Colac South West Primary School 4775

Respect Engage Achieve Care Honesty

Colac South West Primary School is a Child Safe School

ALLIED HEALTH POLICY

Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the Colac South West Primary School office.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to explain to our school community how Colac South West Primary School responds to requests for allied health services — including NDIS-funded and other externally funded therapy — to be delivered on school grounds during the school day, and the conditions that apply when we agree to those requests.

It also explains what our school can and cannot take responsibility for, so that families, therapists and staff share the same understanding before any therapy begins.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all external allied health practitioners and their assistants who attend our school to work with individual students. This includes, but is not limited to, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, physiotherapists, psychologists, behaviour support practitioners, social workers, therapy assistants and allied health assistants.

It applies regardless of how the service is funded, including NDIS agency-managed, plan-managed and self-managed arrangements, privately funded therapy and Medicare-funded services.

This policy does not apply to allied health staff employed by the Department of Education, including Student Support Services practitioners and school-employed allied health staff. Those practitioners are departmental employees rather than visitors, and are accessed through the Student Support Services referral process with parent or carer consent.

POLICY

Our position

The Department of Education, which includes all Victorian government schools, provides educational programs to Victorian government school students. The therapies funded by the NDIS relate to the functional impact of a student's disability on their activities of daily living, and are not provided for educational purposes.

Our school is responsible for supporting students and their learning, including making the adjustments a student needs to access their education. Those adjustments continue regardless of whether external therapy takes place at school.

At the same time, we recognise that input from external therapists can complement holistic planning for a student, and we will support this where it is safe and practical to do so. Child safety, duty of care, privacy and legal obligations mean there are a number of matters the principal must consider before any external therapist works with a student on our site.

What parents and carers may request

Parents and carers may request that an external therapist:

- attends a Student Support Group meeting to help monitor and tailor the support provided to the student
- observes the student in the classroom or the school environment to inform their planning
- provides therapy or support to the student on school grounds

All requests must come from the parent or carer, not from the therapist or the funding provider, and must be made using our request form. Requests are emailed to the school office.

The decision rests with the principal

Like any visitor to the school, the decision to allow an external therapist onto school grounds rests with the principal, who has the right to permit or refuse entry of any person to school premises. There is no legal obligation on the principal to approve a request, because external therapy is generally not required for a student to access their education.

Each request is considered individually and decided on its own merits. Our school does not apply a blanket rule approving or refusing all requests. The principal will consider:

- the individual circumstances of the student, and the benefit to that student — any convenience to the therapist or the family is secondary to the student's best interests
- the impact on the student's access to the curriculum, and on the class and classroom teacher
- the Child Safe Standards and our child safety risk register
- our duty of care, and whether the session can be adequately supervised by school staff
- our obligations under the Reportable Conduct Scheme
- our practical and administrative capacity, including whether a suitable and available space exists
- our obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth), which continue regardless of the decision
- the rights of the student under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- school council support for the licence agreement, which must be signed before therapy commences

The principal will respond to a request within 10 days. The decision, the reasons for it, the request form and the parent or carer consent form are recorded on the student's file regardless of whether the request is approved or refused.

If a request is refused, parents and carers will be given the opportunity to respond and to provide further information, which the principal will consider. Concerns that are not resolved at the school may be raised with the Department's regional office, and then with the Independent Office for School Dispute Resolution.

Duty of care and supervision

Our duty of care to students is non-delegable. It cannot be transferred to an external therapist, and it is not reduced by the presence of an external provider. An external therapist is not a Department or school council employee or contractor and is not under the direction and control of the principal.

Under Department policy, visitors in schools do not have the authority to supervise students. A member of school staff holding current VIT registration and a valid Working with Children Clearance supervises the student for the whole of every session. The therapist holds professional responsibility for their own clinical practice; they do not supervise the student.

Our school uses three supervision arrangements, and the arrangement that applies to each student is agreed before therapy begins and recorded on the student's file:

- the session takes place within a space a staff member is already supervising, such as a corner of an occupied classroom
- a staff member has direct line of sight into the space from a place they already occupy, and checks in during the session
- where a student needs a space that is separate from other students, a staff member is allocated to that session

If the school cannot supervise a session, the session does not take place. Supervision arrangements are also recorded in our Yard Duty and Supervision Policy and are consistent with our child safety risk register.

Where sessions take place

Therapy takes place only in spaces the principal has approved for that purpose, which are listed in the school's schedule of nominated spaces and reviewed each term. Sessions do not take place in store rooms, unobserved or isolated rooms, the sick bay, or any space where student records or staff-confidential material is kept.

Sessions in outdoor areas are approved by the principal case by case, require a staff member to accompany the session, and are limited to a defined area agreed in advance.

Requirements before therapy can begin

Before an external therapist may begin working with a student on our site, all of the following must be in place:

- a licence agreement to use school premises, signed by school council and the therapist or their organisation
- a signed information sharing deed setting out how and how often information will be shared with the school
- a Working with Children Clearance, verified by the school and re-verified at least every 12 months
- current professional registration — AHPRA registration, or Speech Pathology Australia membership for speech pathologists
- current public liability insurance of at least $10 million per occurrence, and professional indemnity insurance of at least $5 million per any one event and in the aggregate
- NDIS worker screening, where the provider is a registered NDIS provider
- completion of our school induction and signing of our child safety code of conduct
- a meeting between the school, the family and the therapist to confirm goals, timing, location, supervision and communication arrangements

These requirements apply individually to every practitioner and to every therapy or allied health assistant who attends. A therapist who has not completed them, including a substitute attending at short notice, will not be admitted to the school.

Any fee charged for the use of school premises is payable by the therapist or their organisation. It is not passed on to families or to a student's NDIS plan.

Classroom observations

Where an observation is approved, the therapist observes only the student named in the request, with that student's parent or carer consent. General guidance is a maximum of one observation visit per term, at a time determined by the school and the classroom teacher. The observer must:

- make written notes about the named student only
- protect the privacy of other students by not recording anything that could identify them

- make no audio or video recording of the class

Observation notes and recommendations are shared with the school within seven working days, by email to the school office.

Photographs, filming and recording

External therapists do not photograph, film or record students at our school unless separate written consent has been obtained in accordance with our Photographing, Filming and Recording Students Policy.

Outside school hours

The principal may decline a request for therapy on school grounds outside school hours. Where such a request is approved, the school will confirm in writing to parents and carers that the therapy is not a school activity, is not organised or managed by the school or school council, and that the school is not responsible for supervising the student. Approval may be conditional on an adult family member or carer being present. A licence agreement and information sharing deed are still required.

Child safety and reportable conduct

All external therapists must comply with our child safety policies and our child safety code of conduct at all times, and with the Visitors in Schools Policy. All visitors sign in and out at the office and wear a visitor identification badge.

Any incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse is responded to immediately in accordance with the Four Critical Actions for Schools. The Reportable Conduct Scheme applies to external allied health practitioners working on our site. The principal will notify the Department's Conduct and Integrity Branch of any allegation of reportable conduct.

Parents, carers and students are told how to raise a concern about a therapist. Concerns about the conduct or quality of an NDIS provider may also be raised with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission on 1800 035 544.

Privacy and records

Personal and health information about students is collected, used, shared and stored in accordance with our Privacy Policy and the information sharing deed signed with each therapist. Records relating to each request, decision and arrangement are kept securely on the student's file.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Principal

Decides each request against the considerations above and records the reasons; signs information sharing deeds; ensures supervision arrangements are adequate; approves the nominated spaces; notifies reportable conduct; approves outdoor sessions individually.

School council

Supports and executes the licence agreement for the use of school premises, and sets the school's position on licence fees.

Allied Health Coordinator

Maintains the register of providers, practitioners and student arrangements; verifies and re-verifies screening, registration and insurance; runs induction; keeps the child safety risk register current.

Session Organiser

Allocates spaces and timetable slots, maintains the central booking record, confirms the supervision arrangement for each session, and notifies classroom teachers, the office and families of any change.

Classroom teachers and education support staff

Release and receive students, provide supervision as arranged, and raise any concern about a student or a therapist with the principal.

External therapists

Hold and maintain current clearance, registration and insurance; comply with all reasonable instructions and directions of the principal and with our child safety code of conduct; share information as agreed; and give the school as much notice as possible of any change to the practitioner attending.

RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

- Duty of Care Policy
- Yard Duty and Supervision Policy
- Visitors Policy
- Child Safe Standards, and our child safety code of conduct
- Volunteers Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Photographing, Filming and Recording Students Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Schedule of nominated spaces for 1:1 allied health sessions

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Made available publicly on our school website
- Provided to staff at induction and included in the staff handbook
- Discussed at staff meetings and briefings as required
- Provided to every external therapist as part of their induction pack
- Included as an annual reference in the school newsletter
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

The Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL):

- NDIS Funded Therapy in Schools
- Visitors in Schools
- Duty of Care
- Supervision of Students
- Child Safe Standards
- Working with Children Checks and other Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors
- Reportable Conduct
- Community Use of Schools – Hiring and Licensing

Related school policies are available at:

- http://colac-sw-ps.vic.edu.au/policies/
- http://colac-sw-ps.vic.edu.au/child-safety-standards/

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	August 2026
Consultation	Staff & School Council – 19 August 2026
Approved by	School Council - August 2026
Next review date	August 2028