

Our New Therapy Dog (Aiko) at SSP – FAQ's



1. What is the purpose of having a Therapy Dog at SSP?

The purpose of introducing a Therapy Dog to St Simon Peter School (SSP) is to assist in supporting students who may be experiencing anxiety and stress in their lives. Studies have shown that the mere presence of a dog can lower stress & anxiety levels and promote relaxation & cardiovascular health by decreasing blood pressure.

2. What type of breed is our Therapy dog?

The Therapy Dog is a 'Labradoodle' puppy who will be 13 weeks old when he starts at SSP in early February 2020.

3. What is the meaning of the Therapy dog's name - Aiko?

From Japanese 愛 (ai) meaning "love, affection" and 子 (ko) meaning "child".

4. Is the Therapy dog trained?

In addition to the Therapy puppy having ongoing 'on the job training' at SSP, it's also currently being trained at home and attending puppy classes ran by the RSPCA.

5. Who owns the dog?

Toni Carrigan, SSP's Health Services Coordinator, is the dog's owner.

6. Where does the dog live?

The Therapy Dog lives with Toni & her family in Ocean Reef and will come to school on allocated days (see below).

7. How often will the Therapy dog be 'attending' school?

The Therapy dog will be present at SSP every Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday.

8. Where will the dog be situated during the day whilst here at SSP?

The Therapy Dog will be based in the ELC (where the dog's designated area is) but will also be regularly found around the school visiting various classrooms during the day to see the children as and when required.

9. What if my child is allergic to dogs?

Labradoodle's are a Hypoallergenic dog breed due to them being a cross between a Poodle and a Labrador, which is beneficial for people who are allergic to pet hair. If you have any concerns regarding your child's allergies, please contact Toni Carrigan at SSP (details below *).

10. What if my child has a fear or doesn't like dogs?

If your child has a fear / mistrust of dogs or in general doesn't like them, no child will be required to interact with the dog if this is the case. If there are concerns regarding the dog's presence with your child, please contact Toni Carrigan advising those concerns. In this regard if a Parent would like their child to be introduced/assimilated with the Therapy dog, please discuss this with Toni and opportunities for a controlled assimilation can be suitably arranged.

11. Can I bring my own dog into school now that SSP has a Therapy Dog?

No other dogs will be permitted onto the school grounds at any time. The Therapy Dog is a working dog that will be trained to fill the emotional needs of the students at SSP.

12. What if there is an unlikely event or incident with the dog?

In the unlikely event of an incident with the Therapy Dog, the child's parents will be contacted immediately, and the School Nurse will see the child as required.

13. How will my child know what to do if they haven't been around dogs before?

The child's classroom Teacher will show them a video from the RSPCA about '*how to safely approach a dog*'. Also, the owner (Toni) will reinforce to the children how to approach the dog upon entering the classroom or in the playground.

Our aim is to slowly introduce the Therapy dog into the classes with short periods throughout the school day as to not overwhelm the puppy or overexcite the children. Teachers will discuss the dos and don'ts of how to handle a puppy during class time and prepare the children for the dog entering into their classroom. Children and the puppy will never be left alone together and will always be supervised by the owner or a designated handler.

14. Can I feed the Therapy Dog?

No food or drink is to be given to the Therapy Dog without the owner's permission (**Link: [Foods Poisonous to Dogs](#)**)

15. Cleanliness of the children and Therapy Dog

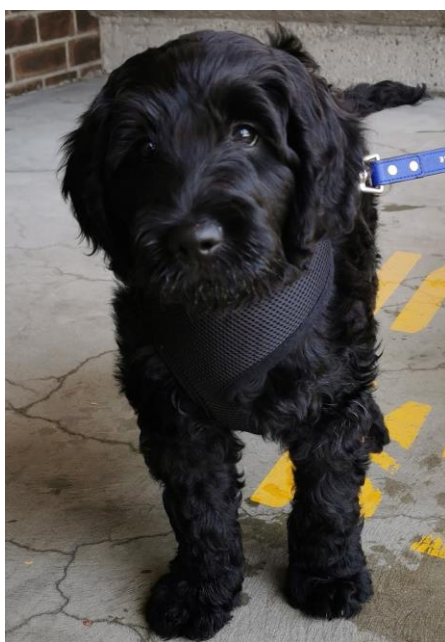
Hand washing before and after handling the dog will be encouraged when we introduce the Therapy Dog to the school. We will remind / direct the children so they will get used to doing this upon handling the dog.

16. How can I as a parent help with preparing my child for the arrival of the Therapy Dog at SSP?

You can help your child by getting them (and siblings) to watch the short video below from the RSPCA and also by looking at '*the Dog Listener*' info guide. If you or your child are anxious about the dog starting at our school, the video and info is very informative and will help ease your mind, as well as your child.

Link (Video): [How to safely approach a Dog - RSPCA](#)

Link (Literature): [the Dog Listener - American Kennel Club](#)



* Contact: Toni Carrigan (SSP - Health Services Coordinator), email - Toni.carrigan@cewa.edu.au