

MILGATE PRIMARY SCHOOL

ANIMALS – WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY



Help for non-English speakers If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact 9842 7744.

PURPOSE

This policy sets out requirements for the use of dogs at Milgate Primary School, as part of the delivery of our animal-assisted wellbeing and engagement program.

POLICY

Definitions

Animal - Any live non-human vertebrate (that is, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals including domestic animals, purpose-bred animals, livestock, wildlife).

Animal handler - The person responsible and in control of an animal while on school grounds. If the animal is school-owned, these responsibilities extend to the care and welfare of the animal at all times.

Assistance animal - Animals that are specially trained to perform tasks or functions to help a person with a disability alleviate the effects of the disability, for example, a guide dog.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) provides the following definition of an assistance animal as a dog or other animal that:

- a. is accredited under a State or Territory law to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effects of disability; or
- b. is accredited by an animal training organisation prescribed in the regulations; or
- c. is trained to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability and meets standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public place.

Wellbeing and engagement animal

References in this policy to wellbeing and engagement animals also cover school support animals and therapy animals.

Animals used to support student wellbeing and engagement in a structured and goal-directed manner. These animals do not have the legal status of an assistance animal.

Training requirements for wellbeing and engagement animals and animal handlers

The therapy dog handler has completed an Advanced level of Certification 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 Milgate, their owner and handlers must adhere to:

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

Animal handling requirements and supervision

The following animal handling requirements are:

- Dogs must be under the supervision of their animal handler at all times. A dog must not be unsupervised or alone with students.
- The animal handler is trained to ensure that they have appropriate knowledge of animal handling and animal welfare. This includes knowledge about their specific animal's breed and character and ability to identify signs of ageing, fear, stress and discomfort. No other person can work with students with the dog in their absence.
- The animal handler monitors the dog's behaviour for signs of discomfort or stress while at school. To reduce stress, the dogs are provided with regular breaks.
- The animal handler monitors the dog's behaviour for signs that they are no longer suited to participating in school-based activities.
- that students must be educated on how to behave appropriately around the animal/s both for their safety and the dog's. This includes instruction on how to interact with the dogs when they are sleeping, eating and toileting.

Welfare, health and disease

A handler has the following responsibilities:

- ensuring that the dog receives routine healthcare treatments including:
 - routine veterinarian check ups
 - microchipping
 - vaccinations
 - de-sexing
 - veterinarian dental treatment
 - hygiene services by an appropriately qualified contractor (such as nail clipping, washing and grooming)
- immediately taking the dog to receive appropriate healthcare treatment from a veterinarian if the dog shows signs or behaviours indicating illness or injury.

Animal welfare

All staff members who are involved with the use and care of wellbeing and engagement animals in schools must ensure the welfare of animals in the following ways:

- that the therapy dogs are cared for and managed to meet their physiological and behavioural needs.
- the animal handler will ensure that the animal is not overworked.

Communication with the school community and consent

The animal-assisted wellbeing and engagement program will be communicated to parent/carer(s) at the beginning of the year in the school newsletter, and on student enrolment. In these communications, parent/carer(s) will be given the opportunity to 'opt out' of the program for their child, raise any concerns or update student medical information (such as allergies or asthma) which may be triggered by a visit from the wellbeing dog.

COMMUNICATION

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

- Available publicly on our school's website and Compass
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Reminders in our school newsletter

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	November 2024
Approved by	School Council
Next scheduled review date	November 2026