



## Dogs On School Grounds Policy

### PURPOSE

To explain to our school community the rules and procedures we have in place in relation to dogs attending our school grounds, including outdoors spaces on school property and within buildings.

### 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 **Therapy Dog** (or 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, or school staff member, who is responsible and in control of a Therapy Dog while on school grounds and when facilitating the animal wellbeing program.

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.

#### ASSISTANCE DOGS

Kingston Heath 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. Kingston Heath 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 school Principal via 9584 5805 or [kingston.heath.ps@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:kingston.heath.ps@education.vic.gov.au)

#### THERAPY DOGS

Kingston Heath Primary School supports the use of Therapy Dogs for the benefit of our students subject to the conditions of this policy. The role of the Therapy Dog is to support the social and emotional needs of our students, under the guidance and supervision of their handler and other school staff.

Kingston Heath Primary School has a Therapy Dog who supports our student's mental health and engagement. Our wellbeing dog is suitably trained and integrated into the school community. Our Therapy Dog is by local arrangement, as authorised by the school Principal; not sourced from a Mental Health Menu Provider. The engagement of a Therapy Dog at Kingston Heath Primary School is subject to an annual implementation procedures review and risk assessment.

Recognised benefits from working or visiting with a wellbeing dog include:

- reduced stress and anxiety, including decreased learner anxiety behaviours
- improved physical and emotional wellbeing
- improved self-esteem, empathy and interpersonal skills
- 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 wellbeing 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, Kingston Heath Primary School will only engage with low-allergen Therapy Dogs and 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. Staff, students and visitors are requested to notify the school of any health or safety concerns about the Therapy Dog. We are committed to consulting with students and parent(s)/carer(s) in relation to any such health or safety concerns so that appropriate arrangements can be made on a case-by-case basis.

#### **PET DOGS**

Kingston Heath 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 Kingston Heath 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.

We ask that families please leave their pet dogs at home, and that dogs attending school drop-off or pick-up remain offsite, outside of the school grounds and safely in the control of a responsible adult. People bringing dogs into the school will be asked to remove the dog from school premises.

The school's Therapy Dog, for the purpose of this policy, is not classified as a pet dog and therefore is granted an exemption to be onsite at school. The school will advise the school community of its Therapy Dog implementation procedures on a yearly basis.

#### **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
- Included in staff induction processes and staff training
- Included in staff handbook/manual
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Reminders in our school newsletter at the commencement of each school year
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

## RELATED POLICIES AND RESOURCES

- **Kingston Heath Visitors Policy:**

<https://khps.vic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/KHPS-Visitors-Policy-June-2022.pdf>

- **Kingston Heath Duty of Care Policy:**

<https://khps.vic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Duty-of-Care-Policy-2019-KHPS-Final.pdf>

- **Therapy Dog implementation procedures 2023**

(Website link T.B.A., or on request to the school office)



### Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the school on 9584 5805.

## POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	May 2023
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	May 2026