

## What is a therapy dog?

A therapy dog is a dog that receives special training to be able to **provide support to people who are experiencing poor physical or mental health.**

Therapy dogs are trained to interact with all sorts of people with a range of different needs. Therapy dogs help people reduce stress, improve their social skills, and, most importantly, provide unconditional love. Even just patting a therapy dog has been shown to elevate people's mood.

## What kind of dog can become a therapy dog?

Dogs wishing to become a therapy dog need to be calm and social with strangers and should be able to adjust to loud noises and fast movements.

There are no breed requirements to become a therapy dog, but some of the most common breeds are **Golden Retrievers and Labradors**, due to their calm demeanour, gentle disposition, and friendliness to strangers.

High energy breeds like **Border Collies and other sheepdog breeds** make great therapy dogs for kids who have excess energy; getting them out of the classroom into some fresh air and physical activity.



# THERAPY DOGS



## How do therapy dogs help kids who are struggling at school?

**Kids who have a hard time at home often fall behind in school.** It can be difficult to catch up to their peers, which leads to children feeling low self-esteem and start to disengage from class.

Therapy dogs help kids catch up on learning in a calm and supported environment. **The dogs make learning fun for kids**, through guided learning activities and encouraging reading and writing by acting as non-judgemental listeners.

Therapy dogs can help kids outside the classroom, too. The dogs teach kids how to manage their behaviours and learn how to interact with others in a safe and friendly way.

## What is Paw Pals?

Paw Pals is MacKillop Family Services' Animal Assisted Education program, created for students who are currently disengaged or at risk of disengaging from education.

The program focuses on building student engagement and confidence through tailored learning sessions, working alongside our trained therapy dogs and program facilitators.

Our Paw Pals team is made up of five facilitators and eight therapy dogs: Indie, Barney, Odie, Lucy, Billie, Keela, Chiko, and Bruno. They work hard every day to reignite kids' love for learning and support them to recover from trauma.

# Meet Mackillop's PAW PALS

and find out how they help kids succeed at school!

## INDIE



I'm a ball of energy that enjoys the company of others. I love making kids laugh and helping them learn how to manage their behaviour in stressful situations.

## BARNEY



I'm a relaxed doggo who's both an attentive and supportive listener. I love to help kids practice their reading and writing by listening to them read aloud and sitting by their feet as they write.

## ODIE



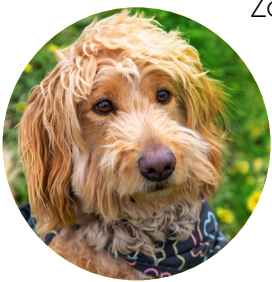
Want to go for a race? I love to run around and play learning games with kids outdoors! But my sporty side is balanced by my affectionate nature. I love gentle pats and making kids feel safe and settled.

## LUCY



While I like my quiet time and sleep (who doesn't!), I'm a people pooch who likes to make kids smile. Kids feel confident to take on anything when I'm standing by their side.

## KEELA



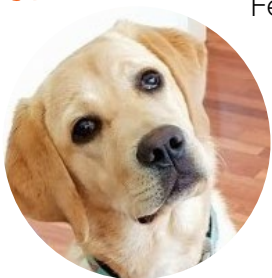
Zoom! Try to keep up! I'm an active pup who has plenty of energy, and enthusiasm to spare. I love to play and help kids burn off their extra energy to help them focus better in the classroom.

## CHIKO



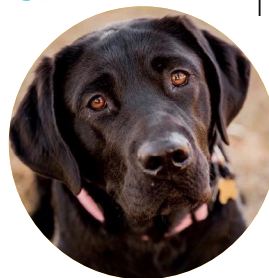
I'm a big, fluffy goofball who loves to be playful and silly. My motto is: don't take life too seriously. I teach kids to believe in themselves, because I believe they can do anything!

## BRUNO



Feeling down? Bruno to the rescue! My job is to show kids how wonderful, smart, and talented they are and teaching them new skills that will help them grow to be their best.

## BILLIE



I love life and making new friends. My calm nature instantly puts kids at ease and I help them feel relaxed when they're anxious. I am a loyal friend to all that I meet.

You can help our Paw Pals reach more kids by donating now at [paws4kids.org.au](https://paws4kids.org.au)