



Therapy Dog Policy

General

VLC in recognising the educational uses of animals in the classroom, requires that permission be obtained from the SLT before animals are brought into the school or classrooms. It is the SLT's responsibility to ensure that there is appropriate educational purpose if any animal is housed in a classroom. Animals are not to be transported in taxis.

Any school which cares for or uses animals for study shall ensure that each animal in such school be afforded the following:

- Appropriate quarters;
- Sufficient space for the normal behaviour and postural requirements of the species;
- Proper ventilation, lighting and temperature control;
- Adequate food and clean drinking water and quarters which shall be cleaned on a regular basis and located in an area where undue stress and disturbance are minimised.

Animals in school must be properly housed, handled, and cared for and only the teacher or those students designated by the teacher are to handle animals.

It shall be the responsibility of the SLT to develop a plan of care for those animals housed in school in the event of an emergency such as fires or school evacuation.

Therapy Dogs

VLC supports the use of a dogs' programme for the academic, social and emotional benefit of its students.

A therapy dog is a dog trained to provide affection and comfort to students in the school. 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 odor.
- 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 students or staff
- A therapy dog does not pose health or safety threat to any student, staff or other persons.

Approval

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

Prior to approval, owners shall provide:

- Proof of current vaccinations
- Proof of health, such as a current health certificate from a veterinarian.
- Visible cleanliness of dog with no sign of fleas/ticks.
- A visually healthy, alert and not glossy over or under weight dog.

These same requirements must be met on an annual basis, prior to the start of any school year.

The SLT shall notify parents on an annual basis regarding the presence of therapy dogs in the school building.