

DOGS AT SCHOOL



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact (03) 5987 26 49 or [Interpreting and Translation Services](#)

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 covers the visits made to Peninsula Specialist College by Therapy/Wellbeing Dogs and their handlers (currently staff members at the school and therefore adhering to all other relevant school policies). The aim is to improve wellbeing, engagement and participation across the school with the assistance of the school therapy dog. The Australian Code of Conduct for the Animal Assisted Services sector (version 4.0- January 2024) has been addressed in this policy.

SCOPE

This policy only applies to pet and stray dogs on school grounds. For policy information on wellbeing and engagement animals, refer to the department's [Wellbeing and Engagement Animals policy](#) on PAL.

POLICY

Definitions

A **pet dog** relates to any dog that is privately owned in the community for companionship 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.

Therapy/Wellbeing Dogs

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

Animal Assisted Therapy is a structured intervention, involving specific treatment plans and is goal directed and, evaluated by an allied health professional.

For information on Wellbeing and Engagement animals, please refer to the [Wellbeing and Engagement Animal policy](#) on PAL.

Pet dogs

Peninsula 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.

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.

POLICY •

- The therapy dog will be under the supervision of her handler at all times and within all interactions between the dog and students.
- Parent/carers will sign a consent form to indicate if they agree to a student interacting with the dog, which will indicate that they are aware of both the benefits and risks associated with the interactions.
- Measures will be put in place to ensure that the therapy dog will not come into contact with students who have not had a consent from their parent/carer.
- Visitors to the school will be informed of the dog at the school reception.

Care and Welfare of the Therapy Dog

- The dog will have 6 monthly veterinarian health checks
- The dog will receive the necessary vaccinations
- The dog will have continuous flea/tick prevention and regular visual inspections
- The therapy dog will not participate in therapy if they show signs of poor health
- The therapy dog will have regular toilet breaks
- The handler will address the therapy dog's signs of fatigue, stress, thirst, overheating or the need for the toilet, by providing the therapy dog a break
- The dog will wear a bandana to ensure she is recognised as a therapy dog

Student and staff expectations

All students and staff will be provided information from the handler, about how to interact with the therapy dog, which will include but will not be restricted to the following:

- Students and staff will ask the handler before they interact with the therapy dog
 - Students will be supported to follow the direction of the handler when interacting with the therapy dog
 - Students and staff will wash their hands (or use wipes) before and after interacting with the therapy dog
 - Students will not share their food or drink with the therapy dog
 - Students and staff will learn to recognise the dog's body language and how to react
 - Students will always be reminded to be gentle and not make sudden movements or attempts to physically contact the dog outside of directed interactions.
 - Students will not disturb the therapy dog when she is taking a break
- Handler expectations
- When in a learning space or in the playground, the therapy dog will be on a leash and always accompanied by her handler
 - The handler will supervise all interactions between students and the therapy dog
 - Equipment touched by the therapy dog will be cleaned with disinfectant wipes
 - The handler is responsible for assessing if the therapy dog needs to be removed from a situation that may cause them stress or potential harm.
 - The handler will ensure that the visual break sign is displayed when the therapy dog is taking a break
 - The handler will advise the school staff of the therapy dog's program for the day/term

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)
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

RELATED POLICIES AND RESOURCES

- Duty of Care Policy
- Visitors Policy

- Wellbeing and Engagement Animals on PAL

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	2025
Approved by	Principal Trevor Hodsdon 
Next scheduled review date	2029