

DOGS AT SAS

PURPOSE

To explain to our school community the rules and procedures we have in place in relation to dogs attending our school grounds.

POLICY

Having a certified therapy dog at school can help staff and students in a number of ways, positively impacting the lives of the school community.

Therapy Dogs

This is a pilot program in place relating directly to student and staff wellbeing. Therapy dogs are permitted to attend with their handler. During 2020 a Leading Teacher and her dog, Sammy, a 3yr old Cavoodle, will be attend a 6 day intensive foundation course with Lead the Way Institute at Mullum Therapeutic Farm. This provides a solid foundation to begin work with a dog in schools for Animal Assisted Education and Animal Assisted Activities. This will lead to Sammy being a certified therapy dog and Nat Proctor a certified handler.

Animal Assisted Activities will begin after completion to support targeted students. The goals will include motivating students, encouraging active participation and school attendance, support students to regulate and promote positive behaviour and promotion of positive feelings and communication.

Sammy will also be used to support students to overcome their fears through positive interactions and this will be further supported with the assistance of a psychologist specialised in phobias.

At all times the well being of the Sammy is considered and needs to be a forefront of planning.

Assistance Dogs

SAS 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 (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. SAS 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 school principal.

Pet dogs

SAS 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 Southern Autistic 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, *at least 5 to 10 metres away from the gate*, when attending our school or school events.

Stray dogs

Unaccompanied or stray dogs sighted at our school should be reported immediately to the front 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

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

REVIEW PERIOD

This policy was last updated on June 2021 and is scheduled for review in June 2023.