



The Ponds School  
*Believe Learn Achieve*

# **Working with externally funded service providers delivering health, disability and wellbeing services to students**

## **Guidelines and Procedures**

***Our Vision:*** *The Ponds School provides quality, individualised and meaningful education in a safe and caring environment. The Ponds School supports families, encourages independence and assists students to become valued members of the community both now and into the future.*

We strongly believe that the greatest educational benefits for our students come from strong community ties and supporting families throughout their child's educational journey.

### **Context**

The Ponds School is a school for specific purposes that provides quality individualised education for students with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities, many with additional disabilities such as Autism, physical disabilities, behaviour disorders and complex health care needs. The school has 18 permanent classes catering for approximately 112 students across K-12.

A large proportion of students have an established National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) plan that targets individual goals. The achievement of these goals often involves collaboration and intervention from specialist personnel including but not limited to Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapist, Speech Pathologists, Behaviour Therapists and Support Workers. Delivery of services in the school setting is a negotiated process and governed by these guidelines and procedures.

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## **SECTION 1: GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE DELIVERY OF EXTERNALLY FUNDED SERVICES IN SCHOOL**

*The primary purpose of schools, under the Education Act 1990, is to deliver the curriculum to all students.*

*The NSW Department of Education recognises that externally funded service providers may have a role in delivering services to children and young people with additional health, disability and wellbeing needs that support their participation in school. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for these services to be delivered at school.*

*Decisions around whether to provide access to externally funded providers are a matter for the school principal, based on whether it is in the best educational interests of the student, and considering the school's duty of care towards all staff and students. Principals have the discretion to grant or not grant school access to an external provider, taking a range of important factors into consideration. These considerations include:*

- *the impact of the service on curriculum requirements and the student's participation in teaching and learning activities*
  - school sessions times, available space, class programs and individual timetables are all factors that will determine whether the school is an appropriate setting for the delivery of externally funded therapy services.
  - once a therapy program is approved for delivery in the school and before it begins, a planning meeting must take place with the therapist/s, parents and class teacher.
- *the extent to which the service supports the student's learning needs or enhances access to education*
  - therapy programs should be closely aligned with Personalised Learning Plan (PLP) goals and contribute to the achievement of these goals
- *the impact of the service on other students and/or the operations of the school*
  - consistency of routines is important for all students. Any delivery of therapy services during school hours must adhere to existing school session times as well as individual class timetables, available space and including any programs such as community access, cooking, excursions and school events.
  - open communication between staff and therapists is essential, however class time is for teaching. Service providers will need to negotiate a mutually appropriate time with staff for discussion and consultation and an agreed method of preferred communication, this may be email. Teachers have a small amount of time released from face to face teaching and they may be available during this time for consultation. This needs to be negotiated with the class teacher.

*[NSW Department of Education – Information for providers 2017]*

School staff have a duty of care to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all students. Any therapy service delivered at school should be done so in the context of the classroom. Students must remain in line of sight of school staff at all times and remain the responsibility of school staff at all times.

## **SECTION 2: PARENT/CARER RESPONSIBILITIES**

*The NSW Department of Education and the National Disability Insurance Agency recommend that therapy services for children's disability needs funded through a child's NDIS support plan are best delivered outside of school hours. This allows the school to focus on teaching your child and all other students and ensure your child does not miss out on important learning time.*

*However, in some cases, it may be suitable for these services to be provided at school. If this is the case, the school principal will manage these services in a way that does not affect your child's opportunity to take part in class. It is important that your child does not miss out on important learning and school programs because they are receiving therapy services.*

*Principals must also make sure that the school is able to run to benefit all students without undue disruption to learning.*

*...provision of services by external providers on school premises is at the principal's sole discretion.*

Parents/carers must make a request in writing by completing the *Request for Delivery of Therapy Services During School Hours* form.

The principal will consider requests on a case-by-case basis taking into account:

- The school's duty of care to all students and staff
- How the service relates to your child's Personalised Learning Plan (PLP) goals
- The impact on your child's learning and the learning of the other students in the classroom
- Arrangements to ensure adequate supervision of your child while services are delivered
- Whether the service needs to be delivered at a particular time of the day

If your request is approved, the class teacher will arrange a mutually convenient time for a planning meeting. This meeting will include parents/carers and the service provider and will document the agreement for therapy provision at school.

**Please note: a service provider will not be able to work in the school before the principal has given approval and until the planning meeting with the class teacher has taken place.**

The school will enter into an agreement with the service provider: *Externally Funded Service Providers Engagement Agreement*.

### **Your ongoing role**

Your service agreement with the provider means that you will continue to have a role when it is agreed the service will be delivered at school. This includes:

- Informing the service provider that the school has agreed to therapy being delivered in the school setting. Information about agreed days and times will be included in the written service agreement.
- Informing the service provider if your child is absent from school on a day when the provider is supposed to be at school.
- Informing the service provider if a school activity means that service cannot take place on a particular day. For example, special events, assemblies, sporting carnivals, excursions.
- Informing the school if you stop using the service or change providers. A new agreement will be required if you change providers.
- Regular follow-up with your child's class teacher via an agreed means to review service delivery and how things are going.

**Please note: The school will not assess or evaluate the service provider. If the school has any concerns about the service provider or delivery of services, these will be discussed with you.**

## **SECTION 3: PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

The principal has discretion to decide whether or not an external service provider can enter the school and how arrangements will be managed for the provider's activity with students, where access is granted. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis taking into account the educational needs and priorities of the student including access to curriculum, the impact on student's learning programs, the school's operational context and duty of care obligations towards all students and staff.

Providers do not have automatic right of access to the school. Provision of services by external providers on school premises is at the principal's sole discretion.

In determining whether the service can be provided in the school, the principal will consider:

- The school's obligation under the Disability Standards for Education (2005) to provide reasonable adjustments for all students with disabilities and whether the service aligns with or complements the reasonable adjustments being provided by the school.
- The impact of the service on the student's access to the curriculum and whether the service supports the student's participation in education and access to the curriculum. If the service does not link with the learning needs of the student or enhance their access to curriculum, then it should be delivered outside of school.
- The impact of the service on other students in the class, whether it will interfere with the learning of other students or impact the classroom environment.
- The ability to maintain the ordinary running of the school, ensuring the external service does not interfere.
- Capacity to observe or supervise the delivery of the service, to meet duty of care and child protection obligations. It is strongly encouraged that all services are delivered within the context of the classroom or learning environment that the student is in with their peers and class teacher.

Service providers must meet all legal and policy requirements before they can commence providing a service in the school. These are outlined in **Section 4: Service Provider Responsibilities**.

The school may withdraw external provider access to the school at any time where it has been determined that the service being delivered is no longer in the student's educational interest. This will be discussed with parent/carers prior to a decision to withdraw access is made.

Service delivery arrangements will be documented through an *Externally Funded Service Providers Engagement Agreement* and after the initial meeting with the classroom teacher and before the service commences, the completion of the *Working With Therapists* planning document. The principal will also complete the *Principal Checklist* to ensure all requirements have been met before delivery of the service commences.

## **SECTION 4: SERVICE PROVIDER RESPONSIBILITIES**

Once the principal has agreed that a service can be delivered at school and before the provider commences, they must demonstrate that they have the necessary checks, protections and training in place. All mandatory requirements are outlined in the provider checklist available in the appendices section of this document.

When the principal or their delegate has determined that all requirements have been met, an *Externally Funded Service Providers Engagement Agreement* will be drawn up by the school. The service provider is only required to sign one agreement with the school, however individual student schedules are required if the service provider is working with more than one student at the school.

Once the engagement agreement is signed and before service delivery commences, the provider will participate in a school-based induction program. Provider staff should familiarise themselves with the department's Code of Conduct and Controversial Issues in Schools Policy and Guidelines prior to the induction.

The induction will clarify the responsibilities of all parties and provide important information including, but not limited to:

- A general induction of the school site
- Confirmation that providers are aware of the department's Code of Conduct and Controversial Issues in Schools Policy and Guidelines
- Child protection and mandatory reporting procedures
- Supervision arrangements
- Privacy requirements
- Managing disputes and complaints
- Records management requirements

Before service delivery commences, a meeting will be held with the class teacher and service provider to complete the *Working With Therapists planning document*. This document outlines details of the goal/s that will be worked on during the service delivery at school, along with details of days and times when service delivery will occur.

**Please note: The school will not be liable for provider costs associated with attending and participating in meetings and induction.**