



PETS IN SCHOOL POLICY

POLICY

To provide students with firsthand experiences of caring for animals and pets, whilst at the same time, ensuring that students realise and meet the obligations involved in caring for pets.

PURPOSE

It is well recognised that pets provide children with companionship, a sense of caring, and develop responsibilities. At Chilwell Primary School the inclusion of well cared for animals and pets into the curriculum has many benefits for students but needs to be properly managed to ensure the benefits for the children are complemented by a safe, comfortable, and secure environment for the animals involved. The school appreciates this inclusion and values pet ownership as an educational experience. The school also acknowledges other people can find contact with dogs stressful, even frightening.

SCOPE

Recognised benefits from working or visiting with an animal 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).

IMPLEMENTATION

- If a school decides to be involved in a program that involves a dog being regularly in the school, such as puppy walking, student incentive scheme or dogs for reading, then a staff member must be responsible for the dog and be the primary carer.
- Any class wishing to incorporate a living animal or pet into their room must provide a comprehensive plan to the Principal for approval and complete Department of Education documentation paperwork to meet DET standards (which demonstrates that the class has appropriately considered essential issues such as feeding, housing, costs, cleaning, vet care, school vacation periods etc...) prior to the introduction of any animal into the room.
- Whilst students may take day-to-day care of classroom pets, a staff member must accept overall responsibility for each animal and maintain records of animal care and use for audit inspection by VSAEC.
- The school will not purchase animals, and the responsible staff member must provide a viable long-term plan for any animal brought to the school as a classroom pet.
- Classes that have pets must have a well-known emergency procedure if the animal escapes so that children do not over-react and endanger the health of the pet involved.
- Guest speakers demonstrating good pet care practices will be welcomed to the school.
- Pets that die have a profound effect on some children. Therefore, the death of classroom pets will be managed in a caring manner. The death of a classroom pet will be discussed openly with students in a manner consistent with their age and understanding, as a natural part of the life cycle of all living things.
- If a student brings a sick, injured, and orphaned animal to the school, a veterinary practitioner, RSPCA or Geelong Council should be contacted to handle the matter.
- Students who wish to bring their pets to visit school must seek the correct approval from a member of the Principal Class team or complete the Appendix A form.
- Consider if the use of pets within the teaching and learning program can be replaced, reduced, or refined.
- Treat all animals with respect and consideration, ensuring that the level of care for animals is maintained over holidays and weekends.



- Take care to prevent the spread of disease with hygiene and minimal handling of animals.
- Therapy, working, or training Seeing Eye Dogs are exempt and always welcomed at Chilwell Primary School.
- School pets (such as chickens) or animals used for classroom and environmental enrichment (such as Story/Therapy Dogs) do not require approval from VSAEC. However, the primary concern of the school must be always the welfare of these animals, including the provision of care during weekends and school holidays (if applicable) and veterinary care when needed.
- 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.

Pet dogs

Chilwell 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 Chilwell 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.

EVALUATION

- This policy will be communicated to our school community by being available publicly on our school's website.
- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

Policy last reviewed	17/05/2023
Approved by	School Council
Next scheduled review date	June 2026 (or when required)