Focus on educational outcomes

Education Queensland provides occupational therapy and physiotherapy services to students with disabilities enrolled in state schools. These services focus on enhancing educational programs and outcomes for students with disabilities who may have an educational need arising from an:

• intellectual impairment;
• physical impairment;
• vision impairment;
• hearing impairment;
• speech-language impairment;
• autistic spectrum disorder; or
• multiple impairments.

Services may be available to children and young people from birth to school exit.

Occupational therapists and physiotherapists assist students to develop the skills they require to access learning and participate at school.

Occupational therapy and physiotherapy services are delivered as a component of the curriculum and are directed towards educational outcomes. Education Queensland’s therapy services target students’ educational performance, and student needs are prioritised according to the degree to which occupational therapy and physiotherapy can enhance educational outcomes. These services are therefore different to those available from many other service providers and cannot be viewed from the ‘traditional’ medically oriented therapy construct. Therapists in the educational context must be skilled in the curriculum areas, and work as part of the education team.

Occupational therapists and physiotherapists:
• work in schools supporting the teaching and learning process and are members of the education team;
• promote the student’s optimum wellbeing, function and independence at school;
• are part of the team that develops an education plan for each student;
• assist the team to adapt school activities to achieve students’ education goals;
• suggest modifications to the school environment such as changes to the physical environment or the introduction of technology;
• consult with and provide resources and training to school staff, parents and the school community;
• liaise with other agencies that provide services to students.

Management of services

The majority of Education Queensland occupational therapists and physiotherapists are school based. The base-school principal is the therapist’s line manager. Senior occupational therapy and physiotherapy officers provide professional supervision. Most therapists are itinerant and provide services across a number of schools and districts.

Occupational therapists and physiotherapists are members of a district or district cluster network. They are encouraged to support each other professionally through network meetings or teleconferences. Therapists are also able to access professional support through school visits and telephone or online consultancy services provided by occupational therapy and physiotherapy advisers.

Further information about occupational therapy and physiotherapy services is available on the Student Services Website or in the document ‘The Role and Scope of Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Services in State Schools: Revised Edition’ (Education Queensland 2007).