

**Bendigo Special Developmental School**

**NDIS-Funded Therapy Policy**

**BACKGROUND**

Bendigo Special Developmental School currently has 126 students attending the school. Each of these students could be in receipt of funding through the NDIS for a variety of allied therapy input. To allow Bendigo SDS to continues to provide optimal access to education for all its students, a policy to ensure NDIS funded therapists do not diminish this role is required. This policy is based on information from the Victorian Department of Education.

There is a difference between what is funded by the NDIS and what the school’s responsibility is. Generally speaking:

* **Schools** are responsible for personalising learning and support for students with disabilities **that primarily relate to their education.** This includes teaching, learning assistance and aids, school building modifications and transport between school activities. This is in line with relevant anti-discrimination laws.
* **NDIS** will fund supports that a child needs which **relate to the functional impact of their disability on regular activities that are a part of daily living**. These supports are not primarily related to the child’s schooling.

**PURPOSE**

This policy aims to clarify Bendigo Special Developmental School’s responsibility regarding allowing NDIS funded therapists to operate within the school. It will:

* Ensure that Bendigo SDS staff and families have a clear understanding of the role of school based and NDIS therapists
* Provide a clear framework and reasoning for decision making regarding NDIS funded therapists visiting Bendigo SDS for assessment or therapy purposes
* Support school-based therapy staff to continue to assist in the making of ‘reasonable adjustments’ to help students to attain their educational goals as required by the Department of Education.

**OBJECTIVE**

* To ensure that Bendigo Special Developmental School meets its responsibilities in supporting students with their educational attainment.
* To ensure clarity regarding NDIS therapists attending Bendigo SDS to assess or work with students
* To establish clear guidelines for and information sharing with external therapists.

**SCOPE**

The Principal, as the delegate of the Minister, has the right to permit or refuse entry onto Victorian Government School premises. This policy applies to:

* all staff, including casual relief staff, contractors and volunteers
* all external therapists funded through student NDIS packages

**POLICY**

School based therapist report writing and provision:

* Bendigo Special Developmental School will provide copied versions of any information/reports that the school has previously obtained from educational or allied health professionals to parents to assist them in providing supporting evidence for NDIS planning.
* The school will not, however, arrange for or pay for new assessments to be completed for the sole purpose of NDIS funding which does not directly benefit the child and his/her schooling

NDIS therapist school visits:

* In general, NDIS therapists will not be permitted to provide therapy to students on an individual basis in the school during the school day.
* Observations within the class from NDIS therapists may occur on a once per term basis provided that these occur without disruption to the class and that NDIS therapy goals correlate with the school environment.
* There must be at least 48 hours’ notice to the school therapists and teachers prior to any requested school visit to observe a student. This request for observation should also include the goals and expected impact on therapy for the observational visit.
* School teachers and therapists may indicate a better time if the one requested by the NDIS therapist is not suitable.
* Collaboration with school therapists and teachers is expected for issues directly relating to overlapping with school therapist roles and responsibilities. It is expected that school and NDIS therapists are working with like goals and approaches as discussed with parents and class staff (as to not contradict one another’s work).
* Communication and collaboration with school therapists by NDIS therapists will need to be planned and succinct given the volume of correspondence from NDIS therapists. NDIS therapists should communicate with school-based therapists via email, phone or meetings as negotiated in a timely manner.
* NDIS therapists will provide school therapists and teachers with copies of their reports, programs and recommendations as appropriate.
* The Principal has the discretion to permit NDIS funded therapists to work in the school in particular circumstances where they deem it necessary to maximise outcomes for students. In making such a decision consideration will be given to the relative benefits of an external therapist providing therapy versus the anticipated impact on student learning, disruption to classes, ability to provide supervision, the availability of an appropriate space to work in and timing of such requests.
* All requests for NDIS therapists to complete observations at school will require the completion of the request form by the NDIS therapist in collaboration with the student’s family.
* Following consideration of individual requests from parents for NDIS funded therapists to work in the school the Principal will provide a written response of their decision and will articulate reasons for granting or refusing NDIS funded therapy in school during school hours
* Where the Principal approves a NDIS funded therapist to work with students during school hours, they must then be satisfied that appropriate checks have been put in place to allow access in a manner that is compatible with the school’s Duty of Care. This will include:
* Working With Children or Criminal History check
* NDIS Worker Screening Check
* Evidence of appropriate qualifications
* Evidence of insurance and NDIS registration
* Documentation regarding licence to use school premises and information sharing
* Compliance with Child Safe Standards
* The school will provide NDIS funded therapists with information as necessary once parental permission is provided and will offer observational/therapy visits
* NDIS therapists are welcome to be part of a student’s Student Support group.

**COMMUNICATION PLAN**

This policy will be communicated to all families in the school community by the following means

* Being published on our school website
* Being available in hardcopy at the front office
* Being provided in hardcopy to a parent should they wish to have a copy
* Having links to the policy periodically published on our social media communication platforms

**REVIEW CYCLE AND EVALUATION**

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| --- | --- |
| Date implemented | September 2019 |
| Author | Megan Turton and Kirshy McAinch |
| Approved By | School Council Monday 19th August 2019 |
| Approval Authority  (signature & date) |  |
| Date reviewed | Ongoing cycle |
| Responsible for Review | Kirshy McAinch |
| Review date | Ongoing |
| References |  |

***This policy is written in accordance with the Child Protection Reporting Policy and Education and Training Reform Act, Child Safe Standards, Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools, Ministerial Order No. 870. Bendigo Special Developmental School will work to ensure a safe and secure environment is provided for all students, staff, school community and visitors to the school. We will do this by ensuring the highest standards in care and supervision, having a zero tolerance approach to child abuse and by clear and sound staff practices that place safety at the heart of all decisions.”***

**Glossary:**

Reasonable adjustments - An adjustment that is a measure or action taken to assist a student with a disability to participate in education and training and access the curriculum **on the same basis** as other students.

School [based] therapist – allied health professional (physiotherapist, occupational therapist or speech pathologist) employed by Bendigo SDS.

NDIS therapist– allied health professional (physiotherapist, occupational therapist, speech pathologist, social worker or other therapist) arranged by the student’s family and paid for through the student’s NDIS package.