



DOGS AT SCHOOL POLICY

PURPOSE

Mont Albert Primary School is part of a community where the benefits of pet ownership are valued. The school's primary duty of care is to our students, staff and school community. Some children have a fear of dogs and students need to feel safe whilst on school grounds.

This policy outlines the responsibilities of dog owners and/or handlers within the school grounds, including dogs specifically trained to enhance student learning, mobility or disability.

POLICY

Assistance dogs

Mont Albert Primary School understands its obligations under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Commonwealth) and the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Victoria) 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 alleviate the effects of a disability (eg seeing eye 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. Mont Albert 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.

School Dog

Following the escalation in mental health concerns due to COVID19, a school dog was introduced to augment the school's Wellbeing Program. The benefits to younger children of a school dog are well documented, and include:

- A calming effect on students;
- Improved behaviour and concentration;
- Improved self-esteem;
- Promotes for the children a sense of belonging and acceptance;
- Increased participation by more withdrawn children;
- Encouraging a sense of responsibility and respect for life.



While the school appreciates this inclusion and values pet ownership as an educational experience, it also acknowledges that other children and adults can find contact with dogs stressful. Therefore, the important guidelines for a therapeutic school dog are that:

- The authority for a school dog at MAPS rests with School Council;
- The Principal along with staff are responsible for the supervision of the school dog when on MAPS premises;
- The school dog will be sourced from a reputable breeder;
- The school dog must complete dog training before being allowed on school premises;
- The welfare of the dog must be a priority at all times and appropriate measures taken for rest and health needs of the dog;
- As a part of the school's Prep Orientation program, information about the School Dog will be circulated. Parents are able to inform the school if they do not wish their child/children to have direct contact with the school dog, whether on medical grounds (such as allergies) or fear of dogs;
- The Principal will be responsible for managing student access to the school dog;
- The Principal will be responsible for setting clear expectations and guidelines on how to interact with the dog;
- All classes where possible will have regular access to the school dog. This will be based on the needs of the students and in consultation with class teachers;
- Students will be instructed to wash their hands after handling the dog;
- All staff will be responsible for the welfare of the school dog whilst on MAPS grounds, including walking the dog, the provision of food and water; with the Principal ensuring appropriate toileting arrangements;
- Any cases of aggressive behaviour by the school dog to a student, parent or member of staff must be reported to the Principal and to School Council;
- Insurance, in the event of the dog being injured or becoming ill at school, will be met by Mont Albert Primary School;
- All other costs, including veterinary bills and vaccinations, will be met by the owner of the dog.

Pet dogs

Mont Albert 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 Mont Albert 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, we have in place a number of rules that we expect all members of the community to follow if they wish to bring their pet dog onto school grounds:

- pet dogs must be leashed at all times and in the control of a responsible adult
- pet dogs must not be tied up on school grounds or left unaccompanied
- families that bring dogs to school that exhibit signs of aggressive behaviour, bark, or jump may be asked to leave.



The principal has the authority to prohibit certain dogs from school grounds or modify this policy to ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff, students and members of our school community at any time.

Dogs are not permitted on school grounds outside of school hours during school events where MAPS students will be present, for example: Working Bees, sports events, Christmas Concerts, etc.

Where community members wish to bring their dog into the school for a particular event prior permission of the Principal is required.

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.

RELATED POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Department of Education and Training [Policy and Advisory Library](#)

REVIEW PERIOD

This policy was last updated on 10/12/2020 and is scheduled for review in one year.