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## Dogs in Schools Policy

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### HELP FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Bittern Primary School on 03 5983 9590 or [bittern.ps@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:bittern.ps@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. This includes the procedures in place for a wellbeing dog program to support student engagement and mental health.

### Policy

#### Definition

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 wellbeing dog is a dog that has been suitably trained to provide animal-assisted wellbeing programs under the control of his/her handler.

A handler is a volunteer in the school who is responsible and in control of a wellbeing dog while on school grounds and when facilitating the animal wellbeing program.

A pet dog refers 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.

#### Assistance dogs

Bittern Primary 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 to alleviate the effects of a disability (e.g., seeing eye dogs, hearing, and physical assistance dogs and)
- 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. Bittern Primary School 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 principal.

## Pet dogs

Bittern Primary School 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 Bittern Primary 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, pet dogs are not permitted on school grounds under any circumstances. Parents dropping off or collecting their child are asked to remain outside the front gates with their dogs. All dogs must be on a lead.

Our school community is diverse and may include people that are allergic or uncomfortable around dogs. We are also conscious of the health hazards that may be posed by dogs. We ask that families please leave their pet dogs at home or safely tether them outside school grounds when attending our school or school events.

## 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.

## COMMUNICATION

- This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:
- Available publicly on our school's website and through our iNewsletter
- Included in staff induction processes and staff training.
- Included in staff handbook/manual.
- Included in transition and enrolment packs.
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions.
- Reminders in our school newsletter
- Discussed at student forums.
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

## Related policies AND RESOURCES

- Duty of Care and Visitors policies

## POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	February 2024
Consultation	School Council subcommittee: month prior to meeting School Council: February 2024 Staff: August School Community: iNewsletter annually and on website
Next scheduled review date	February 2027

