



**PRAHRAN  
HIGH  
SCHOOL**

# **THERAPY DOGS ('Digby') IN SCHOOL POLICY**

## **PURPOSE**

There are numerous benefits to having a therapy dog in school. Dogs can provide a calming and regulating presence for students in distress or for those whom regulation is difficult. Dogs can give an opportunity for students to develop care, empathy and responsibility. Dogs can also inspire playfulness and joy and can help young people to engage in prosocial behaviours.

## **SCOPE**

The scope of this policy is limited to one specific dog (Digby) being on school grounds (Pahran High School) in his capacity as a Therapy Dog. It does not permit any other dogs attending school without the written permission of the Principal.

## **POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

The school community will be notified about the presence and role of Digby at Pahran High School.

Digby is a poodle and is owned by Lucy Hotchin, Art Therapist, and will always remain with her whilst onsite. Lucy is responsible for Digby's care, toilet breaks, food and water. Digby will be on a leash whilst at Pahran High School, and Lucy will provide a crate for him to rest in.

Any dog waste will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately. If any 'accidents' occur, appropriate measures will be taken to disinfect the affected site.

Poodles are described as 'hypoallergenic' dogs. If students are allergic to dogs, their families should advise the school about what measures are necessary to avoid exposure.

Students will only work with the dog if they are comfortable. Anyone with a fear of dogs will be respected and never be forced to interact with Digby. Digby will primarily be used within a therapeutic setting and relationship and with agreed students.

There will be always appropriate staff supervision when the dog is present with students.

Digby's health and well-being is prioritised along with that of the children and staff. Digby will be insured. All vaccinations, worming treatments and vet checks will be up-to-date and paid for by the Digby's owner. If Digby is ill, he will not be allowed into school.

Students will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog. Children should remain calm around the dog. They should not make sudden movements and must never stare into a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog.

Students should not put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up. Children should never go near or disturb the dog if it is sleeping or eating. Students will not be allowed to play too roughly with the dog. Children should not feed the dog or eat close to the dog.

If the dog is surrounded by many children, the dog could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that they always monitor the surroundings.

Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring of teeth indicate that the dog is feeling angry or threatened. Flattened ears, tail lowered or between their legs, hiding behind their owner, whining or growling are signs that the dog is frightened or nervous. If the dog is displaying any of these warning signs it will be immediately removed from that situation or environment.

The dog will not be allowed to enter the school canteen, room 309 or any classroom where food is being prepared.

Students should always wash their hands after handling the dog.

## **RELATED POLICIES**

[Teaching with Animals: Policy | education.vic.gov.au](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/teaching-with-animals/policy)

## **REVIEW PERIOD**

The Therapy Dogs in School policy was developed in November 2022, to be implemented in 2023. The policy will be shared with the School Council and community. The policy will be reviewed every three years, or more regularly if there is a change of staff member or dog.