



Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) or Speech Sound Disorder (SSD) Class Management Policy

INTRODUCTION

Special classes for children with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) or Speech Sound Disorder (SSD) are attached to mainstream primary schools. Applications to establish such classes are considered by the special educational needs organiser (SENO) and those meeting the criteria for establishment are approved by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).

The following conditions apply to these special classes:

- A full-time teacher is assigned to each class, and classes operate with a reduced pupil-teacher ratio of 7:1, with SNA support allocation of 0.33 SNA
- Eligible children may spend up to two years in such classes. Where a second year is required, reapplication is not necessary to access the class.

The Health Service Executive (HSE) funds the provision of speech and language therapy services for the children attending these classes.

There are two special classes catering for children with DLD and SSD in the Waterford and South Kilkenny area. They are based in the Presentation Primary School, Slievekeale Road, Waterford. The first class was established in 1995 and the second class in 2011 by the Department of Education and the then Department of Health and Children (superseded by the HSE).

DEVELOPMENTAL LANGUAGE DISORDER (DLD) – WHAT IS IT?

DLD describes “children likely to have language problems enduring into middle childhood and beyond, with a significant impact on everyday social interactions or educational progress. The language disorder is not associated with a known differentiating condition.”

(Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists 2017)

DLD is not associated with Down Syndrome, Autism, general learning difficulties, intellectual disability, brain injury, sensor-neural hearing loss or cleft palate.

The diagnosis of DLD is a complex process and should only be diagnosed by a Speech and Language Therapist.

OBJECTIVES OF THE DLD/SSD CLASS

1. To develop to optimal levels the child's academic and communication skills through intensive teaching, and speech and language therapy.
2. To maximize parental involvement in the above process by maintaining open communication and opportunities to participate in the child's education.
3. To ensure the child experiences meaningful integration and inclusion within the school.
4. To maintain open communication with the school of origin/return and other professionals working with the child so that the speech and language class intervention will be of maximum benefit to the child.

CRITERIA FOR ENROLMENT

Children who meet the following criteria as per DE circular 0024/2025, may benefit from the intensive and collaborative approach to meeting their therapeutic and educational needs that is offered in a DLD/SSD Class.

1. The child has a conclusive diagnosis by a Speech and Language Therapist of:

a) Developmental Language Disorder where:

- i. there is evidence of significant and pervasive needs evidenced by response to intervention and assessment over time including, use of speech and language assessment tools, observation in both clinical and social environments and assessment for risk factors and clinical markers and monitoring of responsiveness to intervention

and

- ii. language scores at or below a standard score of 78 (-1.5 SD from the mean)

and/or

b) Speech Sound Disorder (SSD) of unknown origin diagnosed by a Speech and Language Therapist where there is evidence of significant and pervasive impact of the SSD of unknown origin on learning, literacy and social relationships evidenced by response to intervention and assessment over time including, use of speech and language assessment tools and observation in both clinical and social environments.

AND

2. The child has complex or severe educational needs as a result of their DLD and/or SSD of unknown origin that are pervasive in nature and require the integrated and targeted educational and therapeutic supports of a special class for children with DLD/SSD.

Supporting evidence should include:

- a) Evidence that despite targeted and intensive therapeutic and educational supports, the child's DLD and/or SSD of unknown origin continues to impact on their learning, participation, socialisation and well-being in their current educational setting

- b) Evidence of engagement with therapy input including response to and impact of intervention across impairment, functioning and participation over time through Speech and Language Therapist review.
- c) Education documentation from schools or early learning and care settings including Student Support Plans and/or Access and Inclusion Profiles detailing:
 - Regular reviews of needs as part of an ongoing cycle of assessment and review with parents and educational staff
 - Target-setting
 - Evidence-informed intervention and review at key points.

TRANSPORT

In general, a child who is eligible for placement in a DLD/SSD class on the basis of the provisions above is also eligible for free transport to the DLD/SSD class nearest to his or her place of residence, subject to the terms of the School Transport Scheme.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

1. Potential candidates for special language class placement are identified as having a conclusive diagnosis of DLD/SSD of unknown origin by a CORU registered Speech and Language Therapist (SLT).
2. Potential candidates should be attending primary school but where spaces are available, candidates enrolled to start in Junior Infants will be considered.
3. On the recommendation of the SLT, Parents/Guardians contact the school to request an application form for the DLD/SSD class.
4. An appropriate member of staff may be made available to parents/guardians of potential applicants to answer any questions or queries they may have prior to submitting the application.
5. On contacting the school office, an application pack will be made available to parents/guardians to include the following:
 - a. *DLD/SSD Class Management Policy*
 - b. *Application Form*
 - c. *Class Teacher's Report Form* (to be completed by teacher in child's current school placement)
6. The completed application form, accompanied by a SLT report, class teacher's report and any other relevant reports, must be provided to the school by the closing date.
7. The closing date for new applications will be notified in the Annual Admissions Notice which is available on the school website www.presentationprimarywaterford.ie
8. Parents will complete the **Parental Consent** section of the application form. This allows for the reports to be copied and circulated to the members of the management advisory committee, prior to the admissions meeting. All members will adhere to appropriate confidentiality and data protection legislation regarding reports.
9. For the purpose of admissions, a speech and language therapy report will not be more than 6 months old at the closing date for applications.

REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS

Applications for enrolment to the DLD/SSD classes, based on a referral from a Speech and Language Therapist, will be considered by an Admissions Committee (AC). The AC meets to discuss all referrals and to make recommendations to the Boards of Management (BOM) regarding the possible offer of available places in the DLD/SSD classes to appropriate candidates. While the AC may recommend placement, the BOM retains ultimate responsibility for offering/refusing enrolment places.

The AC comprises the following:

- a) School Principal of the DLD/SSD Class.
- b) HSE Speech and Language Therapists/Manager for the DLD/SSD Class
- c) DLD/SSD Class Teachers.

The parents/guardians of successful applicants are notified in writing by the relevant school principal with an offer of a DLD/SSD class placement for their child for the following academic year.

Applicants may not be offered a place in a DLD/SSD class if:

- a) they do not meet the Department of Education's eligibility criteria, or
- b) there are insufficient places available to meet the demand. In this situation a prioritisation process is applied.

Where insufficient places are available to meet the demand, priority will be given to those applicants living within the Waterford /South Kilkenny catchment area.

The Admission Committee (AC) has ultimate decision-making responsibility, and the ***"Decision Making Guidelines for Admissions Committees Development Language Disorder/Speech Sound Disorder classes"*** in conjunction with the associated ***"Decision-Making Matrix for Admissions Committees DLD classes"*** and ***Circular 0024/2025*** are used to support a consensus decision making discussion.

SPARE CAPACITY

In instances where there is spare capacity in a DLD/SSD class due to insufficient eligible children (i.e. fewer than 7 children), the board of management may offer a place to a maximum of two children who do not meet all of the eligibility criteria but who could benefit from enrolment in the class for one year on a concessionary basis. Such placements must be supported by the recommendation of a speech and language therapist and a diagnosis of DLD/SSD of unknown origin. The continued enrolment of these children for a second year can only be considered once all eligible children have been accommodated. The NCSE through the local SENO will monitor such situations.

Children who have completed up to two years and who continue to meet the criteria **and** who continue to require intensive speech and language therapy **and** who have an up to date, relevant report/recommendation from an SLT may be considered for a concessionary place. Such candidates are rated against the new concessionary candidates in any given year.

NOTIFYING APPLICANTS OF DECISIONS

- Applicants will be informed in writing as to the decision of the school, within the timeline outlined in the annual admissions notice.
- If an applicant is not offered a place in the DLD/SSD class, the reasons why they were not offered a place will be communicated in writing to the applicant.
- The unsuccessful applicant will be informed of the right to seek a review/right of appeal of the school's decision (see Section 18 Annual Admissions Policy for further details).

ENROLMENT PROCEDURES

1. On receipt of the **Acceptance Form**, the school Principal will meet with parents to complete other paperwork required for enrolment. This will include:
 - National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Application Form
 - NCSE Transport Application Form
 - School Enrolment Form
2. When Parents/Guardians have accepted a place in writing, the principal of the child's school will be informed.
3. To support transition to the DLD/SSD class, the new entrant will have an opportunity to visit the DLD/SSD class prior to enrolment.

QUERIES AND APPEALS

Where a parent/guardian has a query in relation to the procedures for enrolment, the parent/guardian should contact the school principal. If necessary, a meeting will be arranged between the parent/guardian and members of the admissions committee as appropriate.

Review of decisions by the Board of Management

The parent of the applicant may request the board to review a decision to refuse admission. Such requests must be made in accordance with Section 29C of the Education Act 1998. The timeline within which such a review must be requested and the other requirements applicable to such reviews are set out in the procedures determined by the Minister under section 29B of the Education Act 1998 which are published on the website of the Department of Education and Skills.

The board will conduct such reviews in accordance with the requirements of the procedures determined under Section 29B and with section 29C of the Education Act 1998.

Note: Where an applicant has been refused admission due to the class being oversubscribed, the applicant **must request a review** of that decision by the board of management prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998. Where an applicant has been refused admission due to a reason other than the class being oversubscribed, the applicant **may request a review** of that decision by the board of management prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

Right of appeal

Under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, the parent of the student, or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, may appeal a decision of this school to refuse admission.

An appeal may be made under Section 29 (1) (c) (i) of the Education Act 1998 where the refusal to admit was due to the school being oversubscribed.

An appeal may be made under Section 29 (1) (c) (ii) of the Education Act 1998 where the refusal to admit was due to a reason other than the class being oversubscribed.

Where an applicant has been refused admission due to the class being oversubscribed, the applicant **must request a review** of that decision by the board of management **prior to making an appeal** under section 29 of the Education Act 1998. (see Review of decisions by the Board of Management).

Where an applicant has been refused admission due to a reason other than the class being oversubscribed, the applicant **may request a review** of that decision by the board of management prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998. (see Review of decisions by the Board of Management)

Appeals under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 will be considered and determined by an independent appeals committee appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills. The timeline within which such an appeal must be made and the other requirements applicable to such appeals are set out in the procedures determined by the Minister under section 29B of the Education Act 1998 which are published on the website of the Department of Education and Skills.

CURRICULUM AND PROGRAMME PLANNING

- The children in the language classes will follow the regular primary school curriculum at a level appropriate to them.
- There is a special emphasis on the language involved in each subject area, and on esteem-building and social skills.
- The Irish language curriculum is not taught formally in the speech and language classes. Parents are made aware of the implications of an exemption from Irish.
- Speech and language therapy is delivered on an individual and group basis.
- An individual educational plan (IEP) is drawn up for each child by class teacher and speech and language therapist in September, in consultation with the child, the child's parent/guardian and other relevant professionals.
- Teachers and therapists will devise long-term and short-term targets for each child. Teachers will copy their monthly progress report to the school principal.

INTEGRATION

The children in the DLD/SSD classes are involved in school life in the same way as children in all other classes in the school. All children in the school play together at break times, and are involved in all school activities including assemblies, celebrations, concerts, sporting events and school tours. The children in the language classes may integrate with their peers from mainstream classes for some subjects where appropriate.

ASSESSMENT

- Assessment and review of each child's ***school support plan*** (SSP) is ongoing in the DLD/SSD class.
- The IEP is reviewed at least twice during the school year or as required. This includes both informal observational assessments and formal assessments.
- Both teacher and therapist will maintain an individual professional file in accordance with their service requirements.
- The teacher and SLT will monitor and record each child's progress.
- At any time during the school year, where there is a concern about the suitability of a child's placement, the admissions committee will meet to address the concern. This may entail a recommendation for an alternative, more suitable education placement.
- At the Advisory Committee (AC) meeting in Term 3, the progress of each child will be discussed, to determine whether the child will benefit from an additional year in the DLD/SSD class, will return to his/her base school or will transfer to another more appropriate educational placement.
- The recommendations of the AC are then reported to the Board of Management for their consideration and approval.

DATA PROTECTION AND RECORD RETENTION

The school's Data Protection Policy applies to the ***personal data*** held by the school's Board of Management (BoM), which is protected by the Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018 and the EU General Data Personal Regulation (GDPR)

- Manual records are kept in a secure, locked filing cabinet/press in a locked administration office only accessible to personnel who are authorized, to use the data.
- Employees are required to maintain the confidentiality of any data to which they have access.
- Digital records are stored on a password-protected computer with adequate encryption and firewall software in a locked office.
- The school has the burglar alarm activated during out-of-school hours
- Following the Admissions Committee meeting, all copies of reports of children not in receipt of places in the DLD/SSD Class will be shredded early in the following school year.
- On leaving the DLD/SSD Class, a pupil's records will be stored in accordance with Data Retention Periods for Schools policy (available on request).

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The school encourages and welcomes parental/guardian involvement in their child's education. The Aladdin Connect App and teacher designated emails are used for communication between home and school. Meetings between a parent, teacher and SLT are scheduled and a parent/guardian is asked to:

- confer with the class teacher and SLT in drawing up a ***school support plan*** (SSP) for their child
- meet with the class teacher and SLT to monitor and evaluate the child's progress as required by either party
- engage with the Aladdin Connect app for school communications
- contact the class teacher using the teacher's designated email
- voice opinions and offer suggestions in relation to the child's welfare in class
- discuss any concerns as they arise
- monitor and support homework
- notify reason for school absence via the Aladdin Connect App.

Children enrolled in the DLD/SSD Class are expected to adhere to the Code of Behaviour of Presentation Primary School.

COLLABORATIVE WORK PRACTICES

As the DLD/SSD classes are an inter-agency initiative involving the Department of Education and the HSE, a team approach is used in all aspects of the management of the classes.

A child-centred approach is used in the classes, with the teachers, special needs assistants (SNA) and SLT working in partnership, sharing information, resources and methodologies. The teachers and SLT jointly plan the programme and timetable, and share all information regarding the child.

- During the school year, the SLT and DLD/SSD Class Teacher jointly draw up an individual support plan for each child, in consultation with the child, the child's parent, and any other relevant professionals.
- At the beginning of each term, the teacher shares the term plans and care needs with the SLT and other relevant school staff to identify topics/concepts that can be worked on jointly.
- Implementation of the school support plan (SSP) will be discussed and agreed with all relevant individuals in respect of care and education needs
- Teacher and SLT meet weekly to review individual student progress, update targets, plan group work and plan for the generalisation of speech and language therapy goals.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Admissions Committee

The admissions committee advises the Board of Management on DLD/SSD class policy and practice. The committee makes recommendations to the board on the enrolment, retention and discharge of children to the DLD/SSD class.

School Principal of the DLD/SSD Class

- The Principal represents the Board of Management on the Admissions Committee.
- The Principal reports the recommendations of the admissions committee to the Board of Management.
- The Principal is responsible for the day-to-day management of the classes and the support of children, staff and parents/guardians.
- The Principal informs the SENO about enrolments, retention and discharges.
- The Principal applies to the SENO for special needs assistant support, assistive technology (if required), and transport support for children in the class.
- The Principal liaises with HSE in relation to the management of the DLD/SSD classes.
- The Principal consults with NEPS psychologist as necessary.
- The Principal liaises with the relevant school principals at times of intake and discharge.

HSE Speech and Language Therapist/Manager for the DLD/SSD Class

- The SLT is a member of the Admissions Committee.
- The role of SLT is to provide professional opinions on the suitability, eligibility and prioritisation of referrals to the DLD/SSD Classes.
- The SLT provides support and advice to SLTs involved in the referral process to the DLD/SSD Classes.
- The SLT provides intervention for the communication needs of children attending classes. This includes:
 - reviewing existing reports
 - setting therapy targets in conjunction with teachers and parents
 - working closely with education staff regarding speech and language performance in classroom
 - providing training on speech and language intervention for education staff when necessary

DLD/SSD Class Teachers

- The DLD/SSD class teacher is a member of the Admissions Committee and attends the admissions and discharge meetings.
- The DLD/SSD Teacher monitors and reports on the progress of pupils attending the DLD/SSD Class.

- The DLD/SSD Teacher assesses each child's personal, social and academic needs, and in consultation with the child, parent/guardian and SLT devises an individual education plan (IEP).
- The DLD/SSD Teacher ensures that the child follows the regular primary school curriculum (with the exception of Irish), taking account of the child's speech and language abilities and the goals of the SLT.

Special Needs Assistants (SNA)

- The DLD/SSD Class is allocated access to 0.33 SNA assistance per class.
- The SNA always works under the direction of the DLD/SSD Teacher or Principal
- The SNA provides support in assisting the pupil to access the curriculum.
- The SNA operates in the DLD/SSD Class within the school policy and Dept. of Education Circulars

Other School Staff

- There is a high degree of co-operation between staff of the DLD/SSD classes and staff of other classes in the school.
- Children in the DLD/SSD classes may be integrated into their age-equivalent class group for designated curriculum areas.

Other Professionals/Agencies

Consultation occurs as appropriate, with any professionals involved with the child including educational psychology, clinical psychology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, art/play therapy etc.

DISCHARGE CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES

- A full review of all existing pupils is conducted by the class teacher and the SLT in Term 3 each year.
- An Admissions Committee meeting will be held to discuss the discharge and retention of pupils currently in the class.
- A verbal report on each child is presented at the Admissions Committee meeting. The recommendation that a child be discharged is made when:
 - a child has developed the necessary readiness to be re-integrated into a non-specialised educational setting
 - the language class placement is not considered appropriate.
 - the child may still have special educational needs and require alternative provision.
 - the child's parents state a preference for the child to return to mainstream school.

REVIEW AND RATIFICATION

This policy is reviewed annually and updated when required by the Admissions Committee. It was reviewed and updated in February 2026.

Signed: *Terence White* Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 27/02/2026