

Guidelines for Therapy Provision at Beresfield Public School

Beresfield Public School supports the individual needs of all students and believes in working collaboratively with families and external agencies. Strong and positive relationships with all key stakeholders is beneficial in providing the utmost support for students at our school. From time to time, we receive requests for externally funded service providers to deliver services within the school setting. This document serves as a guideline for school staff, parents/ carers and service providers working with students in the provision of therapy services at Beresfield Public School.

Summary

1. All requests for access to a student by an external provider funded by the NDIS (or any other scheme) must come from the student's parent/ carer in writing with therapy goals from the therapist.
2. All requests for the delivery of an externally funded service will be considered against the needs of the student or group of students who are the intended service recipients, other students in the school and the operational requirements of the school.
3. If approved, providers must meet all NSW Department of Education policy requirements and enter into an agreement with Beresfield Public School.
4. All service provider staff will undergo all school induction processes prior to commencing any services.

The staff at Beresfield Public School are responsible for the development and implementation of student learning programs, incorporating curriculum outcomes. Staff are responsible for ensuring learning goals are collaboratively constructed with parents/carers and are reflective of the educational learning needs of the student. These goals are represented in a Personalised Learning and Support Plan (PLSP). The approval and delivery of therapy services in the school is appropriate when there is a clear link between the therapy service and goals indicated in the PLSP. Decisions around whether to provide school access to externally funded providers will be based on whether it is in the best educational interests of the student for the service to be provided at school, if there is appropriate space, time, supervision and the school's duty of care towards all staff and students.

Beresfield Public School supports the Department and the NDIS Operational Guidelines recommendations that *"NDIS funded.... Therapy services should generally not be delivered at school....Nor should children or young people be taken out of school to receive these supports"*. This allows our highly experienced school staff to focus on teaching all students and ensures that students do not miss out on important learning time. However, we also realise that in some cases, it may be suitable for these services to be provided at school.



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF EDUCATION AND THERAPY ORGANISATIONS

The role of school in relation to therapy services is to liaise with families to facilitate any reasonable request for such a service during school hours which will lead to improved educational outcomes.

The role of the therapist when working in schools is to contribute to positive educational outcomes for students in a planned, collaborative and cohesive manner ensuring that the focus is upon the agreed educational goals.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Student safety, wellbeing and educational development is the priority for any therapy service provided in the school setting.
- Students are best served when both school staff and visiting therapists have a clear understanding of the specific purpose for each visit to the classroom.
- Schools are ultimately responsible for student educational outcomes. The decision as to whether a therapy service is to operate within the school is entirely at the discretion of the principal.
- Therapy service providers are responsible and accountable to the student and parents for the service they provide. School staff will not “sign-off” on any service conducted in the school as the agreement is between the parent and service provider.
- A collaborative approach between teachers, therapists, families and carers is in the best interest of the student and will assist in achieving positive educational outcomes.
- At the beginning of the school year staff create safe learning environments with established timetables, routines and programs along with getting to know their new students. Taking this into consideration, the best educational interests of the students at this time is to engage and focus on their school learning environment and for this reason requests for externally funded service providers will be considered from Term 1 Week 5 onwards.
- Externally funded service providers wanting to provide therapy in a mainstream classroom negotiate best times to visit with the classroom teacher. Therapy in our inclusive education classes is held on Tuesdays between 12-1.30pm. Once these dates are set for the term they cannot be rescheduled within that term.
- Counselling sessions are best held outside of school hours; however, the school understands that there might be extenuating circumstances where this will need to be reviewed. If this is the case, counselling visits may be approved for afternoon school sessions only.
- Due to the needs of all students in the classroom, therapists will be limited to one person visiting the identified student at a time.
- At all times, the teacher is responsible for the students’ learning program and the students remain under the duty of care of the classroom teacher whilst on school grounds.

GUIDING PRACTICES FOR RELATIONSHIPS

- The delivery of therapy services in schools MUST be planned and documented in partnership with the school and family or carers. In this way all stakeholders have a clear understanding of their roles and can resolve any arising issues in a collaborative manner. A therapy report MUST be emailed to the class teacher each week at the conclusion of each therapy session. These reports are used to assess the therapy and ensure it is consistent with the child's Personal Education Plan.
- The student's educational goals are developed within the school setting through a Personalised Learning and Support Plan process. Therapy services delivered in schools should link to a student's plan.
- We encourage and support collegial discussions between staff and therapists. However, class time is for teaching. Service providers will need to seek a mutually appropriate time for discussion and consultation.
- Effective relationships between therapists and teachers are responsive and have the flexibility required to meet educational goals where resources and priorities change.
- A high standard of confidentiality is maintained where information is shared between stakeholders. Information pertaining to students other than those receiving therapy services in the school will be held with confidence by school staff and visiting service providers. Reports will only mention the names of the student receiving therapy without any reference to any other student in the class.
- Any concerns regarding students or staff should be immediately brought to the attention of the principal.

REVIEW OF SERVICES

Whilst our school welcomes the provision of therapy during school time it acknowledges that not all proposed activities and lessons are conducive to being provided in the classroom context. Some sessions have the potential to be disruptive to other learners in the classroom. The classroom teacher and their supervisors will review the suitability of a therapy session being conducted during school hours at the end of each semester, or as the need arises, with parents and therapists.

Parent / carer request for External Provider Flow Chart

