

RATIONALE:

Here at McLaren Vale Primary School, we have identified an increase in the percentage of students who are exhibiting signs of anxiety and other social and emotional concerns. A wellbeing dog will become another strategy that we can draw upon in order to reduce the level of anxiety in our students. The benefits of wellbeing dogs in schools are endless. They can reduce stress, anxiety, depression, ease loneliness, encourage exercise and playfulness, develop a sense of belonging, and even improve your cardiovascular health. Caring for a dog can help children grow up more secure and active while providing valuable companionship. We know pets are kind, nonjudgmental and a great companion to share and care with. Some of the roles of a wellbeing dog can include: going for a walk with identified children to reduce their anxiety; joining classroom sessions to listening to children's speeches or reading; and supporting students in any emotional situation.

HISTORY:

In 2019 the Governing Council Committee began exploring the idea of getting a wellbeing dog. This came about as it became evident that there was a need and want for one in the school through the experiences that the children, families and staff had with two staff members dogs that engaged in school activities. Unfortunately for both of these dogs, compliant regulations and policies were not followed to ensure the safety of students, staff, families and the dogs and their owners. The Governing Council Committee and Leadership team began exploring options for a school wellbeing dog, but found the following issues / blockers: there were organisations that allowed you to 'hire' a dog but they were limited in terms of how often they would come, were inflexible with who could use them, costly, difficult to book in or access, needed to be accompanied by their owner/trainer which would make it difficult to use the dog in the way that we wanted to i.e. developing relationships with all students, being brought in to support as needed for individual children and classes, being inconsistent etc.

The Leadership team continued exploring how we could get our school a wellbeing dog through: finding out how other schools have been using wellbeing dogs and what the pros and cons are; exploring Department for Education policies and processes; and researching suitable wellbeing dog breeds. The outcome of our research determined the following was needed for our school to have a wellbeing dog:

- *The dog needed to be owned by a staff member to provide a consistent, embedded approach.*
- *A team of staff were needed to be wellbeing dog handlers to be able to support the dog, provide coverage across the school and manage the workload.*
- *The dog would need to have a strict timetable with adequate time for rest and work.*
- *The dog needs to have the appropriate temperament for training and working with children, as well as be hypoallergenic to support children and staff with allergies.*
- *One of the most suitable breeds for a wellbeing dog was found to be a Labradoodle because they are intuitive, intelligent, gentle, highly trainable, love for people and hypoallergenic.*

With the above in mind, the Wellbeing teacher (permanent staff member) started 'working on' introducing a dog into the family household that could potentially be a MVPS wellbeing dog (there are three cats in the household). Once decided as a family, he started exploring breeders and chose a female Labradoodle dog as generally their nature is meant to be calmer than males which would be more suitable for a wellbeing dog at school (and a three cat home).

The proposal was taken to the Governing Council Committee in 2022, and accepted. **The following dog was chosen, a female Labradoodle named Juno D.O.B 24-05-22 (L to R: Juno as a puppy, her parents Mack and Molly, Juno recently).**



Department for Education policy around conditions for dogs and animal assisted interventions on DfE sites below. Please note that in our circumstance Juno would be considered as a Wellbeing animal / Facility animal (final row in table.)

Definitions and conditions for dogs and animal assisted interventions

Group	Type	Definition	Example of service, intervention or interaction	Conditions
Service Animal	Assistance dog ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A dog trained to provide assistance to a person with a disability The handler of an assistance dog must be over 18 years of age and must be present at all times. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guide dog Hearing dog PTSD dog 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certified handler must be with dog at all times.
	Animal Assisted Therapy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivered by a professional for an individual Planned and structured intervention Progress is measured and professionally documented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> psychologist with certified therapy animal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certified handler is with dog at all times on site for the planned intervention only
Animal assisted interventions (AAI) ²	Animal Assisted Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivered by an educational professional or allied health professional Academic or social and emotional goals Measured by academic or social and emotional progress Not professionally documented for an individual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dog assisted reading program Delivered by a certified volunteer with set hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certified handler is with dog at all times only on site for the planned education activity
	Animal Assisted Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal interaction with a trained handler and certified canine team Motivational, educational or recreational AAA teams may work more formally with a professional educator or allied health service on specific goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visiting companion animals Crisis response animals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certified handler is with dog at all times only on site for the planned activity
	Wellbeing animal/ Facility animal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dog is formally trained and of appropriate age (over 18 months; DfE recommendation) A handler or approved member of staff is with the dog at all times, this person is responsible for all interactions with students and staff Works to a clear timetable with a dedicated space for rest and relaxation without interruption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library dog Wellbeing dog 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approved handler is with the dog at all times Time on site is rostered appropriately and is not more than 3 hours per school day A dedicated rest space and outdoor toileting space is provided away from students and staff

¹ The Dog and Cat Management Act 1995

² IAHAIO (2018). The IAHAIO definitions for animal assisted intervention and guidelines for wellness of animals involved in AAI. Retrieved from https://iahaio.org/wp/wpcontent/uploads/2018/04/iahaio_wp_updated-2018-final.pdf

DfE School or preschool considerations

The following considerations should be undertaken before deciding to introduce a service animal or animal assisted intervention:

Needs analysis

The school or preschool must: demonstrate the need for a service dog or animal assisted intervention; trial other programs or initiatives to meet student needs; consider the following issues:-allergies, religious concerns, other assistance animals or programs already permitted on the school or preschool.

Risk analysis

A risk assessment has been done to consider harm to the students, dog, staff, broader community and developmental appropriateness of students. A process is identified for students and families that are fearful of dogs or who have cultural or religious reasons for not wanting to engage with a dog. **Community consultation**

The school or preschool can demonstrate proof of community support and commitment of leadership, staff, Principal’s Advisory Committee (PAC), Governing Council, students and families

Initial trial program

Any service dog or animal assisted intervention program should begin with a trial. Any incidents should be recorded through the Incident and Response Management System (IRMS) and the trial should stop immediately. **Assistance or therapy dogs**

Training requirements

The dog has appropriate socialisation, training and certification to ensure they are steady and confident in any situation. Dogs under the age of 18 months do not have the maturity or socialisation to be working at a preschool or school

Staff training and responsibilities

The school or preschool must identify what staff will take responsibility for the dog. Staff members handling the dog must complete a basic dog handling course from a trainer accredited with the SA Dog and Cat Management Board Dog training. Staff skills must be maintained each year. The staff member or dog handler is responsible for ‘duty of care’ responsibilities to children. Staff or carers will coordinate day-to-day care of the dog.

Dog welfare

The school or preschool must provide a safe environment for the dog. This includes: time out space, duty roster, toilet time and place, waste disposal process and supervision roster. Toileting, waste disposal and supervision must be undertaken by trained staff not students. An emergency care plan is developed for the dog including when the handler or the dog are unwell.

The registered owner is willing to provide and pay for quarterly reports from a veterinarian about the dog’s behaviour, welfare, annual vaccinations (including regular flea treatment, worming and heartworm control) and other related activities. This includes expenses arising from incidents that occur at the school or preschool.

WHAT THE DFE POLICY MEANS FOR JUNO AT MCLAREN VALE PRIMARY SCHOOL:

- Juno cannot be an official wellbeing dog until she is at least 18 months old (November 2023), she cannot work at full capacity until 18 months of age and can only spend limited time on site in a training stage leading up to this.
- Juno needs to be formally trained to ensure all members of the school and community are safe, and the dog is safe.
- A team of staff will train as official dog handlers allowing Juno to be utilised across the entire school.
- An official handler will be with Juno at all times, responsible for ensuring safe interactions with students and staff.
- Juno has a clear timetable and is not rostered on for more than 3 hours in the school day.
- Juno has a dedicated rest space (or spaces as appropriate) and an outdoor toileting space away from students and staff for rest and relaxation without disruption.
- Juno's owner is responsible for all costs associated with the dog (food, regular vet checks). (The school is responsible for costs for training the staff and Juno for her role at school.)

ROLE OF OWNER :

- Provide a safe, calm, happy environment for Juno with shelter, food, water, (along with lots of love).
- Juno will be vet checked regularly, vaccinated, consistently treated for fleas and worms, washed and groomed regularly, trained and cared for by the carer and family. The owner will keep a full vaccination record.
- If Juno is unwell or injured, it is the responsibility of the owner to visit a vet at their discretion to ensure the dog is cared for appropriately.
- Ensure Juno is registered with their Local council as per the Council bylaws in regard to the ownership of dogs.
- The handler will be responsible for the wellbeing and safety of the children, as well as the Wellbeing Dog whilst at school.

WHERE WILL JUNO BE DURING THE DAY?

Juno will be at school during school hours under the care of its owner or handler/s. Juno will visit classrooms or spaces around the school as needed during the day. Juno will also spend time in the office area for rests.

WHO WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR JUNO DURING THE DAY?

- Juno will be at school during school hours and always under the care of its owners (Leanne/Simon) or designated handlers (Kelly, Lee, Marie). Their responsibilities go from taking Juno out to the toilet, to training her.
- The owners and handlers are guided by an accredited dog trainer (Nicola Ridley) to ensure safe, correct processes are in place. Nicola works with the handlers to train Juno advising on: training/behaviour, processes to put in place in the school and safety.

WHAT WILL JUNO'S TRAINING LOOK LIKE BEFORE SHE IS READY TO BE ASSESSED?

The Leadership team at MVPS recognises that 'on the job' training may take 1 – 2 years before Juno can be accredited. For accreditation to be approved, Juno will attend and work at the school during school hours. To ensure there is an accountability during this process it is acknowledged that Juno (a non-accredited Wellbeing Dog is not expected to perform to the level of an accredited dog) and that all students, staff and families will be informed that Juno is in training. During this time the following will be the focus for training:

- Getting Juno used to being at the school.
- Foundation training – walking on lead, focusing on handler, basic obedience.
- Getting Juno used to being around so many people and how to act appropriately around them.
- Desensitising Juno to the noises and movement within the school.
- Introducing Juno and getting her comfortable in all areas she will be able to go into in the future.
- Training Juno to work with students of varying age groups.
- Introducing more specialised training for Juno's role at the school.
- Completing an assistance dog test before officially commencing work at the school.
- How we would like to involve staff and students: assisting in the desensitising process for people; have Juno visit the classroom later in her training to familiarise herself with new environments; have input into the development
- Role modelling – we carry out rules to role model to students how to behave around Juno.

INVOLVEMENT OF STAFF AND STUDENTS:

Involvement of the staff and students is vital for Juno to learn how to behave in and around the classrooms. At times, Juno will become part of real-life learning for the children. If a child is experiencing any difficult times, they will be a priority to come and see Juno at school, as we work towards this we will have strict, safety processes in place.

RULES AROUND JUNO:

- Please ignore Juno when you see her about the school or community. She is learning to only go to people when invited. There are people who are scared of dogs, so this is vital.
- You are very welcome to say hello to Juno, but please ask whoever is handling her or whose office she is in if you can do so. It is also an important part of her training so if you see her around the school or in an office, initially ignore her and ask 'Can I say hello to Juno?' It may not always be an appropriate time so please don't be offended if the handler says no. If it is fine to then go down to her level and *gently stroke behind the collar* – this will be the information given to the students so we all need to be doing the same.
- Juno will be wearing a jacket around the school or community; this will be a reminder to others that she is a working dog and needs to be treated as such.
- When Juno requires training within a classroom, this will be organised beforehand with the teacher. Initially we would just require a quiet corner and everyone to ignore her and the handler. As her training progresses, we will liaise with teachers beforehand as to classroom setup and how the students would need to behave around Juno.

SAFETY OF CHILDREN:

- Every child should be taught how to behave around dogs in general, including the family's own dog, to the neighbour's dog as well as the dog running around the park. They provide us with clues on their disposition or mood and understanding these clues will help children avoid any unnecessary tricky situations. All of the students from Reception to Year Six will be explicitly taught about safety around dogs prior to being introduced to Juno.
- Within the classroom setting, the Wellbeing Dog aims to comfort students that are having social or emotional difficulties. Prior to entering the classroom, the owner/handler must check to see if any child is afraid or allergic to the dog. The handler/owner will request permission from the teacher whether to enter the classroom or not and will check how long the Wellbeing Dog can stay for.
- The Wellbeing Dog will not be left alone with any student at any time and the Wellbeing Dog will be removed if it becomes distressed.
- The Wellbeing Dog must wear a vest and be on lead at all times.

HYGIENE:

- Hygiene is essential for all participants. Children will be taught the correct hygiene around hand washing after touching Juno. Juno is not to lick faces or lips of any student. Where possible the handler/owner will toilet Juno in a designated area at the school in a safe and clean manner whilst cleaning up after Juno. Should Juno toilet in an undesignated area the area will be disinfected as required.

WHAT IF MY CHILD IS SCARED OR HAS AN ALLERGY TO DOGS?

The students' safety is our highest priority. Prior to entering the classroom, the handler must check to see if any child is afraid or allergic to Juno. The handler will request permission from the teacher whether to enter the classroom or not and will check how long Juno can stay for. The handler will stay for the classroom visit if requested by the teacher. Juno will not be left alone with any student at any time and all of the students from Reception to Year Six will be explicitly taught about safety around dogs prior to being introduced to Juno.

ARE DOGS NOW ALLOWED IN THE SCHOOL?

No dogs are still not allowed on the school grounds. Juno, the wellbeing dog is part of a training program which take 1-2 years to be accredited.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Risk Group	RISK	Risk Rating	Minimisation Strategies	Risk outcome
Student and adult safety	Dog bite	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students supervised at all times by Instructor/handler when with Juno. Juno kept on lead under the supervision of Instructor/handler while walking through school. All students to ask if they can approach and stroke Juno before doing so. Juno not officially used within program until assessed. Juno taught to take treats 'gently' – students taught the correct, safe way of giving treats. If playing with a ball, Instructor/handler to pick up ball - not student, student allowed to throw it. Instructor/handler to model how to behave around Juno. Juno to be treated with respect. Students given instructions to keep themselves safe around Juno. 	M
	Knocked over by loose dog	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interaction with Juno when loose is limited to students only on program, in specific enclosed dog area. Juno taught to come when called and sit on arrival. If Juno having a loose 'relaxed' run within dog area (for a 'breather') students to sit on bench or stand by shed/fence or handler. 	L
	Knocked, pulled over, jumped on, scratched by dog on lead	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Juno trained to stand, sit or lay down around students. Juno is restricted from jumping up. Juno to wear harness. Juno walked by Instructor/handler in high food area when working with students. 	L
Welfare of dog		H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Juno to have access to fresh water and to work one session and then have a break. Juno to not work actively outside in temperatures over 32° C. (can sit with students in the shade). Instructor/handler to monitor Juno for signs of fatigue. All students to ask if they can approach and pat Juno before doing so, to not overwhelm her. Students to be monitored around Juno particularly when working in a group, in a class or if a group of students approach Juno around the school. Instructor/handler to manage number of students around Juno at any one time – monitoring her body language to ensure she is comfortable at all times. Juno is not put in contexts/situations that overwhelm her i.e. whole school events etc. ☐ Instructor/handler to constantly monitor Juno's body language to ensure she is comfortable at all times in all environments. 	M
Hygiene	Zoonoses Transfer of bacteria and parasites	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Juno to be vaccinated. Juno to be up to date with flea, heartworm and intestinal worm control. Students to wash hands at the end of each session. Dog faeces to be picked up only by Instructors/handler and disposed of appropriately. 	L
Emotional wellbeing of students	Fear of dogs	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students do not have to engage with or be near Juno at all, Ensure students know exactly what to expect of any session with Juno. Parents can choose to not give permission for children to work with Juno. Allow students to interact with Juno in a quiet, calm manner. Allow the student to observe Juno from a distance and watch her interact with other students. Allow student to sit or stand nearer Juno, moving towards sitting with Juno – ensure this progression is at the students own pace. Show students how to ask Juno to sit and lie down, encourage them to try so they can feel a sense of control around Juno. Check with all students that they are comfortable carrying out each exercise before doing so. Instructor/handler to model how to behave around Juno. 	L
Destruction of school property/materials		L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dog handlers ensure Juno is in lead and fully supervised. 	L
Allergic to dog		L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Juno is hypoallergenic and has so far not caused any allergic reactions to humans around her (including extremely allergic humans at her home.) 	L