



WILLIAMSTOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Dogs at School Policy

1. RATIONALE

Williamstown Primary School acknowledges the important role that pets play in our community and the positive impact they can have on family life. Dogs are an important part of life within the Williamstown Primary School community and as such, are often included in day-to-day activities such as walking children to and from school. While the School appreciates this inclusion, it also acknowledges and respects that some families and visitors to our school find contact with dogs stressful or frightening.

Our core business is to provide the optimum environment for student learning and our primary duty of care is to the safety of students, staff and the community. We acknowledge that whilst most dogs are friendly, some dogs may behave unpredictably in environments that are busy and crowded, particularly if other dogs are present. This policy takes into consideration all members of the Williamstown Primary School community and the public to minimise the risk of accident, injury or disturbance to people or animals within the School grounds.

2. PURPOSE

- To fulfil our duty of care responsibility towards our students, staff and community members.
- To ensure a safe and optimal learning environment for all our students.
- To outline the responsibilities of dog owners and/or handlers within the School grounds, excluding dogs specifically trained to enhance or support learning, mobility or disability.
- To explain the procedures in place in relation to dogs attending the School grounds during and after School hours.

3. DEFINITIONS

Assistance dog is any dog that is trained to perform tasks or functions that help a person with a disability to alleviate the effects of the disability. This includes dogs trained to pick things up for people with mobility disabilities, and dogs trained to assist people who have seizures.

School means Williamstown Primary School.

4. IMPLEMENTATION/ACTION

Assistance dogs

Williamstown 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 alleviate the effects of a disability (e.g. 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. Williamstown 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 the Principal.

Pet dogs

Pet dogs are not permitted on School grounds at any time, including outside of School hours. Where community members wish to bring their dog into School for a reason/event, prior permission from the Principal is required. If you choose to walk your dog to School, we ask that all dogs remain outside School grounds and more than three metres from School gates. We strongly encourage that the responsible adult always accompanies the dog. In the event of an incident, the onus is on the owner of the dog. Signage will be posted at all Williamstown Primary School entry gates to remind the community.

Stray dogs

Unaccompanied or stray dogs sighted at our school should be reported immediately to the School office. When a collar/tag can be safely located on a dog, School staff will endeavour to contact the listed owner.

Alternatively, the municipal authorities will be contacted for assistance in managing and removing a stray dog from School grounds, to ensure staff and students remain safe at School.

Education

Given the prevalence of dogs within and around Williamstown, Williamstown Primary School adopts a positive and proactive stance about education on responsible pet ownership. Each year, students across all year levels will be educated about responsible pet ownership and how to be safe around unfamiliar dogs. This will include a focus on:

- identifying times when we should leave dogs alone
- the warning signs given by dogs
- how to safely approach and greet a dog, with the owner's permission
- what to do if approached by an aggressive dog

The School will regularly utilise Compass communications to educate our families about safety around dogs, particularly those accompanying families to and from School.

Williamstown Primary School has an expectation that families will also provide positive education in responsible pet ownership and the safe approaching of dogs. This includes but is not limited to:

- if a child shows an interest in approaching a dog (both familiar and unfamiliar), parents should encourage the child to seek permission from the responsible owner first
- if permission is granted by an owner for a child to approach their dog, the owner should guide the child to do so safely
- should a child be handling their family dog, we encourage a responsible adult to guide other children who may show an interest in approaching the dog

References:

- *Williamstown PS Duty of Care Policy*
- *Williamstown PS Visitors Policy*
- Hobsons Bay Community Local Law 2015
http://www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/documents/pdfs/community/local-laws/2015_community_local_law.pdf

5. REVIEW AND POLICY HISTORY

This policy is due for formal review in September 2021 although it may be changed at any time as required after discussion with School Council and the Principal or if guidelines change.

Policy History

Version Approval Date	Summary of changes	VRQA Requirement	DET Mandated Policy	School Council Input
September 2018	New policy	No	No	Consultation recommended but not required