their program implementation and specific circumstances]

Aurora School supports the use of dogs for the benefit of our children subject to the conditions of this policy. The role of a dog is to support the social and emotional needs of our children, under the guidance and supervision of their owner and other school staff.

Recognised benefits from working or visiting with a dog include:

- reduced stress and anxiety, including decreased learner anxiety behaviours
- improved physical and emotional
- improved self-esteem, empathy and interpersonal skills



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- improved relationship building and ability to pick up on social cues
- improved attendance (for disengaged students or students at risk of disengaging).

Examples of activities students may engage in with the dog 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, Aurora School will only engage with low-allergen dogs. We will take care to avoid, where possible, contact between the dog and students, staff, and visitors where the school is aware they have allergies to dogs.

### Dogs onsite standards and procedures

- There will be a maximum of one school dog at any given time.
- When a dog is on school grounds they will be under the supervision of a handler or staff member. The dog will not be unsupervised or alone with children. A safe area separate to the school classrooms and offices will be allocated to the dog and their owner where they will spend time when they are not with groups.
- The owner will ensure that the dog does not pose a health and safety risk to any child, employee, or other person at school and that the 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.
- No child or staff member will be required to interact with the dog.
- If a dog is coming to school, families and staff will be communicated with via Seesaw/email or SMS.

### Pet dogs

Whilst Aurora School 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 remove the dog from school premises.

The Principal has the authority to prohibit certain dogs from school grounds or modify this policy to ensure the safety and 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 school Administration team. 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.



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### 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)
- Reminders in our school newsletter
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

### RELATED POLICIES AND RESOURCES

- Visitors Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
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### POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	12 <sup>th</sup> September 2024
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	September 2028