



Wellbeing Dog Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to the Mary MacKillop College community around working with a wellbeing dog to enhance wellbeing and engagement. This policy also outlines the process in order to seek approval from the College Principal (or delegate) should a staff member wish to propose a dog visit for the purpose of student and staff wellbeing.

Wellbeing dog visits will be considered and assessed on an individual basis and approval is at the discretion of the Principal (or delegate).

The social and emotional learning competencies which can be developed through having a wellbeing dog at school are linked to South Australian Curriculum Standards. This policy also outlines the College's responsibility in ensuring the wellbeing of the school dog and minimising the risk of harm. A risk assessment will be conducted to capture associated hazards and outline necessary controls to eliminate or reduce the level of risk associated to the College and the dog before approval as a wellbeing dog is given.

The College community will have access to this Wellbeing Dog Policy and Risk Assessments, as requested. The Wellbeing Dog Policy will be published on the College website.

Rationale

Students experience a greater willingness to be active in the school environment when there is a wellbeing dog. Other schools have shared that their attendance rates improved as students looked forward to seeing the dog and interacting with it.

A dog in a school gives students a shared interest with other members of the school community. This helps them interact and build connections that they may have struggled to do otherwise.

A wellbeing dog can give students a sense of responsibility. They learn how to take care of the dog and how to delegate care which can help grow their leadership skills. Students can see the impact of their action on their wellbeing dog. This helps them understand how their behaviour impacts the people around them. As a result, students learn to be more empathetic and sensitive to the needs of others.

Ownership and Costs

The College does not own the dog as they are a family pet.

The dog owner is responsible for all associated vet, grooming and medical costs, as well as those costs outside of pet insurance, including excess.

The College will be responsible for ensuring a safe environment is provided for the dog and the owner and any identified risks have been assessed and controlled as much as reasonably possible.



Selection and Training

School dogs used for classroom and environmental enrichment do not require approval from the Non-Government Schools Animal Ethics Committee. The primary concern of the College must be the welfare of these animals at all times, including the provision of care during weekends and school holidays (if applicable) and veterinary care when needed.

When selecting dogs, they will be chosen for their mild temperament, intelligence and their hypoallergenic non-moulting coat. All dogs must have completed basic obedience training and be able to walk calmly on a lead/harness.

Other qualities should include:

- Friendly temperament
- Confident nature
- Calm/gentle nature
- Ease in all situations
- Enjoyment of human contact

Rest spots will be allocated to the dog where it will spend time if not working with students. The dog may attend the College on certain dates and time periods that shall be determined between the dog owner and the Principal (or delegate).

Daily management

The wellbeing dog will:

- Only attend the College if the owner and the Principal (or delegate) permits
- Only attend school if they are healthy and well
- Be kept on lead during times of high human traffic and activity
- Be allowed off lead when in a controlled and contained environment
- Only be taken off site without the designated person in case of an emergency
- Be put on lead and returned to a rest spot and/or owner if the dog shows any signs of stress or unwanted behaviours.

As applicable, members of the College community will be provided with information regarding appropriate behaviours around the dog and hygiene practices.

The dog owner or main handler will discuss and oversee expectations associated with being a designated supervisor with any staff or approved Year 12 student supervisors. At all times when present with students the wellbeing dog will have an approved supervisor. As applicable, notices will be displayed to inform the College community of the dog's presence on campus.

Students will be reminded of appropriate behaviour around the wellbeing dog.



When interacting with the dog this will include:

- Remaining calm and only using gentle play
- Refraining from sudden movements or loud noises
- Keeping face away from the dog's head and approach it standing up
- Never disturbing the dog if it is eating or sleeping
- Watching and responding appropriately to signs of stress, fear or mounting aggression.

Students are not permitted to feed the wellbeing dog or eat close by. The dog will not be allowed to enter the College canteen or any classroom where there is food being prepared. It will also not be permitted to enter areas where there is increased risk of injury or property damage, such as the Science Laboratories or Food Technology space.

The dog's wellbeing is paramount to the College. Supervisors are trained to identify stress as well as how to avoid injuries during visits. The dog will be removed to the rest area, returned to the owner or removed from the campus as needed to ensure the dog's wellbeing and safety.

Health

The dog will meet medical and vaccination requirements. This will be maintained for the duration of its role as a wellbeing dog visiting the College. The dog will be regularly groomed and washed as part of its preparation for visits.

The College will encourage people to practice thorough hygiene and hand-washing practices, particularly after patting and interacting with the wellbeing dog. Access to regular hand-washing facilities and hand-sanitising products will be provided.

Students or staff that have known allergies to dogs will have the opportunity to alert the College in order to identify necessary controls and give them the choice to opt out if required or discuss modified participation/interactions with the dog. This will be included in the information sent home to families. Disclosure of associated concerns with dog interactions and/or fear of dogs should be made known to the College via the method indicated in the correspondence, to enable them to be addressed before visits to the College begin. Responses to concerns will be tailored to the individual need and could include aspects such as refraining from specified classrooms or allowing those affected to leave the area etc. This will be communicated as part of information to the students and staff, as well as during any classroom visits.



Accident or Injury

In the event of an accident or injury (wellbeing dog or member of the school community), the dog will be removed from the immediate area and taken to their rest spot by the designated supervisor as required.

Following an injury or incident, the following steps will take place and are a shared responsibility of the owner, Principal (or delegate) and the College Work Health and Safety Coordinator:

- First aid administered if required
- People involved checked and the area made safe
- Parents and dog owner informed of the incident
- Incident Report completed and submitted to the WHS Coordinator
- Incident investigated

Transfer of Disease

The dog owner must provide annual evidence of the following to the College upon request:

- Vaccination documentation
- Vet health check assessment
- Flea, tick and heartworm preventative regime medication information
- Suitability of temperament for wellbeing dog role (evidence or testimony)

Dog bites, scratches and associated illness or injuries are covered under the College's Insurance policies and will be managed in the same way as other injuries or illnesses on the campus. An incident report must be completed as required.

The dog owner must provide clear instructions about how their dog likes to be approached and interacted with, so that supervisors can relay information and monitor situations appropriately.

Supervisors must carry dog bags at all times and are required to toilet the dog on a regular basis. Any mess must be cleaned up immediately, with indoor accidents cleaned with disinfectant and the cleaning waste disposed of in a suitable outdoor rubbish bin.

Policy Review

The College Leadership Team is responsible for the evaluation and review of this Wellbeing Dog Policy, which will take place every two years. This may include seeking feedback from staff, students and families to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of this policy.

Monitoring & Review Approved:
College Leadership Team
Date of Approval: July 2023
Review Date: July 2025