DOGS AT MANDAMA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact [insert school contact details].

PURPOSE

To explain to our school community the rules and procedures we have in place in relation to dogs attending our school grounds. This policy takes into consideration the needs and expectations of all members of Mandama Primary School and also aims to minimise the risk of accident or injury to people or animals within the school grounds. This includes the procedures in place for our wellbeing dog program to support student engagement and mental health

SCOPE

This policy applies to all students, all staff and the broader school community in relation to the expectations and considerations of dogs at Mandama Primary School. This policy applies to the school's approach to assistance, pet and stray dogs

Refer to the department's Wellbeing and Engagement Animals policy on PAL for more information and details.

POLICY

- 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.

For information on Wellbeing and Engagement animals, please refer to the Wellbeing and Engagement Animal policy on PAL.

Assistance dogs

Mandama 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)

• 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. Mandama 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 Andrew Schaeche, Mandama Primary School Principal.

Wellbeing dogs

Mandama Primary School 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.

Mandama Primary School has a wellbeing dog who supports our students' 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
- walking the dog around the school yard

Where possible, Mandama Primary School will only engage with low-allergen wellbeing dogs. Mandama Primary School 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/carer(s) and ensure appropriate steps are implemented to minimise health risks.

• 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.

• Parents may raise any concerns or update student medical information (such as allergies or asthma) which may be triggered by a visit from the wellbeing dog at any time throughout the year.

• Students, families and staff will not be required to interact with the wellbeing dog due to religious beliefs.

Pet dogs

Mandama 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 Mandama 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.

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 (or insert other online parent/carer/student communication method)
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Reminders in our school newsletter
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

RELATED POLICIES AND RESOURCES

- Wellbeing and Engagement Animals on PAL
- Visitors Policy
- Duty of Care Policy

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	February 2025
Consultation	Staff Owner of Colin the dog School Council
Approved by	Principal & School Council
Next scheduled review date	February 2029