



Fun Reading 🐾 Reading for Life

Our mission is to make reading fun for children,  
so they become confident, lifelong readers.  
No child should be left behind in literacy.

“Education is not the filling of a bucket  
but the lighting of a fire”

William Butler Yeats

# School Information Pack



# School Information

## *A fun, unique and exciting reading program in your school*

### **Benefits to your school and students:-**

- Year 2 students receive one on one time, approx. 20 mins, with an accredited Dog Team, the dog handler and the dog;
- A reading support program that gets results – see web site for more details;
- Minimal class disruption – the dog does not go into the classroom unless invited by the classroom teacher. All reading sessions are outside of the classroom in a quiet space nearby;
- A new and exciting spin on reading for your students.

### **How the Program fits into your school:-**

- Reading sessions take place in a quiet area of the school grounds, such as the library or the verandah outside the classroom.
- A reading session is approximately 20 minutes long, where each child is one-on-one with the dog team.
- The Dog Team will visit on the same day at the same time each week, seeing the same 4 or 5 Target Students.
- Books are chosen to suit the child's reading level. Story Dogs does supply books and books can also be from the classroom or library.
- During the session the handler often speaks through the dog, such as; "Simba doesn't quite understand what is happening on this page could you help him out?" The child becomes the teacher; confidence soars!

**Story Dogs advocates for the students to be guided in how to interact with our dogs and reminds all that it is, 'Pats not Hugs' that our dogs want.**



Email: [info@storydogs.org.au](mailto:info@storydogs.org.au)



Address: PO Box 1076 Bonalbo NSW 2469



[www.storydogs.org.au](http://www.storydogs.org.au)



ABN: 32 603 311 388





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## Steps required to start the program in your school:-

1. The Principal must sign the attached Program Agreement to allow the program to begin.
2. Classroom teachers choose a total of 4 or 5 Target Students to be part of the program. These students are usually from Year 2 or higher classes and are the students who will benefit the most from a one-on-one reading program.
3. A school orientation meeting will be organised. This meeting will be between the School Contact, the Story Dogs Coordinator and the Dog Team (volunteer and their dog). This meeting will decide where the reading sessions will take place, what day and time of day suits all parties involved and how many students will be able to participate. It will also include a tour of the school to familiarise the Dog Team with the reading space and a chance to meet the Classroom Teachers at their classrooms.
4. Parent consent forms (see attached) must be sent and received for all students involved.
5. The Classroom teacher is to fill out the Target Student Information Form (see attached) for each student chosen for the program. This is given to the volunteer so they have an understanding as to why a particular student was chosen.
6. Mark on the school calendar, **Story Dogs Day – last Friday in Book Week in August.** This is a day that the school can hold a free dress day, or other fundraiser where all the funds are donated to Story Dogs.

If Story Dogs has a local Coordinator in your region but no suitable volunteer Dog Teams for your school, the Coordinator may assist your school by providing an ad for your School Newsletter seeking suitable dogs and their owner. Potential new volunteers can contact the Story Dogs Coordinator to commence the accreditation and training process.



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## School Financial Contributions Policy

Story Dogs partners with your school to provide a reading support service for your students. To ensure the financial sustainability of the program we request that participating schools provide an annual financial contribution to Story Dogs.

### Your school agrees to:

**Holding a Story Dogs fundraising event\* each year with proceeds being paid to Story Dogs**

**OR**

### **Donating\* to Story Dogs**

There is no set amount that your school must raise with your event or donation, however we know that it costs \$550 to put a Dog Team into a school each year. It will depend on the size of your school and your school community.

You may decide to seek the help of your P&C Committee or the Student Representative Council to organise an event.

Story Dogs recommends the last Friday of Book Week in August each year as a good day to undertake a Story Dogs fundraising event. If this date does not suit, you can of course hold your fundraising event on another date. It is important to notify your Story Dogs Coordinator and /or Dog Team of your event date, as we look forward to supporting your school community in your efforts to raise funds to ensure that our Dog Teams can continue to make reading fun for your students.

If you prefer to donate instead of holding a fundraising event, you can do so at any time during the year.

### **Payment options:**

1. Request an invoice for either the amount of the donation or the amount of the funds raised.
2. Volunteers cannot accept cash donations. Please pay your financial contribution directly into our secure online payment portal <https://www.storydogs.org.au/donate>
3. Direct debit into our bank account:
  - Bank Name: Westpac
  - Account Name: Story Dogs Ltd
  - BSB: 032 584      Account Number: 286132
  - Reference: please put the invoice number OR school name



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## Teachers, or any school staff, using their own dog

**Please remember that a Story Dog is not a school dog**, in that a Story Dog is not specially trained for therapy work and cannot stay at school all day every day. The welfare of the dog is very important to us and as such we ask that the dog be at the school for a maximum of two hours each week for the reading sessions. This is important if any school staff wants to bring their dog into the school as a Story Dog. They will need to be able to take the dog home so the dog is not at school all day.

Additionally, any teaching or support staff using their own dogs need to have allocated non-teaching /support time to run the Story Dogs reading sessions with the selected Target Students.

### Selection of Students:

Story Dogs suggests that students participating in weekly reading session are not selected from a teacher's or supporting staff's own class.

### Insurance:

Story Dogs legal liability covers only for Story Dogs sessions and school's legal liability will be for anything outside of this.

### Story Dogs Vest:

If the dog is at school for any other purpose than Story Dogs reading sessions or recognition events please do not have it wear the Story Dogs vest. This ensures there is no confusion for the school community and students.

### Other Dog Programs in your School:

Story Dogs doesn't mind if your school has other dog related programs happening at the same. We would appreciate it if there is minimal overlap of times when the dogs are at your school. This then gives each dog its own space and full attention of your students, and school community.

We thank you for your help in these matters, keeping the welfare of the dog at the heart of all activities.



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# School Information

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## Choosing the Target Students for the program

Story Dogs relies on the classroom teacher and or the Learning Support person for the school to choose the children who will benefit most from our program. From experience we have a few tips on which children benefit most and also which children our volunteers are trained and skilled to help the most.

Tips on who to choose:-

**Program aimed at Year 2:** Story Dogs aims to catch the students in Year 2 who are not picking up reading as quickly or as successfully as their peers.

**Students in Year 3 and 4:** We realise how crucial it is that students don't progress with poor reading skills, and we are happy to have these children in the program.

**Kindergarten:** We do not take students in Prep and Kindy.  
This is an age where teacher guidance is critical and not a task for our volunteers.

**No other help:** Students who benefit most from the program are children who do not get reading practice at home or help from other in-school reading support programs.

**Students without significant Special Needs:** Since our volunteers are not trained in Special Needs we recommend choosing students who do not have significant learning difficulties.

## How long should a student continue in the Story Dogs program?

We recommend the full school year, 4 terms.

We know that the students who need the program the most are often the ones who have a high absenteeism rate and therefore may only receive a fraction of their allocated reading sessions.

## Small schools:

If student numbers are very small we can negotiate who is chosen.



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# School Information

## How we manage the risks

Story Dogs is very aware of the potential risks to children who participate in our program. As such we have gone to extensive lengths to minimise these risks. In the event that an injury does happen we have current Public Liability Insurance to \$20 million dollars. The following is a summary of the risk minimisation strategies we have embedded into our recruiting, training and placement procedures for our volunteer dog teams:

- No restricted dog breeds are used
- A person must have owned or be closely associated with the dog for at least 6 months
- The dog must be older than 12 months
- Dog teams must pass a 10 point Dog Team Accreditation Test
- We use only experienced dog trainers, who are external to Story Dogs, to accredit the Dog Teams
- Multiple dog accreditors assess dogs if necessary
- Volunteers are trained to look for the signs of their dog becoming stressed, a possible precursor for a dog bite
- It is Story Dogs Policy that volunteers are not in the playground during break times. Volunteers are directed to enter and exit the school in times when children are in class and not in the playground where the dog can become stressed due to large amounts of noise and attention.
- Volunteers never leave their dog unattended at school
- The dog is on a lead at all times when at school
- Volunteers use a Weekly Dog Interaction Review Sheet. This is a monitoring tool to determine whether the dog is getting stressed at school.
- Volunteers are trained in the Story Dogs Emergency Procedure if any incident happens at school.
- Parental consent is required before a child can participate in the program. It is assumed that a child who is strongly afraid of dogs or who has behaviours which may be detrimental to dogs is not given permission.
- Our volunteers are reminded and encouraged to advocate for their dog at all times, thus 'Pats not Hugs' is what we expect from students and staff.



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# School Expression of Interest Form

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If your school has NOT been contacted by Story Dogs but you would like the program to start in your school please fill out this form and send back to us.

This will not guarantee a Dog Team will be available for your school however it will start the process. A Story Dogs Coordinator closest to you will be in contact.

Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

School Name \_\_\_\_\_

School Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Post Code \_\_\_\_\_

School Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

School Email \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person Name \_\_\_\_\_

Role of Contact Person \_\_\_\_\_

Best way of contacting you – please circle    phone / text / email

Best time to contact you \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Our school is prepared to hold a fundraising event each year the Story Dogs program is running in our school OR make a donation:

☐ Yes

Other comments you would like to add:

\_\_\_\_\_



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# Parent / Care Giver Consent Form

(this is a two page form)

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Dear Parent/Carer,

Story Dogs is a fun and unique reading support program that improves children's reading and communication skills by children reading to an accredited companion dog and its handler.

The Story Dog program is primarily designed for students who have reading challenges, however students may be chosen by the Classroom Teacher to participate in the program as a reward or as an alternative reading activity. Your child may or may not be chosen for the program however completion of this form will allow them to participate if chosen.

Students will spend approximately 20 minutes with the Story Dog Team once per week reading books which are appropriate to their reading level. During the session, the dog will be on its lead at all times and the volunteer will be with the dog and student at all times.

Although the dog is immaculately groomed, fully wormed with flea protection, children with dog allergies are recommended not to be involved with the program.

## **Additional Information about the Story Dogs program**

- The program has been running in Australia since 2009
- Students are chosen by the classroom teacher and not by Story Dogs
- The Dog Team (Volunteer and dog) have been accredited by Story Dogs
- The program is free to all students.

## **Child Protection Information**

### Our Commitment

Story Dogs is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. Everyone involved with Story Dogs is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse.

### Context

Story Dogs works closely with schools, we are only on schools grounds by the permission of the school Principal. As such the children are in the care of the school at all times. Story Dogs acknowledges that it has a strong duty of care to the children when they are engaging with Story Dogs staff or volunteers. Story Dogs volunteers see children on a one on one basis each week for approximately 20 minutes per child. It is expected a bond or relationship will form between the child, volunteer and dog. However, this relationship should always be positive and fun and never become personal.



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# Parent / Care Giver Consent Form

(this is a two page form)



## Risk Minimisation

- All Story Dogs volunteers have a current Working With Children/Vulnerable People Check
- 'Pats not Hugs' is what we expect from students and staff, thus reducing the stress on our dogs. A happy dog is a safe dog.
- The location of the reading sessions within the school are chosen so as to ensure volunteers are not alone and out of sight with your child. Reading sessions are to be in sight of school staff at all times.
- Story Dogs volunteers have only the child's first name and a small amount of information on why the child was chosen so they can best help your child to learn to read. No other information on the children we see is provided. All permission forms and other information are held by the school.

We welcome feedback and contact with parents and caregivers to continue to improve our program. Please contact us on [info@storydogs.org.au](mailto:info@storydogs.org.au) or Janine on 0411 536 355 or visit [www.storydogs.org.au](http://www.storydogs.org.au)

## Continuous Improvement

You or your child may be asked to participate in an anonymous, standardised survey or interview to determine the effectiveness of the Story Dogs program and to assist us with improving our service delivery.

**We look forward to supporting your child to make reading fun. Woof Woof!**

## Story Dogs Permission Slip

I (print your name)..... do give permission for my child

(their name).....of class.....

to be part of the Story Dog program.

I give permission for photographs to be taken of my child participating in the program and I am aware that these photographs may be used for promotional purposes including appearing on the internet, on the Story Dogs web site ([www.storydogs.org.au](http://www.storydogs.org.au)) and social media pages.

☐ Yes ☐ No



☐ My child **does** have known allergies that that will be triggered by contact with a dog.




☐ My child has had a poor or frightening experience with a dog.

**Signature of Parent/Carer**.....

School to keep this slip on file

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# Target Student Information Sheet

Dear Teacher,

In order for the Story Dogs volunteer to best help each student it greatly assists the volunteer if they know the reason(s) why the student was chosen. We understand that due to confidentiality you may not be able to give all reasons.

**Please complete both sides of this form and pass it on to your Story Dogs volunteer.**

Date:	School:
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**Student One** Classroom Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name (first only) \_\_\_\_\_ Year Level \_\_\_\_\_

Reason/s why student was chosen for Story Dogs program	Disengaged reader / low confidence / non-reader / primary language not English  Other reason:
Any likes or dislikes the student may have. Any special needs, eg dislikes eye contact	
Any topics the student really enjoys, e.g. Unicorns, sharks, etc.	

**Student Two** Classroom Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name (first only) \_\_\_\_\_ Year Level \_\_\_\_\_

Reason/s why student was chosen for Story Dogs program	Disengaged reader / low confidence / non-reader / primary language not English  Other reason:
Any likes or dislikes the student may have. Any special needs, eg dislikes eye contact	
Any topics the student really enjoys, e.g. Unicorns, sharks, etc.	



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# Target Student Information Sheet

**Student Three** Classroom Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name (first only) \_\_\_\_\_ Year Level \_\_\_\_\_

Reason/s why student was chosen for Story Dogs program	Disengaged reader / low confidence / non-reader / primary language not English  Other reason:
Any likes or dislikes the student may have. Any special needs, eg dislikes eye contact	
Any topics the student really enjoys, e.g. Unicorns, sharks, etc.	

**Student Four** Classroom Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name (first only) \_\_\_\_\_ Year Level \_\_\_\_\_

Reason/s why student was chosen for Story Dogs program	Disengaged reader / low confidence / non-reader / primary language not English  Other reason:
Any likes or dislikes the student may have. Any special needs, eg dislikes eye contact	
Any topics the student really enjoys, e.g. Unicorns, sharks, etc.	

Please add any other information that may help our Volunteer better help the chosen students:

\_\_\_\_\_



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# Program Agreement

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## **This is an agreement between the School Principal and the Story Dogs Coordinator.**

Story Dogs is excited at the prospect of providing reading support for your students. In order for this program to function smoothly in your school a clear understanding of expectations and requirements between Story Dogs and the School is essential.

Story Dogs will:-

- Ensure all visiting Dog Teams are Story Dog registered volunteers and have appropriate accreditation and insurance
- Ensure that all Story Dogs volunteers have a current Working With Children Check as per the current State legislation
- Ensure that all animals are clean, well-groomed with up to date vaccinations and worming
- Ensure that our volunteers always pick up after their dogs toileting
- Comply with all school policies and procedures and undergo volunteer orientation if required
- Ensure that our volunteers are skilled in supporting a child's efforts to improve his/her reading
- Ensure that our volunteers understand the importance of student confidentiality and comply with school/Department policy
- Contact the school as soon as we know if we have to cancel due to illness or emergency
- Not visit if an animal is showing signs of illness, skin lesions or undue stress
- Always seek permission before taking photographs of students
- Always report in at the office prior to visiting the classroom or students, and out at the end of sessions
- Provide feedback to the classroom teacher and or Principal regarding the program and or individual student's progress/behaviour and
- Report any incident to your Staff and follow any required procedures.

Your School & Staff will:-

- Give permission for Story Dogs to bring dogs on to the school grounds for educational purposes
- Provide the Story Dogs Teams with appropriate orientation, not only for general school policies and procedures but also for incident procedures to follow. Orientation will include identifying spaces to conduct reading sessions and for the dogs to relieve themselves
- Provide briefing about each student's reading goals, short and long term. Information about any challenges or circumstances which may affect a students' ability to participate effectively in a reading session would also be beneficial
- Provide feedback regarding the program and or individual student's progress/behaviour
- Contact us ASAP if there is a need to cancel any sessions



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# Program Agreement

- Notify us of any illness among your students that may be communicable and or threaten the health of the handler and animal (e.g. lice, chicken pox, measles, mumps etc.)
- Include Story Dogs volunteers in any of your Volunteer Recognition programs so their weekly efforts are acknowledged
- If the dog also has a therapy role in school, these roles do not overlap in terms of days at school and roles. The school ensures the welfare of the dog is paramount
- **'Pats not Hugs'** is what we expect from students and staff, thus reducing the stress on our dogs. A happy dog is a safe dog.
- Let Story Dogs coordinator know of any issues with volunteer Dog Teams (person or animal)
- **Hold a Story Dog fundraising event or provide an annual donation each year the program is running in your school**

Our programs are most successful when there is a strong and healthy collaboration between our teams and your staff, with lots of feedback going both ways.

Continuous Improvement - To ensure the effectiveness of the Story Dogs program and to assist us with improving our service we may require your teachers or the school contact person to participate in a short, anonymous, standardised survey.

School Name: .....

School Address: .....

School Email: ..... Phone: .....

## Main Contact who will be the School Story Dogs liaison person:

Name: .....

Role: .....

Email: ..... Phone: .....

## Date Agreed: ..... Story Dogs Representative:

Principal Name  
(printed).....

Principal  
signature .....

Name  
(printed).....

Signature .....

Region: .....



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