



SECRET HARBOUR PRIMARY SCHOOL

Therapy Dogs

At Secret Harbour Primary School, we believe that the inclusion of animals into the curriculum can enrich students' learning experiences and has many benefits for students, however, this needs to be properly managed to ensure a safe, comfortable and secure environment for both our students and the animals involved.

Where approval has been granted from the Principal for a "Therapy Dog", the following applies;

Responsibility for the dog must be undertaken by an appropriate person. Jo Talbot is a qualified/certified therapy dog handler and is considered the animal's "guardian and caregiver" being responsible for ensuring that all the animal's physical and psychological needs are met.

The animal's guardian is responsible for:

- researching the dog's breed and consulting reliable sources (e.g. veterinarian) regarding appropriate diet, housing, exercise, and socialization.
- ensuring that the dog is fed appropriately, handled properly, and that its habitat is cleaned regularly, including waste and shedded hair.
- ensuring that an adult is present whenever the dog is walking around the school. A lead will be used for all transitions.
- seeking regular (and where required emergency) veterinary care for the dog (including vaccinations) and is responsible for all veterinary fees.
- taking the dog home after work, on weekends, holidays, and vacations.
- continuing to care for the dog at home in the event that a future student is allergic and the animal is unable to visit in the classroom.

Safety and welfare of staff and students

- Students are instructed about appropriate hygiene and given opportunities for hand washing after handling the dog and before eating food.
- Designate a separate area for toileting, and responsibility for cleaning up after the dog. Students are not to pick up any excrement.
- The dog is always supervised by its owner, or other designated adult handler, for its safety and the safety of others.
- The dog is provided with a safe area where it can rest and have time away from the stimulus of the students during the day and be provided with water.
- The dog should be placed in the safe area at any time when adult supervision is not possible.
- Students should not feed the dog any food scraps.
- The dog is always supervised by an adult, and students are not left alone with the dog.
- Students are explicitly taught how to interact with the dog.
- Students are reminded of the rules each time before they interact with the dog.
- Every measure will be taken to ensure that the dog is supervised and has the best care while at the school.
- Dog handler(s) are vigilant in observing and identifying signs of stress or illness in the dog.

Commands used

Sit	Verbal and or hand command
Down	Verbal or hand command
Bed	Verbal, to send dog to safe place or time away from children when other instructions are taking place.
Tuck in	Verbal command to eat
Leave	Verbal command for the dog
Give	Verbal command to receive an item from the dog. Hold right hand out, palm up
On	Verbal command to invite dog onto lounge, chair etc
Stay	Verbal with hand command – right palm to dogs nose
No	This command is especially important as it keeps the dog away from an improper behaviour that might end up doing at home, street, or school and it immediately brings him back to you.
Walk	A positive tone of voice for the dog to walk by your side.

Research into the effects of therapy dogs in schools shows a range of benefits including:

- reduced stress and anxiety
- increased school attendance
- increased confidence / self-esteem
- improved learning outcomes. For example, increases in reading and writing levels.
- more positive attitudes towards learning and improved motivation
- enhanced relationships with peers and teachers
- improved social and emotional skills.

Therapy dogs have been shown to reduce the stress chemical cortisol in the brain and trigger the release of oxytocin, which plays a positive role in social bonding.



