DOGS IN CLASSROOMS

Dogs are not considered suitable as classroom pets. However, schools may allow dogs in classrooms as assistance animals to support students with disability or for short-term educational activities for students.

Assistance dogs

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cwlth), assistance dogs are animals trained to:
- assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability
- meet standards of hygiene and behaviour appropriate for an animal in a public place.
Under the legislation it would be considered discrimination to prevent an assistance dog that alleviates a person’s disability from attending school with the person unless the dog’s attendance would constitute an unjustifiable hardship.

Classroom visits

Whilst dogs are not considered suitable to keep as classroom pets, dogs under supervision (other than assistance dogs) may visit classrooms for the duration of a lesson.
When dogs visit a classroom, it is inappropriate to subject them to any procedures other than observation, discussion of behaviour and limited, well-supervised handling.
A source of fresh drinking water should be provided and dogs must be protected from stress such as loud noise and the approach of children who are not closely supervised by their teacher.
If the dog shows any signs of stress, it should be removed immediately from the environment.
Some dogs may visit schools as part of a demonstration team (e.g. an AVA PetPEP school visit) and will not be required to interact with the children. These dogs should have completed an approved training course with the handler who accompanies them. A second person (not the teacher) should also accompany them to conduct the lesson so the handler can concentrate on managing the dog.

Temperament

All dogs that are brought into schools for close contact with children should have passed an approved temperament and handling test with the handler who accompanies them.

Dangerous dogs

Any dog that has been declared menacing, dangerous or restricted under section 89 of the Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008 (Qld) must not be allowed on school grounds. Local councils keep this information.

Risk assessment and reduction

To reduce the risk of injury and transmission of diseases from dogs to humans, teachers should ensure that students practice appropriate handling and good hygiene, including:
- interacting with the dog one at a time – those waiting standing well clear
- standing still and speaking quietly until approached by the dog
- using the handling techniques explained and demonstrated by the handler
- washing hands and contact areas thoroughly with soap and water after handling the dog and before eating
- avoiding putting their hands near their faces while carrying out these activities
- not allowing the dog to lick their faces.

Useful links

- Animal contact guidelines – reducing the risk to human health 2014
- RSPCA World of Animal Welfare
- Animal Welfare League Queensland
- Delta Society
- Australian Veterinary Association (PetPEP)
- Local council