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Special Class for Pupils with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) and/or Speech Sound Disorder (SSD)

Admissions Policy 2027-2028

1. Introduction:

This policy sets out to explain the enrolment process for pupils with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) or Speech Sound Disorder (SSD) in the Developmental Language Disorder or Speech sound Disorder DLD/SSD classes in **St. Marnock's National School** and in **Stapolin Educate Together National School**. This Admission Policy complies with the requirements of the Education Act 1998, the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 and the Equal Status Act 2000. This policy is further informed by the DE Inspectorate report 'Educational Provision for pupils with SSLD' (April 2021). The guidelines set out in the Department of Education (DE) Circular 0024/2025 are also referred to.

This policy should be read in conjunction with St. Marnock's N.S. and Stapolin Educate Together N.S. Admissions policies and the Annual Admissions notice.

The Board of Management in both schools trusts that this policy will assist parents/guardians in relation to enrolment criteria and procedures for the DLD/SSD classes in St. Marnock's N.S. and Stapolin Educate Together N.S.

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

2. Developmental Language Disorder and Speech Sound Disorder

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) and Speech Sound Disorder (SSD) are the up to date terms for 'Specific Speech & Language Disorder or Impairment' (SSLD/SLI).

In May 2017 the Irish Association of Speech & Language Therapists (IASLT) launched a Position Paper & Guidance Document called 'Supporting Children with Developmental Language Disorder in Ireland'. The term Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) is the current term now in use in Ireland to refer to a wider group of clients. This term replaces the terminology of Specific Speech & Language Impairment (SSLI) or Specific Speech & Language Disorder (SSLD).

Children with DLD and SSD are generally described as a heterogeneous group. Different profiles of language difficulty may be described, for example children

- whose understanding and production of language is equally impaired
- who have a considerable gap between understanding and production
- with particular difficulties with one or more specific aspects of language form, for example grammar, semantics, phonology or language use.

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

The Department of Education (DE) criteria for referral to a special class for children with DLD/SSD has recently changed as outlined in circular 0024/2025. This Circular supersedes Circular 0038/2007 and the accompanying conditions and regulations applying to the enrolment in Special Classes for Children with Specific Speech and Language Disorder (SSLD). These special classes will now be known as **Special Classes for Children with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) or Speech Sound Disorder (SSD)**.

Children eligible for referral to the DLD/SSD classes under the current DE criteria are a specific subgroup of children with a diagnosis of DLD and/or SSD.

3. Rationale:

For school aged children with DLD and SSD 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 special classes for children with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) or Speech Sound Disorder (SSD).

Children referred to the special classes for Children with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) and/or Speech Sound Disorder (SSD) in St Marnocks NS and Stapolin Educate Together NS must live within the HSE Integrated Area Dublin North County which includes the Primary Care Networks; Balbriggan, Swords, Coastal, Coolock and Kilbarrack. Children due to be enrolled in these special classes may be eligible for free transport to the school under the terms of the DE School Transport Scheme.

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

As per DE guidelines these classes provide 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 Language Class Teacher and SLT and parents/guardians. Irish is not part of the Language Class curriculum.

4. Limitation on Places and Duration of Placement:

St. Marnock's NS DLD/SSD class was set up in 1998. The Stapolin Educate Together NS DLD/SSD class was set up in 2022. The aim of the classes is to provide children who meet the DE criteria and the local criteria for the DLD/SSD Classes, 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 0024/2025).

The place is offered initially for one year. The classes are 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 each class each year.

5. Criteria for Consideration for Enrolment in the Special Classes for Children with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) and/or Speech Sound Disorder (SSD):

Both Criteria A and B must be met by the applicant and the application process must be adhered to. Applicants who meet criteria A and B will then be considered under Criteria C.

Criteria A: Department of Education (DE) Criteria (Circular 0024/2025)

Children who meet the following criteria 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 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.
- 2 The child presents with language scores at or below a standard score of 78 (-1.5SD from the mean)

and/or

- 3 The child presents with a 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

- 4 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.

and

- 5 A letter from the NCSE confirming that the child is known to them and that the child has the required diagnosis and recommendations for a DLD/SSD class.

Criteria B: Local Criteria for St Marnock's NS and Stapolin Educate Together NS Classes

- (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 the HSE Integrated Area Dublin North County which includes the following primary care networks; Balbriggan, Swords, Coastal, Coolock and Kilbarrack. A full list of the addresses covered by this catchment area is available from your local HSE Office.
- (ii) The referral agent must be satisfied that the applicant's needs cannot be met by the current Speech & Language Therapy service provision.
- (iii) The applicant must have attended SLT sessions in the nine months prior to the closing date for applications. The most recent speech and language therapy assessment must have been completed within six months of the closing date.
- (iv) Applications will be accepted for children in Junior Infants – 5th class at time of referral.

Only applicants who meet criteria A and B above will be considered under Criteria C.

Criteria C: Factors relating to greatest need.

The following factors will be considered in relation to identification of the applicant'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 sound development. 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 and other reports submitted.

6. Referrals:

- Applications for referrals are accepted from Speech and Language Therapists only.
- Applications should be made to the School Principal with the relevant accompanying documentation listed below.
- Parents/guardians may make enquiries directly to the School Principals of either school or HSE Speech & Language Therapists regarding the application process & application forms. The child's Speech & Language Therapist co-ordinates the referral to the DLD/SSD class having discussed this in detail with parents/guardians and other professionals involved with the child.
- Parents/guardians are also made aware by referral agents of the limited number of places available each year in the DLD/SSD classes, and referral agents should provide a copy of this policy to parents/guardians.
- **The closing date for referrals for the following school year is 22nd February 2027. Please refer to Annual Admissions Notice 2027 – 2028 regarding important dates for applications.**

Required Documentation:

Referrals must be accompanied by the following documents and submitted online on the Jotform. The link for the Jotform will be available on both schools websites: www.stmarnocksns.ie and www.stapolinetns.ie

1. **Referral & Consent Form for DLD/SSD Class:** this is completed by the referral agent and parents. A Social, Emotional & Behavioural Rating Scale is included in this form which must be completed by the applicant's SLT and parents/guardians.
2. An up-to-date **Speech and Language Therapy report** (compiled within 3 months of referral date) confirming a diagnosis of Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) and or Speech Sound Disorder (SSD). 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 sound development. 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.
3. **School Teacher Report Form for DLD/SSD Class:** Reports should be completed by the applicant's Class Teacher and Special Education Teacher (where relevant) on the standard School report Form for Referral to DLD/SSD Class. A Social, Emotional & Behavioural Rating Scale is included in this form.
4. **Other Reports:** if relevant (e.g. Audiology, OT, Medical, Social, Psychology, Psychiatry).

All documentation and information received is strictly private and confidential.

7. 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) comprising educational and clinical professionals. The members of the committee are as follows:

- The School Principals of St. Marnock's N.S and Stapolin Educate Together N.S.
- The DLD/SSD Class Teacher of St. Marnock's N.S. and Stapolin Educate Together N.S.
- The HSE Speech and Language Therapists assigned to both classes
- The HSE Speech and Language Therapy Manager from the local area

The role of the Admissions Advisory Committee can be described as follows:

- To make recommendations to the Board of Management regarding the admission, retention/discharge of children in the DLD/SSD class
- To evaluate and process new applications in 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. A waiting list will be formed for unsuccessful applicants and this waiting list will remain valid for the school year in which admission is being sought.

The AAC will place unsuccessful applications on the waiting list for the DLD/SSD classes in the order of priority assigned to the application, after the schools have applied the selection criteria in accordance with this policy.

In the unlikely event where there is spare capacity in either of the classes because of insufficient eligible children, the Principals on behalf of the Board of Management may offer a place to a maximum of two pupils who do not meet the eligibility criteria but who could benefit from enrolment in the classes for one year on a concessionary basis. Such placements must be supported by the recommendation of a Speech and Language Therapist. The question of continued enrolment of these pupils for a second year can only be considered once all eligible pupils have been accommodated. The NCSE through the local SENO will monitor such situations. (Circular 0024/2025)

Late applications who meet Criteria A and B will be added to the end of the existing waiting list of unsuccessful applicants in date order of being received.

Offers of any subsequent places that become available during the school year to which admission is being sought, will be made to applicants in the order in which they are placed on the waiting list.

Applicants will be informed by email as to the decision of the schools, within the timeline outlined in the relevant Annual Admissions Notice. If an applicant is not offered a place in the DLD/SSD classes, the reasons why they were not offered a place will be communicated in writing to the applicant, including, where applicable, details of the student's ranking against the selection criteria and details of the applicant'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 write to 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.

Letters 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 Department of Education 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 Code of Behaviour Policy and all other school policies.

8. 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 Board of Management's decision.

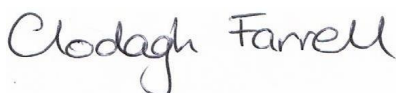
Please note that the procedure for appeals is outlined in detail in the St. Marnock's N.S. Admissions policy and Stapolin ETNS Admissions policy.

Ratified by the Board of Management of Stapolin Educate Together National School:



Helen Meaney
Chairperson

Date: 24th September 2026

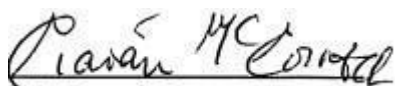


Clodagh Farrell
Principal

Date: 24th September 2026

Review date: October 2027

Ratified by the Board of Management of St Marnock's National School:



Ciarán McCormack
Chairperson

Date: 24th September 2026



Shaun Scallan
Principal

Date: 24th September 2026

Review date: October 2027