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

Chelsea Heights Primary School Story Dog Team: Sue and her dog Sam!

“Education is not the filling of a bucket but the lighting of a fire”
William Butler Yeats
CHELSEA HEIGHTS PRIMARY SCHOOL
PARENT INFORMATION PACK

A fun, unique and exciting reading program in your school

Story Dogs is just that...fun and exciting for the students who are struggling with reading and literacy skills.

Benefits to your school and students:-

- Students receive one on one time with our trained dogs – approx 20 mins
- 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 session are outside of the classroom in a quiet spot nearby.
- A new and exciting spin on reading for your students
- A new reward system for all students – eg earn 5 ticks and get a session with a Story Dog
- A FREE unique reading support program

What the school should expect from Story Dogs:-

- All visiting Dog Teams are Story Dog members, have appropriate accreditation and insurance.
- All animals will be clean, well groomed with up to date vaccinations and worming.
- Volunteers will always pick up after their dogs toileting.
- Volunteers will contact the school as soon as they know if they have to cancel due to illness or emergency
- Volunteers will give regular feedback regarding any aspects of the program, student progress or concerns

Story Dogs Inc is based on the successful American literacy program Reading Education Assistance Dogs (R.E.A.D.). The R.E.A.D program was launched in 1999 in Utah USA, as the first comprehensive literacy program built around the appealing idea of children and young adolescents reading to dogs.

Story Dogs Inc improves children’s reading and communication skills by employing a powerful method - reading to a dog. But not just any dog. Story Dogs are accredited companion animals who volunteer with their owner/handler as a team, going to schools and libraries.

Why dogs?
Learning to read is often less about intellectual limitation than about overcoming fears. “Fear can destroy intelligence,” says educator William Ayers. Animals are ideal reading companions because they help increase relaxation and lower blood pressure, listen attentively, do not judge, laugh or criticise, allow children to proceed at their own pace, and are less intimidating than peers or adults. (source:www.therapyanimals.org/read/)
Which dogs?
All breeds can be used except for restricted dog breeds. The dog’s temperament, obedience, willingness and other training is of utmost importance. Dogs must pass a certification test carried out by a certified dog trainer, as well as being immaculately groomed, vaccinated, with regular vet checks.

The Handler
The handler of the dog is generally the dog’s owner who is trained in basic literacy education. This ensures the handler will not judge the child and will be able to help in ways that will best improve the child’s chances of better reading. Dog Teams are fully insured and handlers have submitted a working with children background check as per State legislation.

Children
The children are usually from Stage 1, primarily Year 2. Students are chosen by the school. Story Dogs does not assess the children in any way as the sessions are designed to be as non-threatening as possible. We rely on assessment results taken throughout the year by the school. Parental consent is required before a child can participate in the program.

A Story Dog reading session
Reading sessions take place in a quiet area of the school grounds, such as the library or the verandah outside the classroom. A large part of the first session with the dog team is introductions so the child gets to know the dog and handler and vice versa. A reading session is approximately 20 minutes long, where each child is one-on-one with the dog team. Books are chosen to suit the child’s reading level.

During the session the handler often speaks through the dog, such as; “Lassie doesn’t quite understand what is happening on this page could you help him out?” The child becomes the teacher; confidence climbs!

The magic
The non-judgmental, loving nature of dogs gives this program its magic. Children relax, open up, try harder and have fun reading with a dog. Also see www.therapyanimals.org/read and www.sitstayread.com
Story Dogs is a fun and unique reading support program that improves children’s reading and communication skills by children reading to a trained 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.

Students will spend approximately 20 minutes with the Story Dog Team once or twice 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 handler will be with the dog and student at all times.

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

**The program is free to all selected students.**