

It's a dog's life in the classroom

By THOMAS MUNDAY

Students at South Thornlie Primary School recently welcomed their newest classmate with open arms.

Dutch the Great Dane - who is a trained companion dog - will be visiting the school on Tuesdays and Thursdays, as part of the school's Story Dogs program.

The program helps students (from years 2-6) to develop their literacy and communication skills, in a positive and laid-back environment.

According to the Department of Education, the program has already helped to change in-class behaviour and improve attendance.

South Thornlie PS school officer Lisa Haholdt, who runs the program, said Dutch has supported many students to become more confident readers and listeners.

"Dutch the Great Dane has had such a positive impact on our students and teachers," she said.

"The students have become more confident readers, and the teachers can see a real engagement in the students wanting to learn and develop their reading skills.

"The students look forward to the routine of seeing Dutch...this has created an improvement in classroom participation and attendance.

"The parents have been so supportive of the program and are excited about their child receiving additional reading opportunities."

Story Dogs is expected to become a permanent support program at South Thornlie PS.



Dutch the Great Dane with his owner, Mick, and South Thornlie PS student Je.