

<b>Section:</b>	<b>School Administration</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Animals in Schools</b>

## Purpose

To provide procedures for the implementation of the Animals in Schools Policy, ensuring the safety and well-being of students, staff, and animals, and compliance with Canadian and British Columbia legislation.

## Procedures

### 1. Approval Process for Animals in Schools

#### a. Guide, Hearing, and Service Dogs:

- i. Must be certified under the *Guide Dog and Service Dog Act* (British Columbia).
- ii. Certification must be presented to and documented by the school administration.

#### b. Medical Therapy Dogs:

- i. Approval must be obtained from the Student Services Department for a medical therapy dog to be used to support a student. Medical documentation may be required to support the request for a medical therapy dog. A therapeutic goal is required when a medical therapy dog is approved.
- ii. In extenuating and infrequent circumstance, the use of a medical therapy dog for non-specific student support will be considered. A plan for use must be developed in discussion with district and school staff and submitted to the Superintendent of Schools or designate for approval.
- iii. The principal must inform the school community when medical therapy dogs will be expected at school and the areas of the building it will be visiting.
- iv. The principal must ensure a risk assessment is completed.
- v. If the medical therapy dog handler is not a school district employee, the principal must ensure the handler has provided a criminal record check in accordance with school district procedures.
- vi. Medical therapy dogs must have up-to-date vaccinations and a current obedience training certificate from an acceptable organization that provides obedience training and certifies the dog (such as Therapy Dogs Canada). Certification must be presented and documented by the school administration.

#### c. Other Educational Animals:

- i. The principal must approve all animals brought into the school.
- ii. The principal must ensure a risk assessment is completed.
- iii. Approval is based on the educational or culturally valuable experience provided to students.
- iv. The principal must inform the school community when other educational animals will be expected at school and the areas of the building it will be visiting.

## **2. Pre-Introduction Requirements for Animals in Classrooms for Educational Purposes**

- a. Teachers must ensure:
  - i. A risk assessment related to the animal in the school is completed and submitted to the Principal.
  - ii. Students and school personnel are not allergic to the animal.
  - iii. The animals are free from disease or parasites.
  - iv. All animals have up-to-date shots and obedience training.
  - v. Students are instructed in the proper care and handling of the animal.
  - vi. Parents are informed, and teachers mitigate any parental concerns.
- b. Teachers are responsible for:
  - i. Ensuring the enclosure and surrounding area are kept in a sanitary condition.
  - ii. Providing animal care on weekends and holidays.
  - iii. Animals should be housed in suitable, sanitary self-contained enclosures appropriate to their size, as per SPCA guidelines.
  - iv. Animals shall not be allowed to roam freely in the school.

## **3. Hygiene and Safety**

- a. If hygiene becomes a concern, the principal may terminate approval for the animal's presence.
- b. Stray animals on school property will be reported to the Principal, who will report to the local animal control centre.
- c. No animals are allowed on school grounds during school hours (8am-5pm), except for;
  - i. Guide, Hearing, or Service Dogs as necessary when supporting a person with a disability.
  - ii. Medical therapy dogs and other educational animals, when approved in accordance with this procedure.
- d. Signs around school sites should clearly state the policy and hours.

## **4. Documentation and Compliance**

- a. Administration is responsible for documenting the certification and authorized use of guide dogs and service dogs in schools.
- b. Procedures must be in place for the approval of medical therapy dogs in schools.
- c. Compliance with school district bylaws and any other legislation or regulation that governs animals in schools must be ensured.

## **5. Communication and Awareness**

- a. Staff will implement a campaign to raise awareness of the policy.
- b. Regular communication with the community about the policy and its implementation is essential.
- c. Consider public consultation to address issues related to dogs on school fields.

## **6. Emergency and Incident Management**

- a. In case of an incident involving an animal, such as a bite, the school must follow appropriate procedures to ensure the safety of all students and staff.
- b. Legal responsibilities and liabilities must be considered and addressed.

**Date Approved:** April 15, 2025

**Date Updated:** June 10, 2025

**Legal Reference:** *British Columbia, Guide Dog and Service Dog Act*

**Cross Reference:** Administration: Animals in Schools Policy

**Forms and Resources:** <https://assistancedogsinternational.org/main/looking-for-an-assistance-dog/>  
<https://therapydogscanada.com/>