

# Subiaco Primary School



**WELLBEING DOG POLICY and RISK MATRIX**

## Background

Subiaco Primary School provides a safe, caring and inclusive learning environment, where our students feel valued, nurtured and encouraged to reach their full potential. We are committed to applying our motto, Our Best, to ensure that an inclusive education supports our students' development across the four domains of physical, cognitive, language and social-emotional.

Subiaco Primary School Business Plan 2024-2026, Strategic Priority 4: Wellbeing and Engagement, has multiple focus areas, including adopting a multi-tiered approach to support student wellbeing through a wellbeing and social-emotional program across all year levels. One of those strategies is to implement a Wellbeing Dog Program (with the Wellbeing dog coming to the school site twice per week) to support social skills and emotional regulation.

Having spent the first 12 months of her life as a well-being dog in training, in a school with the Principal and owner, Stella progressed to Subiaco Primary with her owner and trainer to create a well-being dog Program in her new school.

## Rationale

There is considerable research regarding the benefits of therapy/wellbeing/facility dogs in educational settings. Preliminary evidence suggests that therapy or well-being dogs can enhance children's well-being in a variety of settings, from schools, hospitals, airports, and courtrooms. Therapy/wellbeing dogs have been found to reduce physiological symptoms of stress through lowering cortisol levels, increasing positive emotions, promoting engagement in learning activities and positive attitudes toward learning, reducing negative behaviours like task avoidance and aggression in the classroom, as well as encouraging prosocial behaviours and acting as a "social catalyst" to facilitate social interactions with others.

The key aim of a Wellbeing Dog Program is designed to help boost engagement and improve the mental health of both students and staff, interacting with students as required to reduce anxiety, assist with school refusal, hear students read, give comfort, assist with returning to class and self-regulation, support brain/movement breaks, teach responsibility, and encourage socialisation and empathy.

This policy has been put in place to ensure that the Wellbeing Dogs' attendance at school is safe and inclusive, having regard to the Risk Assessment Matrix included at Annexure A.

## Context

- Dog is owned by the Principal, Heather McNeil
- The owner pays vet costs and general expenses
- Dog is a Bordoodle, and has been chosen for her temperament, intelligence and calmness around people. She loves children and gets along with people and other dogs. Bordoodles are a non-shedding breed that are keen to please and easy to train.
- The dog will be based primarily in the Principal's office and the Administration building, but will move around the whole school from time to time and be visible to students and parents
- Students do not have to have contact with the dog – it is an optional experience
- No student will ever be forced to have direct contact with the dog
- Stella has had extensive and ongoing training in life skills and obedience. She has a complete physical vet check annually, is up to date with all immunisations and takes medications on the advice of her veterinary surgeon.

### Daily Management

- The dog will not attend school if unwell or has an open wound
- The dog will be under the supervision of the Principal or a staff member at all times
- Will be up to date with all vaccinations, worming and grooming
- The dog will be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms and around the school grounds

### Health and Safety

- Everyone will wash their hands after handling/petting the dog
- Any dog excrement will be cleaned and disposed of appropriately by the Principal
- Parents are asked to speak to notify the school if their child has any allergies that will be triggered by contact with the dog, and they will be managed through a medical action plan, or direct contact with the dog will be avoided
- Parents are asked to notify the school if their child is fearful of dogs, and direct contact with the dog will be avoided
- Parents are to notify the school of religious and/or cultural beliefs, and direct contact with the dog will be avoided

### Pet Dogs

Subiaco Primary School is not a public place, and the Principal has the authority and responsibility to permit or decline entry to school grounds and impose conditions of entry to ensure the safety of the community. Whilst Subiaco Primary School values the role dogs play in our community and the many benefits of dog ownership, we also need to ensure that our school remains a safe and inclusive place for everyone. Dogs other than the permitted Wellbeing Dog are not allowed on school grounds, in classrooms or other school buildings unless the Principal has granted specific approval.

### Stray Dogs

Unaccompanied or stray dogs sighted at our school should be reported immediately to the school office. School staff will contact City of Subiaco Rangers for assistance in managing and removing a stray dog from school grounds to ensure staff and student safety.

### Related Legislation/Guidelines

- Use of Animals in Public Schools Policy (Education Department of WA)
- Animal Welfare Act 2002 (WA)
- Animal Ethics Committee of Western Australia Guidelines Related Policies
- Care and Use of Animals Policy
- Code of Conduct Policy
- Duty of Care for Public School Students Policy (Education Department of WA)
- Work Health and Safety Policy (Education Department of WA)

### Additional Information

If you require any additional information or have any concerns about the Wellbeing Dog or compliance with this policy, please get in touch with a Deputy Principal.

We have some FAQs that we can make available to you upon request.

**ENDORSEMENT**

**We, the undersigned, hereby certify that this document was ratified at the Subiaco Primary School Board Meeting on: 12 August 2025**

**School Board Chair**



**Name: Hannah McKelvie**

**Principal**



**Name: Heather McNeil**

**Review – August 2028**

# Wellbeing Dog Consent

It is very important that we are aware of any issues regarding your child and dogs. Please complete the following information sheet regarding your child.

Child's Name.....

Classroom.....

Please tick

- My child **does not** have any known allergies that will be triggered by contact with a dog.
- My child **does** have allergies that will be triggered by contact with a dog.
- My child is genuinely fearful of dogs
- My child is **not permitted** to interact with a dog due to religious and/or cultural reasons.

Signature-----

Date -----

**THANK YOU**

Date of assessment:

20/06/2025

Reason:

This risk assessment is conducted to ensure that all risk possibilities are considered and mitigated when considering having a Wellbeing Dog Program at Subiaco Primary School.

Considerations:

This is to be read in conjunction with the Wellbeing Dog Policy. Stella will be on the school premises twice (maximum) a week.

Assessment completed by:

Subiaco Primary School Board.

This assessment is for

Wellbeing Dog named:

Stella (she is owned by the Principal of Subiaco Primary School).

ASSESS the risks of the activities																																																	
CONSEQUENCES (credible risk)		LIKELIHOOD		IMPACT		RISK SCORE																																											
Significant	Permanent or severe adverse effect(s) due to having a Wellbeing Dog on Subiaco Primary School premises	Almost Certain	> 90% chance of the risk occurring	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th colspan="5">Consequences</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Likelihood</th> <th>Neg</th> <th>Minor</th> <th>Mod</th> <th>Major</th> <th>Sig</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Almost certain</td> <td>H</td> <td>H</td> <td>VH</td> <td>VH</td> <td>S</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Likely</td> <td>Med</td> <td>H</td> <td>H</td> <td>VH</td> <td>VH</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Possible</td> <td>Low</td> <td>Med</td> <td>H</td> <td>H</td> <td>VH</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Unlikely</td> <td>Low</td> <td>Low</td> <td>Med</td> <td>H</td> <td>H</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rare</td> <td>Low</td> <td>Low</td> <td>Low</td> <td>Med</td> <td>H</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Consequences					Likelihood	Neg	Minor	Mod	Major	Sig	Almost certain	H	H	VH	VH	S	Likely	Med	H	H	VH	VH	Possible	Low	Med	H	H	VH	Unlikely	Low	Low	Med	H	H	Rare	Low	Low	Low	Med	H	Severe	Seriously consider cancelling the consideration of having a Wellbeing Dog on Subiaco Primary School premises
	Consequences																																																
Likelihood	Neg	Minor	Mod	Major	Sig																																												
Almost certain	H	H	VH	VH	S																																												
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Unlikely	Low	Low	Med	H	H																																												
Rare	Low	Low	Low	Med	H																																												
Major	Prolonged or significant effect(s) due to having a Wellbeing Dog on the Subiaco Primary School premises	Likely	60-90% chance of the risk occurring			Very High	Authorisation by Principal, School Board and P&C to proceed																																										
Moderate	Reversible medium-term effect(s) due to having a Wellbeing Dog on Subiaco Primary School premises	Possible	40-60% chance of the risk occurring			High	Manage carefully to proceed																																										
Minor	Reversible short-term effect(s) due to having a Wellbeing Dog on Subiaco Primary School premises	Unlikely	10-40% chance of the risk occurring			Medium	Manage to proceed																																										
Negligible	Minimal effect(s) due to having a Wellbeing Dog on Subiaco Primary School premises	Rare	<10% chance of the risk occurring or			Low	Proceed and monitor																																										

C = CONSEQUENCES (from previous page and does not change with controls)

L = LIKELIHOOD (from previous page, should reduce with controls)

HAZARD	CREDIBLE RISK	INHERENT RISK (with no controls in place)			CONTROLS: Effective, tangible, measurable	RESIDUAL RISK (with controls in place)			ADDITIONAL CONTROLS TO BE IMPLEMENTED
		C	L	IR		C	L	RR	
Stella harms a student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stella bites a student</li> <li>Stella jumps on a student, necessitating the need to attend a doctor's clinic for treatment</li> </ul>	Major	Unlikely	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Principal is aware of Stella's stress signals and will immediately remove her from a situation when she displays the following signs:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yawning</li> <li>Shaking</li> <li>Panting</li> <li>Continual licking of paws</li> </ul> </li> <li>Students will only be able to be with Stella when supervised by the School Principal or by a teacher well known to Stella</li> <li>Stella's toenails will be regularly trimmed</li> </ul>	Moderate	Rare	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All students and staff who come into contact with Stella are educated and reminded how to behave around animals respectfully.</li> <li>The School Principal continues to handle and train Stella when off school grounds, so that she remains well behaved and her movements and patterns are very familiar</li> </ul>
Transmission of infection or disease from animal to human (zoonotic disease)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Infection is transmitted from Stella to a student or staff member</li> </ul>	Moderate	Unlikely	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure proper personal hygiene by washing hands after handling Stella</li> <li>Do not eat or drink near Stella</li> <li>Ensure Stella does not come to school if she is unwell</li> <li>Ensure Stella does not come to school if she has an open wound</li> <li>Ensure Stella doesn't lick students</li> <li>Stella has an annual (minimum) veterinary check</li> <li>Stella is up to date with required immunisations</li> <li>Stella takes medication regularly for zoonotic diseases, which a veterinary surgeon recommends</li> <li>Stella's faeces will be immediately removed and disposed of by the School Principal, and her hands will be washed</li> </ul>	Moderate	Rare	Low	

Students are unable to hold, be near or be in the proximity of Stella	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are allergic to dogs</li> <li>• Students are frightened of dogs</li> <li>• Religious/cultural reasons</li> </ul>	Moderate	Unlikely	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a withdrawal of consent to parents and guardians of students unable to work with Stella (contact with Stella is always optional)</li> <li>• Send out a note on Compass asking for consent to work with Stella</li> <li>• Stella is a breed of dog (Bordoodle; Border Collie x Poodle) that reduces the likelihood of allergic reactions</li> <li>• Stella is a breed of dog that is calm</li> <li>• Stella has been well trained by her owner</li> <li>• Communicate well to the students and parents/ guardians the intention of having a Wellbeing Dog at Subiaco Primary School</li> </ul>	Moderate	Rare	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer to provide published studies on the benefits and effects of having a Wellbeing Dog in educational settings when communicating with parents/ guardians</li> </ul>
Stella is harmed while at Subiaco Primary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are rough with Stella and hurt her</li> <li>• Students stress Stella by continuing to follow and chase her</li> <li>• Stella ingests food left on the ground by students</li> </ul>	Moderate	Unlikely	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Principal is aware of Stella's stress signals and will immediately remove her from a situation when she displays the following signs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yawning</li> <li>- Shaking</li> <li>- Panting</li> <li>- Continual licking of paws</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Students will only be able to be with Stella when supervised by the School Principal or by a teacher well known to Stella</li> <li>• Stella is not taken near eating areas while students are eating to ensure she doesn't eat food left on the floor or ground. All uneaten food is to be left in students' lunchboxes</li> </ul>	Moderate	Rare	Low	
Stella escapes from the school grounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stella leaves the premises, becomes lost or runs onto the road</li> </ul>	Significant	Rare	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stella will be on her lead during the hours between 8.30 am and 3.30 pm</li> <li>• Stella is supervised and on a lead with the Principal or a qualified staff member while on school grounds</li> <li>• Need to ensure all doors from the executive team's offices are closed into the main office and lower hall.</li> </ul>	Significant	Rare	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The high residual risk highlights the importance of Stella remaining on her lead; she is supervised, and all doors from the executive team's offices are closed when Stella is on site.</li> </ul>

**Overall assessment:** On balance, residual risks pertaining to the students' welfare are low, indicating that having Stella as a Wellbeing Dog at Subiaco Primary School is a low-risk activity for students. The most significant risk is Stella escaping the school grounds, demonstrating that it is imperative to always have her on a lead and under control when on the school premises.

#### **ENDORSEMENT**

**We, the undersigned, hereby certify that this document was ratified at the Subiaco Primary School Board Meeting on: 12 August 2025**

**School Board Chair**



**Name: Hannah McKelvie**

**Principal**



**Name: Heather McNeil**

Review – August 2028



