

PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND INCLUSION POLICY

RATIONALE:

An inclusive education system enables all students to be welcomed, accepted and engaged so that they can participate, achieve and thrive in school life. Inclusive education:

- ensures that students with disabilities are accommodated to participate in education on the same basis as their peers
- acknowledges and responds to the diverse needs, identities and strengths of all students
- benefits students of all abilities in the classroom and fosters positive cultural change in attitudes and beliefs about disability, in and beyond the school environment
- contributes to positive learning, engagement and wellbeing outcomes for students.

AIMS:

- To support the inclusion of students with disabilities and additional needs in government schools.

GUIDELINES:

Who is the Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD) funding for?

PSD funding is available for schools who are supporting children with disability and high needs. There are seven categories of eligibility criteria. These include: Physical disability, Visual impairment, Hearing impairment, Severe behaviour disorder, Intellectual disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Severe language difficulties with critical educational needs. Each category holds a specific criteria students meet in order to demonstrate eligibility.

Schools use the funding in different ways, depending on the needs of each child.

This can include:

- education support staff such as integration aides
- specialist equipment
- training for teachers so they know more about the student's disability

Applying for PSD funding

For new students (including Foundation) who enrol in school who may be eligible for funding under the PSD as highlighted by families, early intervention staff or teachers, the process for applying for funding involves families providing copies of relevant medical reports and assessments to support the process and discussions. Parents/caregivers will be responsible for providing up to date reports to the school. These reports may include medical reports from the child's doctor, psychologist, speech pathologist or other allied health professionals. In situations where no history and evidence is available, assessments may be required via the most suitable pathway and these will be discussed with families. The department works to specific timelines in relation to applications, and these timelines are addressed with all stakeholders. Parental consent will be sought as required as throughout the PSD application process, Department Student Support Services Officers (psychologists, speech therapists (SSSO)) will be involved.

If the school believes it is possible to apply for funding, a Student Support Group (SSG) will be set up. This will consist of a principal class member, family member/s, school staff and potential relevant allied support services. The SSG helps find the best category for the application and gather any other documents, such as reports, to support the application. The group also completes an Educational Needs Questionnaire (ENQ) where the appropriate level of funding will be sought based on evidence in provided reports. All members of the ENQ, including a school representative, DET representative and family member are required to sign the application prior to submission.

Should concerns become evident for students currently enrolled in the school and be brought forward by teachers as per process flowchart, a meeting will be organised to discuss these concerns with the family. Often in these situations, there is limited evidence of early intervention and history, so a discussion regarding potential assessments through the most suitable pathway is required. Parental consent will be sought to commence any potentially required assessments through the school (ie. psychological, speech). Once assessments are conducted, the process will continue as above.

For any student already receiving PSD funding who transfers to the school from another government school, the Principal/Nominee will arrange for the funding to be transferred and will continue to work with the student and family accordingly.

Under the categories of intellectual disability or severe language difficulties, Assessments Australia carry out the assessment. Families will receive forms to sign to provide permission for this to happen. These forms will ask for information about the student, and the school will complete a similar form. These are confidential documents sent directly to Assessments Australia, professional to professional.

When the application is ready, it is sent to the Department's Resources Coordination Group. The group includes professionals and representatives from the Department. The Resources Coordination Group checks the application to make sure it meets the eligibility criteria. The Department will let the school know if the application is successful. They will also provide information about what funding the school will receive to help support the student at school. The school will let families know what the outcome is. The school ensures the application and health information is confidential and provides statements to parents/caregivers according to DET requirements.

If the PSD application is successful

If the application is successful, the school will receive the funding to support the student. The SSG will meet to negotiate and document a strength based Individual Learning Plan (ILP). The SSG will have a key role in discussing the education needs of the student and how to best assist the student's educational development in collaboration with the school. The SSG will consist of principal class member, family, educational support, class teacher and other relevant personnel. The group meet each term to review and update this plan on an ongoing basis to ensure the student is achieving their goals. The ILP has a mix of short, medium and long term goals.

PSD funding reviews

A review of the PSD usually happens when a student is starting secondary school or if they are on time limited funding. The review helps the SSG to know how a student's needs have changed over time. At this stage, students are usually required to receive updated assessments based on the category of disability. The SSG work together in a timely manner, based on departmental guidelines to conduct this review. The school then submits this to the Department Resources Coordination Group.

If PSD funding is no longer suitable for year 6/7 reviews, the secondary school will receive Transition Support Funding. This helps support setting up personalised teaching and learning programs for students when they commence secondary school.

If a student's needs change over time, the school could ask for the amount of funding to be reconsidered. This is called a reappraisal. To submit a reappraisal, the school principal/nominee and the SSG meet to complete a new Educational Needs Questionnaire. New assessments or reports from your child's medical professional to support the reappraisal may be required. The principal/nominee sends the application to the Department's Resources Coordination Group and will inform families of what the outcome is.

If the PSD application is not successful

Families will be notified if the application is unsuccessful. There are regulated time limits before an application can be resubmitted. It is important to remember that support at school is not dependent on the child being eligible for the PSD. If the PSD application is not successful or if students additional needs become evident through history and evidence, there are other supports available. Reasonable adjustments are made to support students with additional needs on an individual basis.

The school provides a range of supports to students with additional needs including, amongst other individual adjustments:

- Individual Learning Plans that are reviewed each semester. The SSG consists of the class teacher, families, and in some cases instructional leaders or senior staff members
- Differentiated or modified learning
- Additional small group working situations where necessary
- Language Support Program (if eligible)
- Phonological awareness program (if eligible)
- Access to SSO including speech therapists, psychologists, visiting teachers, social workers
- Koorie Education Learning Plans

- Onsite school counsellor and psychologist
- Learning Places Connect (including Centres for Expertise)
- Autism support materials
- Access to lunchtime clubs
- Restorative approaches to behaviour management
- Social stories and relevant resource
- Professional Learning for staff
- Out of Home care DET guidelines

All relevant staff will be advised of students receiving funding under PSD or students with additional needs. Should families note any breakdown in the communication, which the school works very hard to minimise, it should be brought to the attention of the class teacher who will take action.

In situations where information is required from/to the school by professionals, the school requires communication from the professional, either in writing, or via phone contact, and any required documentation is sent directly from professional to professional. Upon request of the parent/caregiver, this documentation will only be shared by the clinician.

All students receiving PSD funding will have a Learner Profile which will be updated annually. These will be available to all relevant staff and casual relief teachers. Students receiving PSD funding and some students with additional needs will have a communication book.

At the conclusion of each school year there will be a handover meeting for students receiving PSD funding between the current teacher, Education Support Staff member, and future teacher regarding student transition, progress and management. Classroom teachers confer about all students with additional needs, and families should take the opportunity to discuss matters during the Meet and Greet session at the beginning of the school year. Should families note any breakdown in the communication, which the school works very hard to minimise, it should be brought to the attention of the class teacher who will take action.

EVALUATION:

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three year review cycle

REFERENCES:

Disability Standards for Education 2005 <https://docs.education.gov.au/node/35943>
 DET A-Z Policies
 Program for Students with Disabilities Guidelines for Schools (distributed annually)
 Student Support Services Forms
 Assessment Australia Forms
 Individual Learning Plan (ILP)
 ILP Tracking Sheet
 Allied Support Services Flowchart
 Findon Wellbeing, Engagement and Inclusion Policy
 Individual Education Plan (IEP) for students in Out of Home Care
 Victorian Curriculum