



Stapolin Educate Together National School

Specific Speech and Language Disorder Class Policy

School Address: Belmayne Avenue, Belmayne, Dublin 13

School Roll Number: 20519G

School Patron: Educate Together

1. Introduction

This policy sets out to explain the enrolment process for pupils with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) in the Senior Specialised Class in Stapolin Educate Together National School. It is set out in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1998, the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 and the Equal Status Act 2000. The guidelines set out in the Department of Education Circular 0038/2007 are also referred to. It is further informed by the Department of Education (DE) Inspectorate report 'Educational Provision for pupils with SSLD' (April 2021).

This policy should be read in conjunction with Stapolin ETNS Admissions Policy and The Admissions Notice for the pupils with SSLD class.

The Board of Management trusts that this policy will assist parents/guardians in relation to enrolment criteria and procedures for the Specific Speech and Language Disorder Class in Stapolin ETNS.

The Board of Management and the Principal will be happy to clarify any matters arising from the policy.

As the Junior SSLD Class in St Marnock's NS and the Senior SSLD Class in Stapolin ETNS accept referrals from the same catchment area, both schools will work in close collaboration with each other in regard to the SSLD Class.

2. Characteristic spirit and general objectives of the school

Educate Together schools are committed to the values laid down in Educate Together's Charter. Our schools are learner-centred, equality-based, co-educational and democratically-run. This means that all members of the school community, whatever their social, cultural or belief background, work together in an atmosphere of dignity and respect. Students follow an Ethical Education curriculum, learning about morality and spirituality; equality and justice; belief systems and an ethical approach to the environment. It teaches students about different

belief systems as well as atheism, agnosticism, and humanism without promoting any one worldview over another. Our equality-based ethos informs all policies and practices in the daily life of the school. In exercising this policy making and decision-making responsibilities, the school's Board of Management upholds the characteristic spirit of the school.

3. Developmental Language Disorder

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) means that a child has significant, on-going difficulties understanding and/or using spoken language, in all the languages he/she uses. DLD was previously known as the interchangeable terms Specific Speech and Language Impairment (SSLI) or Specific Language Impairment (SLI). In Ireland, the new term DLD has been adopted by the Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists (IASLT) in line with international consensus. Specific Speech and Language Disorder (SSLD) is the term which the Department of Education (DE) in Ireland continues to use.

IASLT, in its 2017 Position Paper and Guidance Document Supporting Children with DLD in Ireland, explains that DLD describes “children likely to have language problems enduring into middle childhood and beyond, with a significant impact on everyday social interactions and/or educational progress”. For this group of children, their language disorder is not caused by other medical conditions, such as, hearing loss, physical impairment, Autism, severe learning difficulties or brain injuries. The characteristics of children with DLD include speech, language and communication difficulties affecting the following areas: phonology, syntax, semantics, word finding, pragmatics/language use and verbal learning and memory. Children with DLD can also have other difficulties (e.g. attention, motor, literacy, and speech or behaviour difficulties).

One option within the clinical care pathway for provision of a Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) service to children with DLD is by means of enrolment within a specific class. These classes, termed SSLD (Specific Speech and Language Disorder) classes by the DE offer intensive speech and language therapy which is integrated with the child's academic development.

Children eligible for referral to the SSLD class under the current DE criteria are a specific subgroup of children with a diagnosis of DLD.

4. Rationale

For school aged children with DLD in the Republic of Ireland an arrangement exists between the Department of Education (DE) and the Health Service Executive (HSE) to provide school-based Speech and Language Therapy to suitable candidates through attendance at a Specific Speech & Language Disorder class.

Children referred to the class must live within a specific catchment area of the HSE Community Healthcare Organisation Dublin North City & County (North Dublin area). Children due to be enrolled in the SSLD Class may be eligible for free transport to the school under the terms of the DE School Transport Scheme.

The aim of the class is to address the pupils' Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) through appropriate education and intensive speech and language therapy within the context of a broad and balanced primary school curriculum.

As per DE guidelines the SSLD Class provides a curriculum that while similar to that followed to their peers in mainstream classes, has a particular and constant emphasis on the language involved in each subject area. It also provides for intensive speech and language therapy and collaborative programmes between the SSLD Class Teacher and SLT and parents/guardians. Irish is not part of the SSLD Class curriculum.

5. Limitation on Places and Duration of Placement

The aim of the class is to provide children who meet the DE criteria and the local criteria for Stapolin ETNS SSLD Class, the opportunity to spend one or two years in a small class setting where they can receive intensive educational and speech & language therapy support (DE Circular 0038/2007). **The place is offered initially for one year.** The class is staffed by a full time Teacher employed by the DE and a part time Speech & Language Therapist employed by the local HSE area. No more than seven children will be enrolled in the class each year.

6. Criteria for Consideration for Enrolment in the Senior SSLD Class

Both Criteria A and B must be met by the applicant, and the application process must be adhered to. Individual factors will also be considered under Criteria C and children with the greatest need will be offered one of the seven places in the class.

Criteria A: Department of Education (DE) Criteria.

The DE has outlined the eligibility criteria for enrolment in a SSLD Class. These include exclusionary and discretionary criteria in relation to language and IQ scores in children with SSLD. In order to be described as having a specific speech and language disorder in Ireland each applicant should meet each of the following criteria (from the DE Circular 0038/07):

- (i) The applicant must have an assessment by a psychologist on a standardised test of intelligence, which places the applicant's non-verbal, or performance ability within the average range or above. (i.e., non-verbal IQ of 90, or above).
- (ii) The applicant must have an assessment on a standardised test of speech/language development by a speech and language therapist which places the applicant's 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 (2 standard deviations or below, at or below a standard score of 70).
- (iii) The applicant's difficulties are not attributable to hearing impairment; where the applicant is affected to some degree by hearing impairment, the hearing threshold for the speech-related frequencies should be 40Db.
- (iv) Emotional and behavioural disorders or a physical disability are not considered to be primary causes.

Criteria B: Local Criteria for Stapolin ETNS Senior SSLD Class.

- (i) The applicant must live within the designated catchment area, as determined by the HSE, at the time of referral. At present this catchment area is HSE Community Healthcare Organisation Dublin North City & County (Dublin North Area). A full list of the addresses covered by this catchment area is available from your local HSE Office.
- (ii) Applications are only accepted for children who are in 2nd, 3rd, 4th or 5th Class at the time of referral. The maximum number of years for a pupil in the SSLD Class is two years. Children in 5th Class can only be considered for a one-year placement. Those children deemed to be in need of a second year in the SSLD Class must continue to meet Criteria A
- (iii) The applicant must have attended SLT sessions in the 9 months prior to the closing date for applications.

Only applicants that meet Criteria A & B above will then be considered under Criteria C.

Criteria C: Factors relating to greatest need.

The following factors will be considered in relation to identification of the children's needs and those presenting with the greatest need will be offered a place in the class. The adapted New Brunswick Priority Rating Scale (PRS) will be used to identify the applicants with the greatest need under Criteria C under the areas of;

- The impact of Primary Presenting Problem
- The predicted Outcome of Intervention
- The impact of Service Delay

These areas of the PRS will be rated on a 5-point scale with 1 being a low impact score and 5 being a high impact score. The following information will be considered when reviewing individual applications under Criteria C;

1. The applicant's current profile, including standardised assessment results of receptive and expressive language development and speech. Standard scores, percentile ranks, standard deviations and age equivalents should be included where possible.
2. The severity of the applicant's speech impairment i.e. current level of intelligibility, phonological system, oral motor functioning.
3. History of the applicant's involvement to date with speech and language therapy services including the number of therapy sessions attended and/or offered, the focus of therapy and therapy outcomes.

4. Summary of the impact of the applicant's language and/or speech impairment on his/her educational progress
5. Summary of the impact of the applicant's language on his/her social/emotional development.
6. Case history information as included in the SLT Report; Psychology Report and other reports submitted.

7. Referrals

Applications for referrals are accepted from Speech and Language Therapists and Psychologists only.

Applications should be made to the School Principal with the relevant accompanying documentation listed below.

Parents may make enquiries directly to the School Principal or HSE Speech & Language Therapist. The child's Speech & Language Therapist or Psychologist co-ordinates the referral to the SSLD Class having discussed this in detail with parents/guardians and other professionals involved with the child.

All documents and application forms necessary are available on the school's website (<https://www.stapolinetns.ie/>).

Required Documentation:

Referrals must be accompanied by **5 copies** of the following documents:

1. **Stapolin ETNS Referral & Consent Form for SSLD Class:** this is completed by the referral agent and parents.
2. A recent **Psychological Report** (within the last 2 years of referral date). This should include results of a comprehensive assessment of both non-verbal and verbal ability, including subtest results.
3. An up-to-date **Speech and Language Therapy report** (compiled within 3 months of referral date) confirming a diagnosis of Specific Speech and Language Disorder (SSLD). Standard SLT Assessments must have been carried out within the 6-month period prior to referral. The SLT report should include:
 - Summary of case history information
 - History of the applicant's involvement to date with speech and language therapy services including the number of therapy sessions attended and/or offered, the focus of therapy and therapy outcomes.
 - Description of the applicant's current profile, including standardised assessment results of receptive and expressive language development and speech. Standard scores, percentile ranks, standard deviations and age equivalents should be included where possible.

- Where relevant, an indication of the severity of the applicant’s speech impairment i.e. current level of intelligibility, phonological system, oral motor functioning. A short phonological transcription should be included.
 - Summary of the impact of the applicant’s language and/or speech impairment on his/her educational progress and social/emotional development. A Social, Emotional & Behavioural Rating Scale is included in this form which must be completed by the applicant’s SLT and parents/guardians.
4. **Stapolin ETNS School Report Form for SSLD Class:** Reports should be completed by the applicant’s Class Teacher and Resource Teacher (where relevant) on the standard ‘School report Form for Referral to SSLD Class’. A Social, Emotional & Behavioural Rating Scale is included in this form.
 5. **Other Reports:** if relevant (e.g. Audiology, OT, Medical, Social, Psychiatry).

All documentation and information received is strictly private and confidential.

8. Application Process

Following the closing date for referrals, as set out in the Annual Admissions Notice for the class, applications for enrolment in the SSLD Class are reviewed by an Admissions Advisory Committee (AAC). The members of the committee are as follows:

- The School Principal of Stapolin ETNS.
- The Class Teacher of Stapolin ETNS SSLD Class
- The HSE Speech and Language Therapist assigned to the class.
- The HSE Speech and Language Therapy Manager from the local area
- The HSE Principal Clinical Psychologist from the local area

The role of the Admissions Advisory Committee is as follows:

- To make recommendations to the Board of Management regarding the admission, retention/discharge of children in the SSLD class
- To evaluate and process new applications in the light of Criteria A and Criteria B
- In the event of oversubscription, all applications which meet Criteria A and B will be considered under Criteria C.

In the event of there being more applications to the school year concerned than places available in the SSLD Class, a waiting list of students whose applications for admission to Stapolin Educate Together National School were unsuccessful due to the class being oversubscribed will be compiled and will remain valid for the school year in which admission is being sought.

Placement on the waiting list for the SSLD Class is in the order of priority assigned to the students’ applications after the school has applied the selection criteria in accordance with this policy.

Late applications who meet Criteria A and B will be added to the list in date order. Offers of any subsequent places that become available for and during the school year in relation to which admission is being sought will be made to those students on the waiting list, in accordance with the order of priority in relation to which the students have been placed on the list or date of application for applications submitted after the closing date set out in the relevant Annual Admissions Notice. Waiting lists will expire at the end of each school year.

Applicants will be informed in writing (by email) as to the decision of the school, within the timeline outlined in the relevant Annual Admissions Notice but no later than three weeks after the annual admissions process or for late applications, three weeks after the school receives an application. If a student is not offered a place in the SSLD Class, the reasons why they were not offered a place will be communicated in writing (by email) to the applicant, including, where applicable, details of the student's ranking against the selection criteria and details of the student's place on the waiting list for the school year or class concerned. Applicants will be informed of the right to seek a review/right of appeal of the school's decision.

Written acceptance or rejection of the offer must be received by the school within seven calendar days from the date of the offer letter issued to the parent/guardian of the applicant.

If the offer is not accepted within the above timeframe, the place is forfeited. The Principal will email the parents/guardians informing them that the place in the class is no longer available for their child and that place in the class will now be offered to the applicant at the top of the waiting list.

The Principal of Stapolin ETNS also notifies the successful applicant's current school Principal of the decision to offer a place in the SSLD Class.

Emails to parents/guardians offering a place to their child or informing them that the application was invalid/unsuccessful will also be copied to the referral agent.

The school enrolment procedure is then followed and where pupils are eligible and wish to avail of transport provided by the DE the relevant forms for this are also completed. Applicants are accepted on the basis that they and their parents/guardians accept and understand the school's Positive Behaviour Policy and all other school policies.

In the event of undersubscription of pupils meeting the DE criteria in either the Junior SSLD Class in St Marnock's NS or the Senior SSLD Class in Stapolin ETNS, both principals will liaise to ensure that all available places are filled with pupils who meet the Department of Education criteria.

In the event of spare capacity in the SSLD class the Advisory Admissions Committee will adhere to the relevant clauses in Circular 0038/2007.

9. Appeals

In the letter to parents/guardians of children not offered places, parents/guardians are advised that they are entitled to appeal this decision, under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998. In general, appeals must be made within 42 days of receipt of the BOM's decision.

Ratification

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 16th December 2022.

Signed: 

Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 16th December 2022