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DOGS AT SCHOOL POLICY

**Help for non-English speakers**

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Emerald Secondary College on (03) 5968 5388 or email [emerald.sc@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:emerald.sc@education.vic.gov.au)

**Purpose**

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

**Policy**

**Assistance dogs**

Emerald Secondary College 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 in alleviating 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. Emerald Secondary College 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 the Administration office on 5968 5388.

**Pet dogs**

Emerald Secondary College 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 Emerald Secondary College 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:

* Dogs are not allowed onsite without the approval of a member of the Principal Team/the Principal.
* If approval is given pet dogs must be leashed at all times and in the control of a responsible adult
* If approval is given pet dogs must not be tied up on school grounds or left unaccompanied
* If approval is given and the dog exhibits signs of aggressive behaviour, bark, or jump you will be asked to leave.

The principal has the authority to prohibit certain dogs from school grounds 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 Administration 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.

**Dogs In Education**

**Rationale:**

At Emerald Secondary college, we aim to provide a safe learning environment in which everybody feels valued and respected.

**Vision:**

At Emerald Secondary College we foster our students to become independent life-long learners, encourage them to try new and exciting things, and to acknowledge and respect diversity.

**At Emerald Secondary College our values drive us to:**

* Have a duty to develop and model practices where teaching and learning can be linked to the love, care, and connection of our school dog.
* Draw on the skills and knowledge of the school, Dogs Connect staff, and the wider community and enter into practices that are mutually beneficial to all community members.
* Implement effective decision-making practices in collaboration with the School Executive, Dogs Connect staff, school staff and where appropriate the wider community.

**Aim:**

We aim for the responsible implementation of a structured program through which a school wellbeing dog/s will be used to assist the school community in experiencing connectedness, developing links to learning throughout the school community, and helping to develop students who are socially adept, respectful, just, and appreciative of diversity.

**Practices:**

This vision is enacted through the following procedures/systems:

* Reflection on current teaching and learning practices and student data.
* A thoroughly considered and gradually implemented program involving the school dog interacting with staff and students on many levels.
* Documentation and review of current risk assessment, agreed practice, and implementation schedule.
* Alignment of Agreed Practice with current pedagogy and student/staff needs.
* Reflection and evaluation to guide future action/implementation to ensure suitability of all practices.
* Clearly signed notification that dogs are not allowed on school grounds, unless previously authorised.

In alignment with the aims of our Dogs in School Policy, we agree to implement, manage, and evaluate the practices and processes used so that we maintain safe and meaningful interactions between dogs and all other members of our school community. To achieve these standards, we have the following agreements and practices in place:

**Responsibilities of Leadership:**

The responsibilities of leadership are as follows:

* Ensure that all staff have access to and have had opportunities to read and review related policy
* Ensure communication with the broader school community regarding related programs and processes.
* Continue to assess, evaluate, and implement actions as recommended through consulting specialists and school community

**Responsibilities of Employees:**

The responsibilities of employees are as follows:

* Become familiar with Dogs in School Policy and Agreed Practice documents
* Become familiar with Risk Assessment document and adhere to related recommendations
* Suggest amendments to above mentioned documents if deemed necessary through observation or reports from students or caregivers
* Become familiar with the International Standards for Animals Assisted Education.
* Always ensure that students are actively supervised when interacting with the dog.
* Demonstrate and explicitly teach safe interaction options to students - this refers to walking on lead, general interactions, and sanitising after handling.
* Always allow time for the dog to wake up, avoid sudden awakening.
* The dog will always be led by attachment to lead when students and/or staff are walking with him/her unless deemed safe and appropriate by staff with responsibility for him/her.
* People move slowly and in a predictable manner when walking with the dog on lead.
* Consider that the dog needs to be in the classrooms and school buildings and make decisions on where the dog can play, roll, run, frolic based on this consideration.
* Be proactive when considering or having awareness of potential hazards or dangers to the dog - make decisions based on the priority being safety for the dog.
* Exercise caution and base decisions about managing the dog during any given scenario on common sense and safety.
* Never allow the dog to ‘feed’ or have bones or similar in classrooms or around students.

**COMMUNICATION**

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways

* Included in staff induction processes
* Available publicly on our school’s website
* Discussed at staff briefings/meetings as required
* Discussed at parent meetings as required
* Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request

**Related policies AND RESOURCES**

* [Duty of Care Policy](file:///\\8707AFS01\Users\ESC%20School%20Policies\Duty%20of%20Care%20Policy.pdf)
* [Visitors Policy](file:///\\8707AFS01\Users\ESC%20School%20Policies\Visitors%20Policy.pdf)

**POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL**

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| Policy last reviewed | 10/07/2023 |
| Approved by | School Council |
| Next scheduled review date | August 2025 |