

SPECIAL CLASSES FOR CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL LANGUAGE DISORDER (DLD)

Waterford /South Kilkenny

Language Class Management Policy

**Presentation Primary School,
Slievekeale Road,
Waterford.
Roll No : 19955T**

**SLT Department
Unit 3
University Hospital Waterford**

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INTRODUCTION

Children who have been diagnosed with a specific speech and/or language disorder are eligible to be considered for enrolment for the special language classes, set up in mainstream primary schools by the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Health and Children.

There are two language classes catering for children with developmental language disorder (DLD) 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 Skills and the Health Service Executive (HSE).

A child with developmental language disorder can be referred by their parents/guardians in consultation with a CORU registered speech and language therapist, a psychologist and other professionals, as appropriate, for consideration for a place in the language classes.

DEFINITION OF DEVELOPMENTAL LANGUAGE DISORDER

“Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) is a term currently used to describe children whose skills in understanding and /or expressing themselves through speech and language is significantly impaired. These difficulties occur in the context of normal cognitive abilities and are not primarily attributable to social, emotional, behavioural, educational, physical or sensory difficulties” (Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists IASLT 2007).

OBJECTIVES OF THE LANGUAGE CLASSES

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

The criteria for enrolment in special classes for pupils with developmental language disorder have been set by the Department of Education and Skills Circular 0038/2007. A pupil enrolled in a special class for pupils with developmental language disorder (DLD) should meet each of the following criteria:

1. The pupil has been assessed by a psychologist on a standardised test of intellectual ability that places non-verbal ability within the average range (i.e. non-verbal IQ of 90) or above.

2. The pupil has been assessed by a CORU registered speech and language therapist (SLT) on an age appropriate standardised test of speech and language development that places performance in one or more of the main areas of speech and language development at two standard deviations or more below the mean or at a generally equivalent level (i.e. 2 standard deviations or below, at or below a standard score of 70).
3. The pupil's difficulties are not attributable to hearing impairment; where the pupil is affected to some degree by hearing impairment, the hearing threshold for the speech-related frequencies should be 40dB.
4. Emotional and behavioural disorders or a physical disability are not considered to be primary causes of the Developmental Language Disorder.

PROCEDURES FOR REFERRALS

1. Potential candidates for the language class placement are typically identified (but not necessarily) by a local CORU registered HSE Speech and Language Therapist and a psychologist.
2. An Open Day for **parents** of potential pupils will be held during Term 2 of the school year.
3. The child's speech and language therapist provides parents/guardians with an information leaflet on the language class.
4. The HSE speech and language therapist and the NEPS psychologist liaise as appropriate to support applications.
5. Parents/Guardians make contact with the school to request information and an application form for the speech and language class.
6. The principal will send an application form to all parents/guardians on request. The application will include the following:
 - a. Enrolment and Admissions Policy
 - b. application form
 - c. a class teacher's report (to be completed by teacher in child's current school placement)
 - d. consent form
7. The completed application form accompanied by a psychological report, speech and language report, report from the child's current class teacher and other relevant reports, must be provided to the school by February 28th of the current school year.
8. Parents will also submit with their application, a completed consent form which 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.
10. For the purpose of admissions, for children who had their cognitive assessment completed while attending primary school, the report can be over 12 months old. For children not attending primary school, the psychological report must be completed within 12 months of the Speech and Language Class application closing date.
11. The Management Advisory Committee (MAC) meets in March to discuss all referrals and to make recommendations to the Board of Management of Presentation Primary School as to the children who should be offered places in the language class.
12. The Principal presents the recommendations of the MAC to the Board of Management for its consideration and approval.

13. Parents/Guardians of applicants will be informed in writing of the decision of the Board of Management on enrolment, retention and discharge of children to the language classes.
14. Successful applicants will initially, be offered a year's placement. For each child, the first term is considered a trial period. Subsequent to this or at any time during the school year a child considered inappropriately placed will be withdrawn at the discretion of the Board of Management of Presentation Primary School

REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS

Admissions Committee

The Management Advisory Committee (MAC) is a multi-agency admissions committee set up to make recommendations to the school board of management in relation to the admission, retention, and discharge of the children to the language class. The MAC considers the appropriate placement of candidates based on the information provide with the application, taking into account the speech/language, social, emotional and educational needs of the child. The admissions committee comprises of:

- speech and language class teachers
- speech and language class therapists
- school principal
- principal speech and language therapist
- designated educational psychologist - National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS).

It is recommended that representative members of each group should be present at the meeting for decision making.

A consensus decision is reached in all cases. Where consensus may not be possible

- additional information may be sought from relevant source
- a school visit may be carried out for potential candidates by a member of the Management Advisory Committee (MAC)

The date for the Admissions meeting is set by the MAC. The meeting will take place in March. The agenda of the meeting is to:

- make recommendations regarding retention/discharge of children currently enrolled in the language classes. It is recommended that a provisional discussion has taken place at a previous MAC review meeting in early February and this discussion is fully communicated to parents. Parents/ Guardians will be required to complete a consent form to allow their child to be discussed at this meeting.
- evaluate the new applications in the light of DES criteria (DES Circular 0038/2007) and deem them to be eligible or ineligible for consideration for the class.
- prioritise **eligible** applicants based on criteria for enrolment through a structured language class rating scale.
- following the prioritization of places to eligible candidates, if there are more places than eligible candidates, concessionary places are then considered according to Circular 0038/2007 (see below)
- report their recommendations regarding allocation of places to the school Board of Management.

Concessionary Places

If there is spare capacity in a language class because of insufficient eligible children, the admissions committee may recommend to the Board of Management to offer places, to a maximum of two per class, to children who do not meet the DES eligibility criteria but who could benefit from enrolment in the class for one year on a concessionary basis. Concessionary places are allocated based on the scores in the priority rating scale.

The continued enrolment of these children for a second year can only be considered once all eligible applicants have been accommodated. The local Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO) will be notified in relation to such decisions (DES Circular 0038/2007).

Communication with Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO)

The principal will inform the SENO of the decisions made by the Board of Management relating to the retention/discharge of children currently in the language classes and decisions made by the Board of management relating to all new applicants.

PROCEDURES FOR ENROLMENT

1. The school principal reports the recommendations of the Advisory Committee to the Board of Management and the board makes the decision in relation to the allocation of places for the following school year.
2. The school principal, as secretary of the Board of Management, writes to the parents/guardians of **all** the children, informing them of the decision of the Board of Management in relation to their child.
3. Parents/Guardians of pupils who are not offered places are informed of their right to appeal such a decision.
4. Parents/guardians of pupils being offered a place, are required to complete an acceptance form if they are accepting a place for their child.
5. On receipt of the **Acceptance Form**, the school Principal will meet with parents to complete all other paperwork required for enrolment. This will include:
 - National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Application Form
 - School Enrolment Form and related documents
 - NCSE Transport Form(if relevant)
6. New entrants are initially offered a placement for one year. For each child, the first term is considered a trial period. Subsequent to this or at any time during the school year a child considered inappropriately placed will be withdrawn at the discretion of the Board of Management of Presentation Primary School
7. When a place has been accepted in writing, the principal of the child's school is informed.
8. An **Open Day** is held in June for new entrants. The children accompanied by their parents/guardians visit the classrooms and meet with school staff.

Transport

A child who is enrolled in special language classes may be eligible for transport to the school, subject to the DES School Transport Scheme. Details available from school principal.

Waiting List

- ❖ If there are more children eligible for places than places offered, the Advisory Committee will draw up a prioritised waiting list. Priority is based on the Rating Scale.

- ❖ The waiting list (subject to Board of Management approval) will operate for Term 1 of the school year. If a vacancy arises during that time, places will be offered to children on the waiting list in order of priority.
- ❖ Where a place becomes available and there are no candidates on the waiting list, the School Principal and the Speech and Language Therapy Manager, where clinically possible, will call an additional Advisory Committee meeting, following the procedures laid out above.

QUERIES AND APPEALS

Queries

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.

Appeals

According to Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, a parent/guardian may appeal a decision by a Board of Management not to enroll a child. Parents are informed of this information if their child is not offered a place in the Language Class. The appeal is made in writing to: The General Secretary, Appeals Administration Unit, Department of Education and Skills. The appeal must be made within 42 calendar days from the date of the original letter informing them of the decision

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 plans for each child. Teachers will copy their monthly progress report to the school principal.

Language Class, Presentation Primary School, Waterford, clinical standards for service delivery have been developed to identify areas of best practice for integrated service provision in the language classes.

Integration

The children in the language 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 **individual education plan** (IEP) is ongoing in the language classes.
- 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 therapist 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 placement.
- A mid-year report will be made available to the Management Advisory Committee in February by the teachers and therapists.
- At a Management Advisory Committee meeting, following ongoing review by the class teacher, SLT and psychologist, as appropriate, the progress of each child is discussed, to determine whether the child will benefit from an additional year in a language class, will return to his/her base school or will transfer to another more appropriate educational placement.
- The recommendations of the Management Advisory Committee are then reported to the Board of Management of Presentation Primary School for their consideration and decision.

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 authorised 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 meeting, all copies of reports of children not in receipt of places in the Language Class will be shredded early in the following school year.
- On leaving the Language Class, a pupil's records will be stored in accordance with Data Retention Periods for Schools (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 therapist are scheduled and a parent/guardian is asked to:

- confer with the class teacher and SLT in drawing up an individual education plan (IEP) 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
- send a written explanation for any school absences.

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

ROLES AND WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

Collaborative Work Practices

As the language classes are an inter-agency initiative involving the Department of Education and Skills (DES) 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 speech and language therapists working in partnership, sharing information, resources and methodologies. The teachers and therapists jointly plan the programme and timetable, and share all information regarding the child.

- During the school year, the SLT and 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 therapist and other relevant school staff to identify topics/concepts that can be worked on jointly.
- Implementation of the support plan will be discussed and agreed with all relevant individuals in respect of care and education needs
- Teacher/Therapist meet weekly to review individual student progress, update goals, plan group work and plan for the generalisation of speech and language therapy goals.

Role of Management Advisory Committee

The advisory committee advises the Board of Management on language class policy and practice. The committee makes recommendations to the board on the enrolment, retention and discharge of children to the language class.

Role of School Principal

- The Principal represents the Board of Management on the Advisory Committee.
- The Principal reports the recommendations of the advisory 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 language class 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 language class.
- The Principal liaises with HSE in relation to the management of the language classes.
- The Principal consults with NEPS psychologist as necessary.
- The Principal liaises with the relevant school principals at times of intake and discharge.

Role of Language Class Teachers

- The language class teacher is a member of the Advisory Committee and attends the admissions and discharge meetings.
- The Language Class Teacher monitors and reports on the progress of pupils attending the Language Class.
- The Language Class Teacher assesses each child's personal, social and academic needs, and in consultation with the child, parent/guardian and speech and language therapist devises an individual education plan (IEP).

- The Language Class Teacher ensures that the child follows the regular primary school curriculum (with the exception of Irish), taking into account the child's speech and language abilities and the goals of the speech and language therapist.

Role of Special Needs Assistants (SNA)

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

Role of Speech and Language Therapist

- The Language Class Speech and Language Therapist is a member of the Advisory Committee.
- The role of SLT is to provide professional opinions on the suitability, eligibility and prioritisation of referrals to the Language Classes.
- The SLT provides support and advice to SLTs involved in the referral process to the Language Classes
- The SLT provides intervention for the communication needs of children attending classes. This includes:
 - reviewing existing reports
 - setting and targeting current therapy goals 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

Role of Educational Psychologist

- The designated NEPS psychologist is a member of the Advisory Committee
- The NEPS psychologist has an advisory role on the committee in his/her capacity as educational psychologist.
- The NEPS psychologist provides a psychological service to the school.
- The psychologist consults with the school principal and relevant professionals associated with the language class to identify priorities for intervention by NEPS according to the NEPS model of service.
- In the case of children being referred for consideration for language class placement, requests for psychological assessment by NEPS are made in consultation with the Principal of the child's base school.
- Schools that do not have a designated NEPS psychologist are advised to arrange assessments through the SCPA as necessary.

Role of Principal Speech and Language Therapist (PSLT)

- The role of the Principal SLT is to lead the governance of the speech and language therapy service provision to the language classes.
- The Principal Speech and Language Therapist oversees the SLT advisory role in the referral process to the language classes, in consultation with the SLT team.
- The PSLT / PSLT designate liaises with the Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapy / Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapy Managers on pertinent issues regarding SLT service provision to the language classes to ensure local service is aligned to national standard practice.

Role of Other School Staff

- There is a high degree of co-operation between staff of the language classes and staff of other classes in the school.
- Children in the language 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

1. A full review of all existing pupils is conducted by the class teacher and the Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) in advance of the MAC meeting in March and the results of this assessment will be discussed and used to complete the Rating Scale at the MAC meeting.
2. The Speech and Language Therapy Report will be copied to parents/ guardians.
3. Parents/Guardians will be informed that their child's review will be discussed at the MAC meeting in relation to accessing a subsequent place in the Language Class for the following year. Parents/Guardians can request that their child's review is not discussed at the MAC meeting if they do not wish to apply for subsequent access to the Language Class.
4. Following consultation at the Management Advisory Committee meeting, a subsequent year in the language class may be offered. Where existing class pupils continue to fit the criteria they will be offered a second year in the language class.
5. Where a child no longer meets the criteria for the Language Class, s/he may be offered a place in line with the Dept. of Education and Skills policy on concessionary places.
6. A verbal report on each child is presented at the Advisory Committee meeting in March. 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 primary disorder is no longer a developmental language disorder.
 - the child's parents state a preference for the child to return to mainstream school.
7. When the decision is made that a child is to be discharged from the language class, the child's parents/guardians are informed. A final meeting will be arranged at which the parents/guardians, SLT and class teacher will discuss the child's end of year school report, and speech and language class report. If the child has been reviewed by the psychologist attached to the class, s/he will attend also. The Principal will also advise parents to procure a school place for their child even if the child has come from a base school.
8. Parental permission is sought for the principal of the Presentation Primary School to contact the principal of the child's next school, so as to establish close links as early as possible between the two schools and the staff involved. All efforts are made to ensure a smooth transition for each child.

Permission is also sought so that end of year reports compiled on the child i.e. class report, speech and language therapy report and any other relevant reports can be forwarded to the child's next school. The school is also invited to make contact with the language class staff.

9. The child is transferred back to the local speech and language therapy service if clinically indicated.

REVIEW AND RATIFICATION

This policy is reviewed and updated annually by the Management Advisory Committee (MAC). This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in December 2021.

Signed: *Terence White* Chairperson

Date: *08-12-2021*