



Dogs at School Policy 2022

Rationale

To ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff, students and members of our school community. Bass Coast Specialist School supports the use of dogs for the therapeutic, social and emotional benefit of its students and appreciates and values pet ownership as an educational experience. The school also acknowledges some people can find contact with dogs stressful, even frightening. Bringing dogs to school is a privilege and not a right. The school retains the right to direct that a dog is not to be brought to school at the Principal's discretion.

Aims

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

Implementation

Parents and Visitor Pet Dogs

Whilst Bass Coast Specialist 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, we have in place a number of rules that we expect all families to follow if they wish to bring their pet dog onto school grounds:

- pet dogs must be leashed at all times and in the control of a responsible adult
- pet dogs must not be tied up on school grounds or left unaccompanied
- families that bring dogs to school that exhibit signs of aggressive behaviour, bark, or jump may be asked to leave.

The Principal has the authority to prohibit certain dogs from school grounds or modify this policy to ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff, students and members of our school community at any time.

Assistance Dogs

Bass Coast Specialist 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 required by parent, carers, staff and other visitors 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. Bass Coast Specialist 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 our Principal, Rob Sands.

Therapy Dogs

A therapy dog is a dog trained to provide affection and comfort to students in the school. Dogs can behave unpredictably when placed in excited and/or crowded environments, particularly if other dogs are present, and this may lead to accidents or injuries. The most important characteristic of a therapy dog is its temperament. A good therapy dog must be friendly, patient, confident, at ease in all situations and gentle. Therapy dogs must enjoy human contact and be content to be petted and handled, sometimes clumsily. A therapy dog's primary job is to allow unfamiliar people to make physical contact with it and to enjoy that contact. The following minimum standards shall be in effect for all dogs approved to serve in the school:

- A therapy dog must be clean, well-groomed, and not have an offensive odour.
- A therapy dog does not urinate or defecate in inappropriate locations.
- A therapy dog does not annoy any member of the student's body or school personnel by seeking attention.
- A therapy dog does not vocalise unnecessarily.
- A therapy dog shows no aggression towards people or other animals.
- A therapy dog does not solicit or steal food or other items from student body or school personnel.
- A therapy dog does not pose health or safety threat to any student, personnel or other persons.

The presence of a therapy dog at school will be based on conditions set by the Principal, including any conditions in relation to responsibility for cleaning and collection of dog waste, and will reviewed on an annual basis or more frequently as required.

Therapy dogs are independently owned by school staff and must meet standards of health as prescribed by veterinarians at owner's expense. The owner of the dog is solely responsible for the care and maintenance of the animal. The school bears no financial responsibility for the care or feeding of the animal.

Prior to approval, owners shall provide to the Principal:

- Proof of current inoculations
- Proof of health, such as a current health certificate from a veterinarian.
- Visible cleanliness of dog with no sign of fleas/ticks.
- Proof of training certification and qualifications to meet the standard of a therapy dog.

These same requirements must be met on an annual basis, prior to the start of any school year. The Principal shall notify parents on an annual basis regarding the presence of therapy dogs in the school building.

Staff Pet Dogs

Staff pet dogs will not be permitted at school unless they are a certified therapy dog or have been given written permission by the Principal. The Principal retains the right to revoke this permission at any time and for any reason at his own discretion.

Stray Dogs

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

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's review cycle.