



## **WAVERLEY MEADOWS PRE-SCHOOL Assoc. Inc.**

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LICENSE No. 3738 ABN: 28 483 128 625



## **KINDER DOGS POLICY**

### **Quality Area 3**

#### **Purpose**

This policy will provide guidelines for engaging staff, students and families at Waverley Meadows Pre-School with our Therapy Dog: Ruby. It also provides direction to the Guide Dog Puppy policies - developed specifically by Guide Dog's Australia and adhered to by the Preschool when we have a Guide Dog join the program.

This policy aims to clearly define:

- A Framework for the appropriate education and training of staff, parents and children on how to live safely with dogs.
- Procedures for dealing with Ruby inside the kinder environment
- Appropriate supervision of all children, staff, parents at the service
- An environment that is safe, clean and hygienic
- Where to find specific policies developed by Guide Dogs Australia

#### **Policy statement**

##### **Values**

Waverley Meadows Pre-School is committed to:

- \* supporting all children to feel safe, happy and secure in the kinder setting
- ensuring that the health, safety and wellbeing of children at the service is protected at all times while also promoting their learning and development.
- implementing and following effective hygiene practices
- fulfilling a duty of care to all children attending the service
- \* fulfilling the requirements of the Guide Dog puppy policies
- providing accountable and effective staffing and management practices
- \* facilitating appropriate communication and education for staff, parents and children relating to Ruby

##### **Scope**

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, educators, other staff, students on placement and volunteers at Waverley Meadows Pre-School.

## **Background and legislation**

### **Background**

Having a pet at Waverley Meadows gives children the opportunity to observe, interact and learn about animals. It is a valuable part of a child's education and care experience, enriching their learning about nature, ecology and relationships.

Ruby is a chocolate Labrador who have been bred specifically to work as 'Pet Therapist'. Ruby has been a part of the 4-year-old program since 2013 and have had a wonderfully positive impact on the program at Waverley Meadows. Ruby works to support all children, as well as those who are finding separation difficult, those lacking in confidence, children with special needs, those with English as a second language, or even children who begin the kinder year with a fear of dogs.

Ruby has been particularly successful with inclusion of all children returning to kinder after long periods of absence due to the World Health Pandemic of COVID19 and the resulting lockdown periods.

Ruby lives full time with Mrs Knowles and is a huge part of the 4-year-old program. While they are not a formal part of the 3-year-old program, children in the 3-year-old groups will also see them around kinder.

Over the years, numerous research studies have been undertaken to validate the benefits of animal assistance activity and in particular the contribution of therapy dogs. Therapy dogs can enhance children's psychological development, improve social skills, and increase self-esteem among other benefits. Dogs can also teach responsibility, compassion, and respect for living things. Dogs in the classroom can be used to calm fears, relieve anxiety and teach skills.

Another added benefit is that staff teach students about responsible pet ownership in a positive and real-world manner. Students learn about the responsibilities of looking after living things. It helps develop empathy and provides a sense of pride for personal actions.

Staff are required to actively supervise children at all times when Ruby is in attendance at the service.

### **Legislation and Standards**

Relevant legislation includes but is not limited to:

- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Education and Care Services National Law 2010
- National Quality Standards
- Occupational Health and Safety Oct 2004
- Occupational Health and Safety regulations 2007

National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety

- Standard 2.1: Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted
- Element 2.1.2: Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented

### **Definitions**

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the General Definitions section of this manual- available at the Pre-School.

**Appropriate supervision:** Children should also be appropriately supervised when they have contact with animals to avoid potential injury or harm to the child or the animal.

**Disease:** Access to animals in an education and care service requires special consideration to prevent the spread of infectious diseases because contact with animals can spread disease. Health authorities identify that germs can be present on the skin, hair, feathers and scales, and in the faeces, urine and saliva of animals. While these germs may not cause disease in the animal, they may cause disease in humans.

**Effective hand washing and cleaning:** Children and adults should employ effective hand washing after touching or feeding animals. Cleaning of enclosures can be part of the learning experience.

**Safe behaviour around dogs:** The following rules are recommended by the Department of Environment and Primary industries 'Living Safely with Dogs' program and reinforced by the Victorian Government's Better Health Channel Website:

- Always supervise children and dogs
- If you are unable to supervise even for a short time, separate children from dogs.
- Always let the dog smell the back of your hand first.
- Pat dogs gently and calmly from the collar to the tail
- Do not pat a dog on its head.
- Never disturb a dog that is eating or sleeping

## **Sources and related policies**

### **Sources**

- Better Health Channel Website: Child Safety "Children & Animals"
- Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries 'Living Safely With Dogs' Education Program
- ACECQU - Quality Information Sheets: Keeping Pets And Animals In Education And Care Services
- Jells Park Primary School - D PAWS Program - Information Sheets
- RSPCA - Guidance for Pet Ownership
- Responsible Pet Program - VIC Government

### **Policies**

- Occupational Health & Safety Policy
- Incident, Illness, Trauma & Illness Policy
- Supervision of Children Policy
- Child Safe Environment Policy
- Hygiene Policy
- Guide Dogs Australia - Puppy guidelines - Please see Sue Knowles should you wish to view any of these policies in more detail

## **Procedures**

### **The Approved Provider is responsible for:**

- Ensuring adequate care and training of the dogs is continually provided by their owner, Sue Knowles in order for them to attend the preschool
- Ensuring proper procedures are in place to maintain the health and hygiene of the kinder is maintained with the dogs' present
- Encouraging educators to model appropriate behaviour and support children during interactions with Ruby.
- Running a "Living Safely with Dogs' education session for each four-year-old kinder group, parents and staff. Particular attention in the session is given to recognising the warning signs given by dogs, the correct way to approach a dog and what to do if approached by an aggressive dog.

- Supplying a First Aid Kit
- Encouraging parents, through this policy, to practise safe dog behaviours at home and to teach children on an ongoing basis how to behave around dogs to minimise risk of dog bites
- Following all procedures as set out in the Incident, Injury, Trauma & illness Policy (including notice of notifiable incidents, appropriate record keeping in the event of an incident, maintain first aid kit etc)

**The nominated supervisor and other educators are responsible for:**

- The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for the care, health, wellbeing and continuous training of the Therapy dogs in order for them to be a part of the pre-school community - this includes a monthly vet check to assess temperature, nails, fleas, ticks and ensure the dogs general health is good. This also includes regular worming and vaccination.
- The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for keeping the dogs home if they are unwell
- Ensuring procedures are in place to maintain the health and hygiene of the kinder while the children are eating. The dogs are kept in the office during seated lunch and while the children are having morning/afternoon tea.
- Teaching the staff and children about safety and hygiene issues and the general care and responsibility required for a pet - prior to the introduction of Ruby for the kinder year.
- Ensuring the Dogs do not attend nature kinder to maintain the safety of the children. Other dogs may be drawn to play with the Ruby and the attention of the educators is solely on the children during this time.
- Continually educating children on the appropriate behaviours around dogs, including recognising warning signs, the correct way to approach a dog, and how to treat Ruby
- Ensuring dogs and children are never left unattended without an educator
- Ensuring procedures to check for dog poo prior to all kinder sessions are enacted each session. Dog Poo checks added to the general environmental safety checklist and is the responsibility of all educators
- Ensuring any medical incidents are reported in a log
- Ensuring children wash hands if they touch a dog and prior to eating

**Parents/guardians are responsible for:**

- Practising safe dog behaviours at home and outside of the kinder
- Teaching children on an ongoing basis how to behave around dogs to minimise risk of dog bites, attending the 'Living Safely with Dogs' education session as provided by the committee for children, parents and staff
- Reading and being familiar with this policy
- Bringing relevant issues to the attention of both staff and committee
- Following the directions of staff at the service at all times to ensure that the health, safety and wellbeing of children is protected.

**Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.**

**Evaluation**

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly check staff procedures to ensure Working with Children Checks and qualifications are current and complete
- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness

- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures.

### **Attachments**

Nil

### **Authorisation**

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Waverley Meadows Pre-School in March 2019

**Date Review:** *See Policy Schedule for next review date*