



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

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## *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 

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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:
  - o Bank Name: Westpac
  - o Account Name: Story Dogs Ltd
  - o BSB: 032 584 Account Number: 286132
  - o 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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## 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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## 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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