



NDIS AND EXTERNAL PROVIDERS POLICY

PURPOSE

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is an Australian Government scheme that provides people with significant and permanent disability greater choice and control over the delivery of their disability support services. This has led to an increase in requests for schools to allow NDIS-funded or externally funded support to be delivered to students at schools.

This Policy explains the approach taken by St Mary's College in relation to requests by parents (or, in some cases, by students) for the NDIS or other external providers (Providers) to provide services to students on School premises, whether during or outside of School hours.

This Policy explains:

- the matters that St Mary's College will consider when a request is made for a Provider to provide services to a student at School
- the process that applies when making such requests.

DEFINITIONS

Parent includes one or both parents, carers and legal guardians.

Providers encompasses health, disability and wellbeing providers who are funded externally to the School and includes both NDIS-registered providers and those who are not registered with the NDIS.

Students includes but is not limited to students supported by the NDIS.

PRINCIPLES

- St Mary's College considers that awareness of, recognition of, and responsiveness to the needs and rights of all individuals are essential to human dignity.
- St Mary's College recognises the importance of providing equitable access and opportunity for all learners through the implementation of inclusive practices that embrace and celebrate diversity within the School community.
- St Mary's College values the development of high-quality relationships within the School community and in this context aims to work together with families in relation to student needs.
- St Mary's College acknowledges its legal obligations towards students arising from its duty of care, the Child Safe Standards, the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme and anti-discrimination legislation.
- St Mary's College values empowerment, inclusion, independence and resilience with our knowledge of deaf and hard of hearing student's needs in seeking to create the best possible educational opportunities and environments within each campus and partner school.

POLICY

While the delivery of therapy services at St Mary's College is a partnership between the School, our partner school and parents, it is the St Mary's College Principal's decision whether to permit an externally funded service to be delivered in the School.

The Principal will make decisions on a case-by-case basis. The Principal has discretion in relation to the approval, review or withdrawal of in-school delivery of external services.

It is important to be aware of the difference between NDIS-funded and/or externally funded services and school-funded services. NDIS-funded therapy relates to the student's 'whole-of-life' support needs, i.e. supports which relate to the functional impact of their disability on regular activities that are a part of daily living. St Mary's College remains responsible for the provision of therapy that primarily relates to the student's education. The Principal has ultimate responsibility for the educational programs provided by the School, and the School is responsible for all aspects of a student's program and care during School hours.

Considerations

When considering requests or reviewing an existing arrangement, the Principal will be guided by the following key questions:

- Is this in the best interests of the student who is receiving the service?
- Are there alternatives available to meet the identified student needs in the School context?
- How will this impact other students and staff at St Mary's College and our partner schools?
- How will this impact the operational requirements of St Mary's College and our partner schools?

In addition, the Principal will consider the following factors:

- a) student access to the curriculum
- b) practical and administrative capacity
- c) individual circumstances of the student
- d) duty of care
- e) child safety
- f) request for therapy on School grounds after School hours
- g) anti-discrimination obligations
- h) health and safety
- i) privacy.

Most requests received by the School are for services to be provided by NDIS-registered Providers, who must consent to NDIS guidelines, terms of business and background checks. If requests are made for in-school access by unregistered Providers, in addition to the considerations above, the Principal will consider the heightened risks of unregistered Providers.

Providers do not have an automatic right of access to the School, even if they currently deliver a service to another student at the School and/or currently work with the student outside of School.

Review

The in-school delivery of external services will be reviewed at regular intervals (e.g. each term) and may also be reviewed whenever the Principal deems such review to be necessary. For example, the Principal may decide to review the arrangement when there is a change in the student's circumstances, when advised that the arrangement is impacting on other students and staff or the availability of access to a service such as St Mary's College speech therapists.

Withdrawal

The Principal has discretion to withdraw in-school delivery of external services, based on consideration of the matters outlined under 'Considerations' above. The following factors may also be relevant:

- the service no longer meets the student's needs
- there have been inadvertent effects on other students, staff and the overall operation of the School
- delivery of the service does not meet the Clinical Access Arrangement
- the quality of the service is not acceptable
- there has been a high turnover of Providers
- the Provider is not reliable
- there has been inappropriate conduct by the Provider

DECISION CONSIDERATIONS

The Principal will specifically consider the factors described by headings a) to i) below. Some examples of the considerations under each heading are listed below. Please note these examples are not exhaustive.

a) Student access to the curriculum

- Is there a direct relationship between the service and the student's educational program outcome?
- Does the service enhance the student's educational program?
- Is there any impact on the student's engagement and access to the curriculum?
- Is access to the curriculum improved by allowing the service to occur during School hours?
- Is there any impact on staff of an additional adult in the School environment?
- Does the service impact on access to the curriculum for other students?
- Is there any disruption or difficulties experienced by the teacher or other students if the therapy occurs in the classroom/on the School premises?

b) Practical and administrative capacity

- Does the School have the practical capacity to accommodate the provision of the service to the student on School grounds?
- Is there physical space available?
- Is there an increased administrative burden in having the Provider on School grounds?
- Does the provision of the service impact on timetabling requirements?

c) Individual circumstances of the student

- What are the factors relevant to this student, including family and social circumstances?
- Do the student's family circumstances exclude therapy being delivered in another location or outside School hours?
- Is there sufficient flexibility in the student's educational program?

d) Duty of care

- How can the School ensure it complies with its duty of care obligations (i.e. reducing the risk of foreseeable harm to all students) during in-school delivery of services to the student?
- Are there safe and suitable premises for the provision of services?
- Is there adequate supervision of the student, with line-of-sight to the therapy session or a parent/staff member in attendance?

e) Child safety

- Does the Provider hold a current Working with Children Check and National Police Record Check?
- How will the School ensure it complies with the Child Safe Standards in relation to the Provider and provision of services?
- How will the School inform the Provider of the School's Child Safe Policy, code of conduct, supervision arrangements, internal reporting and obligations under the reportable conduct scheme?
- How will the School advise parents what to do if they have concerns about their child's welfare?
- Is there an appropriate registration body to quality assure the relevant credentials of the Provider e.g. the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA), Speech Pathology Australia (SPA)?

f) Request for therapy on School grounds after School hours

- What are the risks and limitations in permitting services to students on School grounds outside of supervision hours?

g) Anti-discrimination obligations

- Does the requested service directly relate to access to education or 'whole-of-life' support?
- Is the School providing 'reasonable adjustments' to enable the student access to their education on the same basis as their peers?

h) Health and safety

- Are there any specific health and safety considerations relating to the Provider on School grounds?
- Are there any health and safety considerations relating to equipment used by the Provider?

i) Privacy

- How will the School manage privacy considerations in terms of information disclosed to the Provider?

PROCESS

St Mary's College will endeavour to follow the process outlined below in respect of requests for in-school delivery of external services. There may be slight variations in process depending on the circumstances.

Step 1: Request for access

A request for in-school delivery of external services must come from the student's parent or, where appropriate, the student. All requests should be made to the Head of Campus (Deputy Principal) in the first instance.

When a request is made, the Head of Campus (Deputy Principal) will:

- forward the parent a copy of the *Parent Consent Form* (Attachment 1) to complete and return. This form is the means by which the parent provides authorisation for the external therapy and for the sharing of health information with the School
- forward the Provider the *Therapist Information Request Form* (Attachment 2) to complete and return. This form is the way in which the Provider provides the School with all relevant information about the request.

Step 2: Decision

Once the School has received the fully completed and signed *Parent Consent Form* and *Therapist Information Request Form*, with all requested documentation attached, the Principal (in conjunction with any relevant staff members) will consider the request in light of the considerations outlined in this Policy.

The Principal will make the decision on an individual basis.

Step 3: Notification of the decision

Once the Principal has made a decision (regardless of the outcome), the Principal will:

- advise the parents in writing of the decision (and provide a copy to the Provider)
- record the decision and considerations on the student's file.

If the parent has any concerns about the decision or wishes to provide supplementary information, they may raise this with the Principal. The Principal will consider any additional information and provide a final response.

Step 4: Clinical Access Arrangement

If the Principal decides to approve the request, the next step is to make a Clinical Access Arrangement with the Provider to minimise any risks associated with the provision of the service.

St Mary's College will arrange a meeting between the Head of Campus (Deputy Principal) and any relevant staff members as determined by the Principal, parents and Provider to confirm arrangements for the therapy including:

- the student's educational and therapy goals
- the time, frequency and place the therapy will occur
- supervision arrangements
- notice of change of arrangements (e.g. notification arrangements if the Provider is delayed or the student is absent)
- the timeframe for an initial trial where this is specified by the School.

During this meeting, it is intended that the Deputy Principal and Provider will agree to and sign the:

- Clinical Access Arrangement
- Information Sharing Agreement.

St Mary's College will take minutes of the meeting and provide the Provider with copies of the signed agreements.

Step 5: Record keeping

St Mary's College will place copies of relevant documentation on the student's file, including:

- signed copy of the *Parent Consent Form*
- signed copy of the *Therapist Information Request Form*
- letter to parents and therapist
- record of decision
- signed copy of the *Clinical Access Arrangement*
- signed copy of the *Information Sharing Agreement*
- minutes of the meeting with the Provider.

Step 6: Commencement of services

Prior to the commencement of services at the School, the School will ensure:

- the Provider and service meet all legal and policy requirements
- the Provider undergoes a School induction
- the service is delivered in accordance with the School's visitor/contractor arrangements.

Note that attendance of the Provider at any school-based meetings should be funded from the student's NDIS plan.

St Mary's College will inform school-based therapists and relevant MACS staff of services being delivered by an externally funded Provider to ensure coordinated participation in the student's School life.

ATTACHMENTS

1. [Parent Consent Form](#)
2. [Therapist Information Request Form.](#)

REFERENCES

- SMC Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct
- SMC Student Wellbeing Principles
- Our partner school student welfare policies
- Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd [NDIS/External Providers: Guidelines for Schools](#)
- Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd [Child Safety & Reportable Conduct](#) (includes resources on the engagement of contractors)
- Department of Education and Training [NDIS funded therapy at school](#)
- *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (Cth)
- National Disability Insurance Scheme [website](#).

Responsible person/policy owner	Principal
Approving body/individual	SMC School Advisory Council
Approval date	August 2021
Date of next review	August 2024

The information in this Policy is of a general nature and is not intended to create a binding legal obligation on the School.