
Animals – Wellbeing and Engagement Policy



HELP FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Bunyip Primary School on 03 5629 5462 or bunyip.ps@education.vic.gov.au.

PURPOSE

This policy sets out requirements for the use of animals in Victorian government schools, as part of the delivery of a variety of animal-assisted wellbeing and engagement programs, including school support animals and animal-assisted therapy.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the approved school wellbeing dog only (Owen, a Golden Retriever). It does not affect the school's right to prohibit other dogs on school property in accordance with our Dogs in School Policy.

DEFINITIONS

Animal - Any live non-human vertebrate (that is, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals including domestic animals, purpose-bred animals, livestock, wildlife).

Animal handler - The person responsible and in control of an animal while on school grounds. If the animal is school-owned, these responsibilities extend to the care and welfare of the animal at all times.

Assistance animal - Animals that are specially trained to perform tasks or functions to help a person with a disability alleviate the effects of the disability, for example, a guide dog.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) provides the following definition of an assistance animal as a dog or other animal that:

- a. is accredited under a State or Territory law to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effects of disability; or
- b. is accredited by an animal training organisation prescribed in the regulations; or
- c. is trained to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability and meets standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public place.

WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT ANIMAL - REFERENCES IN THIS POLICY TO WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT ANIMALS ALSO COVER SCHOOL SUPPORT ANIMALS AND THERAPY ANIMALS. ANIMALS

USED TO SUPPORT STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT IN A STRUCTURED AND GOAL-DIRECTED MANNER. THESE ANIMALS DO NOT HAVE THE LEGAL STATUS OF AN ASSISTANCE ANIMAL.

POLICY

- Assistance dogs

Bunyip 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 in alleviating 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. Bunyip 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.

- School Wellbeing Dog

The current school wellbeing dog is a 2 year old Golden Retriever named Owen, who is owned by the Learning Specialist, Alexandra Lewis, who will assume the cost and responsibility of all daily living and medical costs.

Parents/Carers informed of the presence of a school dog.

Risk assessments related to the wellbeing dog have been completed, and will be reviewed as required

Training requirements for wellbeing and engagement animals and animal handlers

Advice and procedures for training the wellbeing dog, Owen have been provided by *Dog's Connect*, a Department of Education and Training Mental Health Menu animal wellbeing program provider, with a specific emphasis on contact with children and large groups

1:1 Training for Owen and handlers is completed through *Patient Paws*

Animal handling requirements and supervision:

- Wellbeing dog must be under the supervision of one of their animal handlers, or a suitable school staff member, at all times when in the presence of students.
- The animal handlers are trained to ensure that they have appropriate knowledge of animal handling and animal welfare. This includes knowledge about their specific animal's breed and character and ability to identify signs of ageing, fear, stress and discomfort.
- The animal handlers monitor the wellbeing dog's behaviour for signs of discomfort or stress while at school. To reduce stress, the wellbeing dog is provided with regular breaks and quiet child-free spaces in which to rest.
- The animal handlers monitor the wellbeing dog's behaviour for signs that they are no longer suited to participating in school-based activities.
- Students are educated on how to behave appropriately around the animal/s both for their safety and the dog's. This includes instruction on how to interact with the wellbeing dog when they are sleeping, eating and toileting.
- Bunyip Primary School staff will take reasonable care to avoid, as far as possible, any contact between the school dog and pupils, other staff and visitors where allergic reactions are a known

risk, however, the cooperation of all staff, visitors and pupils is requested in notifying the School of any known or suspected health concerns.

- Staff will be mindful of any student who has an allergy and monitor this on a case by case basis according to advice from the family.
- Anyone with a fear of dogs will be respected and never be forced to interact with the dog. They can receive coaching in a controlled environment with the dog to help them overcome their fears if they so wish.
- To reduce risks, school staff will be vigilant and ensure that children remain calm around the wellbeing dog, touch the dog respectfully and don't go near or disturb the dog if it is sleeping or eating.
- Students will not be allowed to play roughly with the wellbeing dog.
- The wellbeing dog will not be allowed to enter the school canteen, staffroom, Community Room, or any classroom where food is being prepared.
- Any wellbeing dog waste will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately. If any 'accidents' occur in areas where children have access to, appropriate measures will be taken to disinfect the affected site.
- The dog will not be fed any egg, sesame or nut products at school to avoid contamination that may cause anaphylactic or allergic reactions.

Welfare, health and disease

School Staff and handlers have the following responsibilities:

- notifying the owner immediately of any suspected illness or injury to the wellbeing dog

The owner has the following responsibilities:

- ensuring that the wellbeing dog receives routine healthcare treatments including:
 - routine veterinarian check ups,
 - microchipping,
 - vaccinations,
 - de-sexing,
 - necessary dental treatment,
 - maintaining hygiene and grooming.
- taking the wellbeing dog to receive appropriate healthcare treatment from a veterinarian if the dog shows signs or behaviours indicating illness or injury.

Animal welfare

All staff members who are involved with the use and care of wellbeing and engagement animals in schools must ensure the welfare of animals in the following ways:

- that the wellbeing dog is cared for and managed to meet their physiological and behavioural needs.
- the animal handler will ensure that the animal is not overworked.

Communication with the school community

The animal-assisted wellbeing and engagement program will be communicated to parent/carer(s) at the beginning of the year in the school newsletter, and on student enrolment. In these communications, parent/carer(s) will be given the opportunity to raise any concerns or update student medical information (such as allergies or asthma) which may be triggered by a visit from the wellbeing dog. Any such wishes will be respected and upheld by the school. These wishes are to be communicated by email to the school.

COMMUNICATION

- Included in staff induction processes
- Available publicly on our school's website
- Discussed at staff briefings/meetings as required

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- Duty of Care Policy
- Visitors Policy
- Dogs in School Policy
- Anaphylaxis ManagementPolicy

Related legislation and regulations

- Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1986)
- Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations (2008)

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	19/06/2025
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	Before 19/06/2029