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Referral Information Leaflet for Speech & Language Therapists & Psychologists (Referral Agents) for the School Year 2025/2026.

OPENING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS IS Monday February 2nd 2026.

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS is Monday March 2nd 2026.

Referrals to the Language Classes are only accepted from Speech & Language Therapists.

Completed referrals should be submitted online using Jotform (link available on the school websites).

Referral of children to Developmental Language Disorder/Speech Sound Disorder (DLD/SSD) Classes in St. Marnock's NS and Stapolin ETNS.

General Information

The DLD/SSD classes are located in St. Marnock's National School and Stapolin Educate Together National School. There are seven children in each class each year. The aim of the classes is to provide children with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) and/or Speech Sound Disorder (SSD) of unknown origin the opportunity to spend one or two years in a small class setting where they can receive intensive educational and speech & language therapy support. The classes are staffed by a full time Teacher employed by the Department of Education (DE) and a part time Speech & Language Therapist employed by the HSE.

Applications are accepted for children who are in Junior Infants to 5th class at the time of referral. The child's age and class level will be taken into consideration when allocating places in each class. The child must live within specific areas of the HSE Integrated Area Dublin North County which includes the Primary Care Networks; Balbriggan, Swords, Coastal, Coolock and Kilbarrack. If you have a query regarding the catchment area for

the child, please contact either St. Marnock's NS, Stapolin ETNS or the local HSE Speech & Language Therapy (SLT) Department.

Transport is provided by the Department of Education to successful applicants.

Terminology

Developmental Language Disorder

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) and Speech Sound Disorder (SSD) are the up-to-date terms for 'Specific Speech & Language Disorder or Impairment' (SSLD/SSLI). Developmental Language Disorder is when a child (over 5) or adult has difficulties talking and/or understanding language. These difficulties impact on education and social interactions. The difficulties exist without another biomedical condition such as autism or intellectual disability.

Speech Sound Disorder

Speech Sound Disorder is an umbrella term for a group of communication disorder that involve persistent difficulties producing speech sounds correctly. This includes difficulties with articulation (forming individual sounds), Phonology (patterns of sound errors) or the Motor Planning and Co-ordination needed for speech.

Criteria for admission:

The current Department of Education (DE) criteria for referral to the DLD/SSD classes changed in 2025 and are outlined below. Please see circular 0024/2025 for further information.

Criteria A

The child has a conclusive diagnosis by a Speech and Language Therapist of Developmental Language Disorder where 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 language scores at or below a standard score of 78 (-1.5 SD from the mean)

and/or

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

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.

Criteria B:

Along with the DE criteria above, additional local criteria must be met by each applicant. The current local criteria for the DLD/SSD Classes in St. Marnock's NS and Stapolin ETNS are:

- (i) The applicant must live within the designated catchment area, as determined by the HSE, at the time of referral. The current criteria is HSE Integrated Area Dublin North County which includes the Primary Care Networks of Balbriggan, Swords, Coastal, Coolock and Kilbarrack.
- (ii) The referral agent must be satisfied that the applicant's needs cannot be met by the current Speech & Language Therapy service provision.
- (iii) Applications are accepted for children who are in Junior Infants to 5th Class at the time of referral.
- (iv) The applicant must have attended SLT sessions in the 9 months prior to the closing date for applications.

Referral Procedure

- Information leaflets for referral agents and parents are available on the school websites
- Referrals are **only** accepted from **Speech & Language Therapists**.

- Referrals are only accepted using the following forms available on either school website
Form A: Referral and Consent Form for DLD/SSD Class 2026 and Form B School Report form for DLD/SSD Class 2026.
- All referrals should be made via the Jotform platform on either school website.
- The referral and relevant reports and forms should be received by the closing date (March 2nd 2026)

Referrals should include the following:

- A cover letter to the School Principal signed by the referral agent.
- A completed '**Form A Referral and Consent for DLD/SSD Class 2026**'. This includes a parental consent section and a Social, Emotional and Behavioural Rating Scale to be completed by the child's parents with the assistance of the SLT.
- A completed **Form B School Report for DLD/SSD Class 2026** which provides information on the impact of the child's DLD/SSD on his/her educational progress and social/emotional development. Please refer to the instructions on the top of the form prior to completion. A Social, Emotional and Behavioural Rating scale for teacher(s) to complete is included in the school report form.
- An up to date **Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) Report** (written within three months of the closing date) confirming a diagnosis of Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) and/or Speech Sound Disorder (SSD) of unknown origin. The SLT assessment must have been carried out not more than 6 months prior to the closing date for applications.
- Other reports where relevant should also be included such as Psychology, Occupational Therapy; Audiology; ENT etc.

Applicants will be informed in writing as to the decision of the schools, within the timeline outlined in the Annual Admissions Notice (St. Marnock's N.S. Admissions Policy 2026/2027: Stapolin ETNS Admissions Policy 2026/2027 available on school websites).

The SLT Report should include the following:

- **Case history information:** background information should include all relevant information and risk factors for speech and language difficulties. If there is a history of hearing or other difficulties please ensure reviews are up to date and enclose copies of any relevant audiology/medical reports. Please outline any involvement or onward referral to other services. Referring SLT should make onward referrals if possible prior

to DLD/SSD class referral if this is required (e.g. ENT, OT, Audiology, Primary Care Psychology).

- Further specific information in the case of **children who are bi/multilingual** is required (e.g. languages used, for how long, in what contexts). Clinical judgment should include a description, if relevant, as to differential diagnosis between 2nd language learning and DLD. Please see the IASLT (2016) Guidelines for SLTs Working with Linguistically Diverse Service Users.
- **Educational history:** A brief summary which provides information regarding the impact of the child's DLD/SSD on his/her educational progress and social emotional development. The school report should elaborate on this section. Where the child has access to additional support teaching in school this should be stated and summarise collaboration between SLT, school & home (e.g. school contacts; collaborating with school/parents for IEP goal setting; school programmes provided). If the child has access to SNA support or additional support teaching please state the reason why this is in place. If a child does not have SNA support but requires it, this should be clearly stated in the report.
- **Current Diagnosis:** The child's **DLD/SSD diagnosis** should be clearly stated with a summary of the areas of speech, language and communication difficulties. Please refer to IASLT's Position Paper (2017) 'Supporting Children with Developmental Language Disorder in Ireland' for terminology to use and information on diagnostic markers. Child's age at diagnosis and co-occurring disorders should also be stated. Where a co-occurring disorder is suspected but has not been diagnosed give a description of the child's other needs.
- **Previous SLT assessments:** a very short paragraph will suffice. Give total language or index standard score of previous assessments– not necessary to elaborate on individual subtest score results. Include a summary of any non-standard and informal assessments.
- **Discuss Risk Factors & Response to Previous SLT Interventions:** State number of sessions offered and number attended, and a brief synopsis of therapy goals and response to intervention over time. Parental commitment and home carryover should be included.
- **Most recent Speech & Language Assessments:** these must have been carried out within the last 6 months. Provide standard and non-standard assessments results in table or other format for Language – understanding (receptive) and use (expressive). For standardised assessments all subtest scores should be included as well as total or core/index scores. Give standard deviations, percentile rank scores etc. and severity of overall disorder. Include information from any observations made (or reported) of the child in natural settings to support these findings. A short narrative or conversational transcript could also be included. Standardised assessments of speech should be used where possible. Percentage of phonemes correct should be included for children with speech disorders and a description of the child's phonological system where relevant. A report of oro-motor examination where applicable.

- Referral to ENT in the case of children who are constant mouth breathers / have rhinitis should have been already considered.
- **Impact of the DLD/SSD** on functional communication; social participation and inclusion; emotional well-being; behaviour development and academic progress should be provided. Give clear objective examples of the impact of the disorder in each of the relevant areas. Describe briefly if the child has developed other skills or strategies to aid communication.
- If the DLD/SSD is not impacting significantly on these areas of development you should state if the child has developed coping strategies or if specific support systems are in place at present in school.
- **Social, Emotional & Behaviour Rating Scale:** When completing this ensure that just **one** rating is chosen for each question. Additional information that is provided to the SLT by a parent while filling in this form should be included in the SLT report **only**.
- **Diagnosis and Recommendations:** Summarise diagnosis at end of report and provide clear recommendations as to the need for placement in DLD/SSD Class based on severity and impact of the DLD/SSD. A recommended support plan should also be included should the child not be offered a place in the DLD/SSD Class. Summarise other needs if relevant; other professional reports and any other onward referrals.

For further information please contact:

Ms. Sinéad Trimble, School Principal, St. Marnock's NS
on 8462060.

or

Ms Clodagh Farrell, School Principal, Stapolin ETNS on 01-52401618

This leaflet briefly describes the DLD/SSD Class referral process. For further information please visit St. Marnock's NS website www.stmarnocksns.ie and Stapolin ETNS website www.staopolinetns.ie