

## Dogs in School Policy

### Introduction

Animals are ideal learning companions because they help increase relaxation and lower blood pressure, listen attentively, do not judge, laugh or criticise, allow children to proceed at their own pace, and are less intimidating than peers or adults. Working with a dog in school has numerous applications and reaches a diverse group of children.

### Scope and Application

This policy applies to all employees, parents, children and community members of Child Side School. This policy will be reviewed and amended in accordance with Child Side School Policy on Policies and Policy Guidelines and Procedures Contents Schedule.

The use of the word child/children in this policy refers to students in the context of the school environment.

Child Side School is very aware of the potential risks to children who participate in learning activities with a dog. As such we have implemented this policy including child and staff assessment, site evaluation requirements and risk minimisation strategies. In the event that an injury does happen the school also has current Public Liability Insurance.

### Related Legislation/Guidelines

- Use of Animals in Public Schools Policy (Education Department of WA)
- Animal Welfare Act 2002 (WA)
- Animal Ethics Committee of Western Australia Guidelines

### Related Policies

- Care and Use of Animals Policy
- Child Code of Conduct Policy
- Code of Conduct Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Work Health and Safety Policy

### Related Documents

- Procedure for Dogs in School
- Parent Consent
- Child Side School Enrolment Form (Enrolment Policy)

### Policy Statement

The model we use at Child Side School when having a dog work in the school is the model where the school professional is also the handler and the animal works primarily out of the same building. This

model allows the Educator, who has significant knowledge of each of the children, to educate the children about behaviour expectations when the dog is working.

The Child Side School Enrolment Form requires consent and all parents to answer questions relating to their child and the use of dogs as learning companions.

Educators as handlers are required to have approval from the Co-Principals and follow the attached Procedures for Dogs in School to plan, assess and minimise risk prior to using dogs as learning companions.

## Appendices

Appendix 1	Procedures for Dogs In School
Appendix 2	Parent Consent

## Version Management

[illegible]

## Procedures for Dogs in School

### Risk Minimisation

- Only suitable breeds of dogs are used.
- The handler must have owned or be closely associated with the dog for at least 6 months.
- The dog must be older than 12 months.
- Only trained dogs are be used.
- Handlers are trained to look for the signs of their dog becoming stressed, a possible precursor for a dog bite.
- Dogs are never left unattended at school.
- The dog is on a lead at all times when outside the classroom.
- A Dog Behaviour Record sheet is to be completed as a monitoring tool if the handler notices the dog showing signs of stress at school.
- Handlers are trained in first aid and the school emergency response procedures.
- Parents are required to disclose if their child has any allergies in relation to dogs and or a strong fear response to dogs or who have behaviours which may be detrimental to dogs.

### Procedures

Handlers are required to plan and assess;

#### School Layout and Typical Activities

- movement through classrooms
- outside access for bathroom breaks
- outside equipment and classroom set-up
- management of dog during an emergency procedure including fire alarm or lock-down.

#### Child Assessment

- the age of the children is old enough to not be grabbing and pulling on a dog's fur, and able to learn the rules on how to approach and respond to a dog.
- are there any children who have aversions or a fear response to dogs
- are there any children with allergies
- are there any children that display negative physical behaviours (towards animals)

#### Staff Assessment

- are there any staff members who has an aversion to dogs
- are there any staff members with allergies

### Dog Selection

A dog suitable for the Child Side environment is one that loves being in the middle of large groups of children. It must also possess these key characteristics that include obedience, ease of training, size, age, health, and character.

The dog must be in good health and must have attended training such as the Canine Good Citizen and Agility courses and obedience training.

### **Dog Care**

The children are to be taught when is a good time to come say hello to the dog and how to approach the dog.

The dog should have a "dog only" zone in the classroom where it works. This provides the opportunity to take a break if needed. There should be a command "Crate" for example, to ensure the dog moves to a safe place in the room if the adult in charge needs her to move away e.g. when we are making lunch or if the door needs to be open for an extended time.

### **Benefits to the Children**

The impact on the class is obvious when the dog is working. It motivates children to be more physical during breaks, taking the dog for a walk or run around the oval or throwing the ball.

The dog will also provide comfort during stressful times, especially on days the educator knows there may be high stress levels amongst some children. The children will naturally seek out the dog for comfort over time.

It has been demonstrated to be very beneficial for a child when they read a question aloud to the dog and then verbally explain how they are trying to solve the problem.

The dog can also be used as useful subject matter for social stories e.g.- What did Nicka (the dog) do when her sister took her favourite toy? What about when her sister chased away her BFF, Fanta the cat? These questions generate discussions that can be transferred to experiences of children in the group.

The general day-to-day presence of the dog will have a positive effect on the classroom, generating more smiles, encouraging the children to be thoughtful and respectful of the dog's needs, keep their voices to an appropriate level, and be mindful when moving around the classroom.

The dog can lighten the mood with funny antics and allows children a legitimate and socially acceptable way to be kind, caring, nurturing and gentle.

## Parent Consent – Dogs in School Policy

In accordance with Child Side School Dogs in School Policy we may from time to time during the school year use dog/s in the class room as learning companions utilising animal therapy techniques. At this time the program is being implemented in the MCC (Middle Cluster Classroom).

My child .....

**Does / does not** have an allergy to dogs

**Does / does not** have a fear response to dogs

I give consent for my child to be part of this program.

**Signed: Parent** \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_/\_\_/\_\_

**Signed: Parent** \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_/\_\_/\_\_