



Dogs in school Policy

Rationale

Research has shown major benefits to students from having dogs at school. Whittlesea Secondary College understands having a visiting companion dog can help reduce blood pressure, help with pain management and provide tactile stimulation.

Having a dog around helps boost self-esteem, stimulates discussion and helps promote interaction with others (particularly student/staff interaction).

Dogs tend to lift spirits, and promote self-esteem.

Scope

At Whittlesea Secondary College our values drive us to:

- 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 the practices that are mutually beneficial to all community members.
- implement effective decision- making practices in collaboration with the school executive, Dogs Connect staff and where appropriate the wider community.

Implementation:

1. Only one dog per day may be present in the school.
2. The dog's visit must be registered and approved by the Principal. A risk assessment must be completed and submitted to the Principal prior to the visit.
3. The owner must check with students regarding allergies and/or fear of dogs. If either is apparent, the dog must not be taken into the classroom.
4. The owner must check with staff in their staffroom regarding allergies and/or fear of dogs. If either is apparent, the owner must avoid contact with the dog.
5. The dog must have access to clean drinking water and must be under the control of the owner at all times (preferably on a leash).
6. The dog must be healthy, clean, and free of fleas.
7. The dog must be fully vaccinated.
8. The staff handler is responsible for cleaning up after the dog.
9. Under no circumstances should students be left alone with the dog. A responsible adult must be with a student/students if the dog is present.
10. The main staff room is a Dog Free Zone during recess and lunchtime. Attention must be given to the welfare of the dog.



Appendices

In research quoted by the [Charlottes Litter](#) project, teachers reported improvements in various skills such as reading but also that dogs contributed to emotional and rational development. School counsellors found that the presence of a dog can help students work through issues such as bullying, anger management and other social and emotional problems.

In a case study published in [Teaching Exceptions Children Plus](#), which dealt with the results of bringing dogs into classrooms for children with behavioural or emotional disorders, parents and teachers reported the following beneficial outcomes.

- Students' attitudes towards school improved.
- Students found companionship with the dog.
- Students used the dog to remain in control of their emotions and behaviors in order to prevent them from entering into emotional crises
- Students used the dog as a de-escalation tool to calm their minds and bodies when they did enter into an emotional crisis.
- Students demonstrated self-regulation by managing their behaviors toward the dog through appropriate verbal and physical interactions, no acts of aggression were directed toward the dog
- Students' peer interactions became more frequent and positive.
- Students' interactions in the home setting increased
- Parents felt the inclusion of the dog was of educational value.
- Students' learning was extended by fostering growth in respect, responsibility, and empathy

Evaluation Period

This policy will be reviewed as part of the College's review cycle or when new information is provided by DET. Next review February 2023.