



Dogs in Schools

A link to this policy is available on the McClelland College website, staff will be directed to this policy via the Staff Handbook, parents and students will be directed to this policy via COG and the students Personal Learning Journal (PLJ).

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 our wellbeing dog program to support student engagement and mental health.

SCOPE

The aim of this program is to assist and support students within the Wellbeing and Hands On Learning spaces. This will be achieved through improving socializing and self-awareness skills as outlined under Personal and Social Capabilities in the Victorian Curriculum.

- The program will be implemented within McClelland College.

The objective of this program is to improve engagement, learning of self-regulation practices related to Personal and Social Capabilities in the Victorian Curriculum.

This program is in place directly relating to student wellbeing. This policy governs the program, ensuring the program maximizes its full potential.

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 **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** 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

McClelland College 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)
- 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. McClelland College 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 assistant principal relevant to the students year level.

Wellbeing dogs

McClelland College supports the use of wellbeing dogs for the benefit of our students subject to the conditions of this policy. The role of the wellbeing dog is to support the social and emotional needs of our students, under the guidance and supervision of their handler and other school staff.

McClelland College has a wellbeing dog who supports our student's mental health and engagement. Our wellbeing dog is suitably trained and integrated into the school community.

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, McClelland College will take care to avoid, where possible, contact between the wellbeing 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 wellbeing 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.

Wellbeing dog standards and procedures

- There will be a maximum of one school wellbeing dog at any given time.
- When the wellbeing dog is on school grounds they will be under the supervision of a handler or staff member. The wellbeing dog will not be unsupervised or alone with students. A safe area separate to the school classrooms and offices will be allocated to the wellbeing dog and their handler where they will spend time when they are not working with students.
- The handler will ensure that the wellbeing dog does not pose a health and safety risk to any student, employee, or other person at school and that the wellbeing dog is brought to school only when properly groomed, bathed, free of illness or injury and of the temperament appropriate for working with the school community. In the event the school is made aware that the dog triggers a student's health condition (for example, allergies or asthma), the school will notify the student's parent/carers and ensure appropriate steps are implemented to minimise health risks.
- The wellbeing dog will be appropriately identified while on school grounds by wearing a purple jacket.
- No student or staff member will be required to interact with the wellbeing dog. If a student indicates that they wish to overcome any fear of dogs, they can be supported to do so with coaching in a controlled environment with the wellbeing dog and their handler.
- The wellbeing dog program will be communicated to parent/carers at the beginning of the year in the school newsletter, and on student enrolment. In these communications, parent/carers 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.

Pet dogs

McClelland College 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 McClelland College 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, other than an approved "bring your pet to school day for", which would be held on a student free day.

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 reception, 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. Duty of care policy

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

[Duty of care policy](#)

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last approved by College Council on 2nd August 2022 and is scheduled for review in 2026.

Therapy Dog Program Procedures

Risks in having a dog in a school environment.

This policy covers all aspects of having a dog in a school environment, careful management abiding by this policy ensuring there is a very low risk of harm.

Liability in the event of attack or injury: Under section 29 of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, the person 'in apparent control' of the dog at the time that a dog attacks or bites any person (or even if the dog 'rushes at or chases any person') is guilty of an offence, whether or not they are the owner of the dog. Various penalties can be imposed under the section, and a court may require the payment of compensation if a person is found guilty. Any staff members responsible for the supervision of a dog on school premises should be made aware of these obligations and the school should ensure they feel comfortable with this responsibility and managing the dog.

CONTEXT

- Parent/carers to be notified at beginning of year or upon enrolment that the McClelland College has a therapy dog, allowing parents/carers/students the opportunity to notify the school about allergies and or fears.
- Norman is owned by Outreach worker– Stephanie Harrison.
- Vet Costs and general expenses are to be paid by the owner

- Norman is a Golden Labrador
- Norman will be allocated set spaces within the Wellbeing, Outreach and Hands On Learning program spaces.
- Students will be educated in appropriate behaviour around the dog and develop increased responsibility with handling and managing the dog
- Therapy Dog signage will be displayed at entrances of the program areas that he is working, and any visitors will be informed of the dog being present.

DAILY MANAGEMENT OF DOG

- Norman will not be allowed at school if unwell
- Norman will be kept on lead at all times when on the main school grounds
- Norman will be under the supervision of Stephanie Harrison or an inducted staff delegates within the Wellbeing and Hands on Learning programs.
- Norman will continue to be trained as a therapy dog, this training is ongoing
- Norman will be up to date with all vaccinations, worming and grooming
- Norman will not be taken off the site without Stephanie Harrison or her delegate in emergencies
- Norman will be provided a quiet, safe zone in the Outreach office when not working with students
- Norman will wear training/work coat to ensure he is recognized as a therapy support dog
- Principal class will be notified in writing of any incidents of concern

Student expectations

- Students will never have sole responsibility for the dog or be left unsupervised around the dog
- Students will be reminded of appropriate behaviour around Norman with each contact
- Students will be reminded to respect Norman and be reminded to remain calm around him at all times
- Students will be required to be gentle with the dog when having contact
- Students are not to stare into dogs' eyes
- Students are to request permission before touching Norman
- Students are not to put their faces near dog
- Always approach the dog in a standing position
- Students should always approach the dog in a calm slow manner and not touch dog until it is sitting and calm
- Students should not disturb Norman while he is eating, drinking or sleeping
- Students should never feed Norman human food
- Students should assist in the beneficial learning of the Norman's development
- Students should demonstrate collaboration of Norman's role within McClelland College

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- All persons should report any fear of dogs prior to contact so the proper precautions can be taken, and the student is placed on the NO CONTACT register.
- All persons should report any allergies prior to contact so the proper precautions can be taken, and the student be placed on the NO CONTACT register.
- Norman will be covered by McClelland College insurance policy for public liability purposes.
- All persons should always wash their hands after handling the dog.
- Any dog excrement to be cleaned and disposed of appropriately by Stephanie Harrison or delegates.
- External doors are to always remain closed when the dog is working in any program space.
- Only assistance dogs (e.g., seeing hearing etc.) allowed in area unless other arrangements are made with Stephanie Harrison

IF NORMAN IS HURT OR INJURED (ACCIDENT OR BY STUDENT)

- Norman will be removed by Stephanie Harrison calmly from the situation if required
- Norman to be relocated immediately to his safe area
- Stephanie Harrison to take Norman to the vet if medical attention is required. This is Hastings Veterinary Clinic on Hastings Flinders Road Hastings
- Movement of Norman being on or off site will be registered in the sign in/out book.
- If a student has deliberately hurt Norman, Staff will contact parents/carers and the incident and consequences will be managed in line with the SWPBS.
- Principal class will be notified in writing of any incidents of concern

INCIDENT PROTOCOLS

- Stephanie Harrison to be notified immediately, documentation required
- Parents to be notified immediately
- Seek medical attention if required
- Inform Principal class of incident
- Full investigation carried out from Principal

SUPPORT OF POLICY K9 SUPPORT. THERAPY DOG TRAINING. TESSA STOWE. 31 DAVIES ROAD, WARRENBAYNE. VIC 03 5763 2471

School Therapy Dogs <http://www.schooltherapydogs.org/>

Dogs in the classroom <http://www.creativeteachingsite.com/dogs/dogs.html>