

Speech pathology in schools

Schools may use specialist allied health services through this scheme to support students and the professional development of their teachers and school staff.

Allied Health professionals are not part of the medical, dental or nursing professions, but are university qualified practitioners with specialised expertise in preventing, diagnosing and treating a range of conditions and illnesses.

What is speech pathology?

Speech pathologists study, diagnose and treat communication disorders including difficulties with speaking, listening, understanding language, reading, writing, social skills, stuttering and using voice. Speech pathologists also work with students who have difficulties with swallowing, drinking, eating and saliva control.

Speech pathologists can also help with augmentative, or alternative communication. Students may be equipped with technology or alternative strategies that will help them to communicate.

There are two ways in which allied health providers may deliver services on school grounds:

▼ Parent funded

A parent/carer may request permission from the Principal to allow their speech pathologist to deliver services during school hours to their child. In most cases, this service will be funded out of the student's NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme) plan. NDIS funding does not fund group programs or services of any kind.

• School funded groups, whole of class/school and staff professional development:

Direct engagement of a speech pathology by the school, paid for with RAM funding. These services will largely be linked to learning outcomes. Schools can use speech pathologist services to meet the specific and individual needs of students with disability that affect what they need to do at school. They may engage speech pathologist services to support identified groups of students or to provide professional development to their staff. Schools may also engage providers for the support of individual students if they believe these services are required and are not being funded through the NDIS.

Who does a speech pathologist work with?

Speech pathologists work with people who have difficulties communicating because of a range or reasons that may include:

- Developmental delays
- Chromosomal abnormalities including Down syndrome, Angelman syndrome
- Brain injuries
- Learning disabilities
- Intellectual disabilities
- Neurological conditions such as Cerebral Palsy and muscular disorders
- Hearing loss or impairment
- Dysphagia
- Weak oral muscles
- Cleft lip or palate
- Autism
- Respiratory problems

Speech pathologists may also work with parents, carers, teachers and others in support roles to provide training, professional development and mentoring.

Existing Resources

For school initiated and funded services, schools may use the Department's Specialist Allied Health Scheme to identify and engage pre-qualified allied health providers.

[Externally Funded Service Providers information hub.](#)



What services can a school engage a speech pathologist to deliver?

Z

When working with students, speech pathologists aim to develop their skills and abilities so they can learn and safely and independently access the school environment. This can include:

Assessments

- Assess and analyse a student's speech and language skills
- Assess needs for Augmentation and Alternative Communication systems (AAC)

Supports

- Supporting students in developing their capabilities in receptive language, expressive language, pragmatic language, play skills, literacy and phonological skills, speech fluency and articulation
- Model correct sounds and syllables for students
- Providing communications strategies
- Helping students to understand others and share their thoughts and ideas
- Implementation of evidence based programs

Recommendations

- Designing tasks and environments to support the student to achieve improved participation in their education
- Identify technology and supports for the classroom
- Provide strategies and homework for students to continue their speech therapy at home
- Co-design tools and activities for teachers to use in the classroom

For teachers and school staff

Speech pathologists work with teachers and school staff to provide expertise and training and ensure that they are equipped to best support students with specific needs. This can include:

Training and education:

- Using ACC in the classroom
- Work collaboratively to develop and implement a student's *Personalised Learning and Support Plan*.
- Developing resources for teachers and student supports to access

Team teaching and classroom support:

- Specialised professional learning for school teachers on oral language development, assessment tools, screening tools and intervention programmes
- Working in the classroom with teachers to model and implement strategies for students with speech/language disabilities

How are services delivered?

Depending on the therapist, there are a number of ways in which services can be delivered.

Delivery mode:

- Face to face
- One on one
- Virtual consultations which can be effective for low intensity and ongoing support, or can be used to supplement face to face services. Providers may use:
 - Virtual/video conferencing
 - Online platforms
 - Phone
 - Email
- Small groups
- Classroom and whole of school
- Training workshops and webinars - one off and ongoing
- Collaborative planning and strategic workshops

Delivery frequency:

- One off session
 - Ongoing - for example weekly sessions for the period of a school term or year
 - Educational/professional development programs - series, short and long
- 