



Scoil Náisiúnta An Dea Aoire

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The Good Shepherd National School

ADMISSION POLICY for DEVELOPMENTAL LANGUAGE DISORDER (DLD) / SPEECH SOUND DISORDER (SSD) CLASSES

INTRODUCTION

The Good Shepherd DLD/SSD Classes are two classes in a mainstream primary school, which cater for the educational and speech and language needs of children with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) and/or Speech Sound Disorder (SSD) *of unknown origin*. DLD/SSD Classes are jointly run by the Departments of Education and Health. The classes are staffed by a full-time primary teacher, and the children receive direct therapy and indirect support (through working with teacher and parents) from a part-time HSE Speech/Language Therapist (SLT).

There is a maximum of seven children in a DLD/SSD Class in any one year as per Department of Education guidelines (DE Circular 24/2025). DLD/SSD Classes follow the regular primary school curriculum apart from Irish. Children attending a DLD/SSD Class may integrate with their peers from mainstream classes for some subjects, during break times and for school activities such as concerts/ school tours.

WHAT IS DEVELOPMENTAL LANGUAGE DISORDER (DLD)?

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) occurs when a child experiences severe difficulty developing their communication skills (understanding and/or using spoken language) and does not improve with regular speech and language therapy. DLD is a language disorder with no known associated differentiating condition (e.g. Autism, Down Syndrome or General Learning Difficulties), that is pervasive and enduring. Pupils with DLD have exceptional problems in learning and generalising certain language skills, which have a functional impact on educational progress, everyday social interactions, and other aspects of everyday life.



WHAT IS SPEECH SOUND DISORDER (SSD) OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN?

'Speech Sound Disorder' is an umbrella term to describe a range of speech delays and disorders including phonological speech disorders (consistent and inconsistent), articulation disorder, Childhood Apraxia of Speech (CAS) and dysarthria. Some children may present with persistent and severe speech sound disorders in isolation and others where there are co-occurring language difficulties including DLD. For a small but significant group of children, their persistent and severe speech sound disorders can impact on literacy, learning, social participation, school and well-being. Speech Sound Disorder of unknown origin is diagnosed by a SLT where there is no known origin or the speech sound disorder is not associated with any known medical condition such as Cleft Lip and/or Palate, Cerebral Palsy, Downs Syndrome.

CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION

DLD is a language disorder with no known associated differentiating condition that is pervasive and enduring (NCSE Criteria for Enrolment in Special Classes for children with DLD/SSD 2025).

Children referred for DLD/SSD Class placement consideration should meet the following criteria as outlined in the DES Circular 24/2025:

The child has a conclusive diagnosis by a Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) of:

1. (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 are 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 SLT 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.

The SLT initiating or involved in the referral should be satisfied that:

- They have followed the [Decision Making Guidelines for Admissions Committees Development Language Disorder/Speech Sound Disorder classes](#) (see Appendix A)
- There is evidence of engagement with therapy input including response to and impact of intervention across impairment, functioning and participation within the previous 9-12 months prior to the application deadline. This should



include a SLT review of the child's response to intervention in terms of impairment, functioning and participation.

- There is evidence of ongoing educational needs arising from the child's DLD/SSD of unknown origin following intervention.
- The child must be at least 4 years of age on/before 1st April in the enrolment year.
- The child must live within the following designated HSE catchment areas:
 - Dublin Southeast
 - Dublin South
 - Parts of Dublin Southwest that are within the M50
 - Parts of Dublin South City and West that are south of the River Liffey and within the M50

Children living outside the catchment area who meet all other above criteria will only be reviewed by the committee if places remain following the primary admissions round.

Please note:

- Parents are reminded that GSNS is a school with a Catholic ethos where we strive to develop a *spiritual and good moral foundation*.
- No child will be refused admission for reasons of ethnicity, language, gender, asylum seeker or refugee status or religious or political beliefs, family or social circumstances or being a member of the traveller community.
- While recognising the right of parents to seek to enrol their child with DLD/SSD of unknown origin, in GSNS, the Board of Management has a duty of care to the existing school community. This requires balanced judgements, which are guided by the principles of natural justice and acting in the best interest of all children. The BOM reserves the right not to admit a child unless it believes it can meet the needs of a child seeking enrolment.
- Please note GSNS is a primary school, it is not resourced to meet an individual's medical needs. If GSNS cannot meet a child's medical needs safely, a child cannot be enrolled.
- The school prioritises the health and safety of its pupils and staff. Therefore, the Board of Management reserves the right to refuse enrolment to any child



whose history of violent or out-of-control behaviours presents an unacceptable safety risk.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Referrals for DLD/SSD Class placement are made by the SLT working with the child and their family. The SLT initiates the application process, which involves:

1. Completing the GSNS DLD/SSD Class's application forms (Appendix B).
2. Compiling all other necessary documentation, as detailed in the DLD/SSD Language Referral Pack available in the Admissions Section of www.goodshepherd.ie. (Appendix B)

Applications must be sent to the school principal before the annual deadline as advertised on the annual admission notice on the school website. A covering letter and three copies of all referral documentation must be included.

If a referral meets the criteria for DLD/SSD Class placement, the application then goes forward for discussion, ranking and selection at the annual DLD/SSD Class Admissions Meeting. Members of the Admissions/Management Committee allocate places available in the DLD/SSD Class based on agreed criteria: These include:

- Severity of the DLD/SSD
- Age and readiness of the child
- The degree to which the disorder impacts on child's academic performance and social skills
- Suitability of DLD/SSD Class placement for the child at that time.

Please note** **Referral does not guarantee that a child will secure a DLD/SSD Class place.** There is a maximum limit of 7 places in each of our two DLD/SSD Classes at any time, and each child referred is usually one of many to be considered. As children may avail of 1–2-year placements the number of places available annually can vary.

DLD/SSD CLASS REFERRALS MUST INCLUDE:

1. Completed 'Referral to DLD/SSD Class's form
2. Parent Consent Form



3. Speech & Language Therapy Report (written within 3 months of referral date) confirming a diagnosis of DLD or SSD (of unknown origin) (see further guidance below)
4. School/Preschool report to include School Support Plans/Access and Inclusion Profile (see guidance below)
5. A copy of the child's most recent school report
6. Completed Parent Social, Emotional and Behaviour (SEB) Rating Form
7. Completed School/Pre-school SEB Rating Form
8. All other reports relating to the child. These may include AON, psychology reports, audiology reports, OT reports, paediatric reports, CAMHS report etc.

GUIDANCE FOR COMPLETION OF APPLICATION SPEECH AND LANGUAGE REPORT

The SLT report should include

- Case History summary including any family history of speech, language or learning difficulties, any other developmental difficulties e.g. hearing, motor coordination or other risk factors/clinical markers for DLD. Please ensure reviews are up-to-date and that any onward referrals needed are made prior to DLD/SSD Class referral e.g. ENT, OT.
- Specific information in the case of children who are bi/multilingual (e.g. languages used, for how long, in what contexts). Where relevant, clinical judgment should be described as to differential diagnosis between second language learning and a DLD/SSD of unknown origin. (Please see the relevant IASLT Guidelines 2016)
- A summary of the child's educational history and the impact of the language/communication difficulties on his/her ability to access or progress with the curriculum effectively. Please also detail any support needs including any support provision already in place (e.g. support teacher/ SNA).
- Summary of speech and language therapy input and interventions including dates, target areas and outcomes in relation to supporting the diagnosis.
- Longitudinal speech and language assessments and/or intervention identifying need over time. Assessment over time should include formal assessment tools and observation in both clinical and social environments.



- The child's current profile including most recent *standardised assessment results of receptive and expressive language development and of speech if relevant. (*assessed within 6 months of application deadline). Subtest scores, index scores, percentile ranks, and the confidence interval used, should be included. In the case of pragmatic/social language skills, use a checklist if possible and briefly describe key areas.
- Description of the significant functional impact of the child's DLD/SSD of unknown origin on their learning, literacy, communication, social and emotional development, regulation and behaviour and overall well-being across contexts (i.e. home, school, peers).
- Evidence of engagement with therapy input including response to and impact of intervention across impairment, functioning and participation within the previous 9-12 months prior to the application deadline.
- Where relevant, indicate the severity of the child's speech challenges i.e. current level of intelligibility, phonological system, oral-motor functioning as relevant. A short transcription can also be very helpful.
- Diagnosis and Recommendations: The child's current diagnosis should be clearly stated along with recommendations as to the need for placement in DLD/SSD Class based on severity and impact.
- Include information regarding any co-occurring disorders/needs (see IASLT Position Paper on DLD (2017)) and the impact of these on the child's participation and engagement in learning and socialisation in the current educational context.
- Confirmation that the recommendation for referral to special class for DLD/SSD of unknown origin has been discussed with school and parents and, as appropriate, with the child

GUIDANCE FOR COMPLETION OF APPLICATION SCHOOL/PRESCHOOL REPORT

School/Preschool Teacher's Report should include

- The impact of the child's DLD/SSD on his/her educational progress and social and emotional development. It should also include any educational supports, approaches, strategies and/or interventions that have been implemented for



the child in their classroom or across the school day specifically within the last 9-12 months. This should include collaboration with professionals e.g. psychology, SLT, OT etc.as well as additional educational support such as access to SNA support or assistive technology.

- The aim, content, timeframe and review of this evidence informed educational supports, approaches, strategies and/or interventions to date.
- Outline of regular review of the child's educational needs as part of an ongoing cycle of support and review with parents, educational staff and the child within the last 9-12 months.
- Description of the functional impact of the child's DLD/SSD of unknown origin on their learning, literacy, communication, social and emotional development, regulation and behaviour and overall well-being across educational contexts (i.e. yard, classroom, peer relationships).

SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES

Notification of a successful application will be sent to parents as per the date specified set out annually in the Admission Notice on the school's website (www.goodshepherd.ie). Parents will also be invited to attend a Welcome Afternoon in the school in late Term 3 of the year immediately prior to enrolment. The school handbook and any other relevant information will be given to parents during this meeting, to help parents assist their child's transition into the DLD/ SSD Class.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents are encouraged to be involved with setting their child's learning and speech/ language goals. They are expected to attend various meetings during the school year. These include meetings between the teacher, therapist and parent; between the parent and speech/language therapist; between the teacher and parent.

Home support is a necessary requirement of sustaining a DLD/SSD Class place. This support ensures that agreed approaches/ strategies and homework are introduced and completed.



LENGTH OF PLACEMENT:

Eligible pupils may spend up to two years in a DLD/SSD Class (DES Circular 0024/2025).

Placement in the DLD/SSD Class is reviewed annually. Parents are usually advised of their child's progress in November parent teacher meetings and will be informed about the second-year placement early in Term 2. At the end of the placement, the children return to either their mainstream school or to a school of their parents'/guardians' choosing. It is the responsibility of the parents/ guardians to ensure their child has a place secured in another school.

If there is spare capacity in a DLD/SSD Class because of insufficient eligible applications the Board of Management may offer a third year to a maximum of two pupils on a concessionary basis. Such placement must be supported by the recommendation of a speech & language therapist and sanctioned by the Admissions Advisory Committee.

RIGHT TO APPEAL

The BOM of the Good Shepherd National School recognises and upholds a parent's right to appeal a refusal to enrol through the Appeal Procedures under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998. Upon receiving the BOM's decision parents/guardians will be informed by the BOM of the procedure and timeframe involved for an appeal.

The procedures under Section 29 cannot be invoked until all procedures at local level have been exhausted.

This Admissions Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 16th October 2025. It will be reviewed in October 2026.

Signed: Brian Swan

Brian Swan
Chairperson

Signed: Órlaith Veale

Órlaith Veale
Principal



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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.

REFERRALS MUST INCLUDE:

DLD/SSD CLASS REFERRALS MUST INCLUDE:

1. Completed 'Referral to DLD/SSD Class's form
2. Parent Consent Form
3. Speech & Language Therapy Report (written within 3 months of referral date) confirming a diagnosis of DLD/ SSD of unknown origin
4. School/Preschool report to include School Support Plans/Access and Inclusion Profile
5. A copy of the child's most recent school report
6. Completed Parent Social, Emotional and Behaviour (SEB) Rating Form
7. Completed School/Pre-school SEB Rating Form
8. All other reports relating to the child. This may include AON, psychology report, audiology report, OT report, paediatric report, CAMHS report etc.

Speech and Language Therapy Report

Speech and Language Therapist's Report should include

- Case History summary including any family history of speech, language or learning difficulties, any other developmental difficulties e.g. hearing, motor coordination or other risk factors/clinical markers for DLD. Please ensure reviews are up-to-date and that any onward referrals needed are made prior to DLD/SSD Class referral e.g. ENT, OT.



- Specific information in the case of children who are bi/multilingual (e.g. languages used, for how long, in what contexts). If relevant, clinical judgment should be described as to differential diagnosis between second language learning and a DLD/SSD of unknown origin. (Please see the relevant IASLT Guidelines 2016)
- Brief summary of the child's educational history and the impact of the language/communication difficulties on his/her ability to access or progress with the curriculum effectively. Please also detail any support needs including any support provision already in place (e.g. support teacher/ SNA).
- Summary of speech and language therapy input and interventions including dates, target areas and outcomes in relation to supporting the diagnosis.
- Longitudinal speech and language assessments and/or intervention identifying need over time. Assessment over time should include formal assessment tools and observation in both clinical and social environments.
- The child's current profile including most recent*standardised assessment results of receptive and expressive language development and of speech if relevant. (*assessed within 6 months of application deadline). Subtest scores, index scores, percentile ranks, and the confidence interval used, should be included. In the case of pragmatic/social language skills, use a checklist if possible and briefly describe key areas.
- Description of the significant functional impact of the child's DLD/SSD of unknown origin on their learning, literacy, communication, social and emotional development, regulation and behaviour and overall well-being across contexts (i.e. home, school, peers).
- Evidence of engagement with therapy input including response to and impact of intervention across impairment, functioning and participation within the previous 9-12 months prior to the application deadline.
- Where relevant, indicate the severity of the child's speech challenges i.e. current level of intelligibility, phonological system, oral-motor functioning as relevant. A short transcription can also be very helpful.



- **Diagnosis and Recommendations:** The child's current diagnosis should be clearly stated along with recommendations as to the need for placement in DLD/SSD Class based on severity and impact.
- include information regarding any co-occurring disorders/needs (see IASLT Position Paper on DLD (2017)) and the impact of these on the child's participation and engagement in learning and socialisation in the current educational context.
- Confirmation that the recommendation for referral to special class for DLD/SSD of unknown origin has been discussed with school and parents and, as appropriate, with the child

School/Preschool Report

School/Preschool Teacher's Report should include

- The impact of the child's DLD/SSD on his/her educational progress and social and emotional development. It should also include any educational supports, approaches, strategies and/or interventions that have been implemented for the child in their classroom or across the school day specifically within the last 9-12 months. This should include collaboration with professionals e.g. psychology, SLT, OT etc. as well as additional educational support such as access to SNA support or assistive technology.
- The aim, content, timeframe and review of this evidence informed educational supports, approaches, strategies and/or interventions to date.
- Outline of regular review of the child's educational needs as part of an ongoing cycle of support and review with parents, educational staff and the child within the last 9-12 months.
- Description of the functional impact of the child's DLD/SSD of unknown origin on their learning, literacy, communication, social and emotional development, regulation and behaviour and overall well-being across educational contexts (i.e. yard, classroom, peer relationships).

There is no guarantee that a child referred to our school will secure a DLD/SSD place as places available annually are limited. to be considered. Should you have any queries, please Ms. Veale through the office school@goodshepherd.ie



**APPENDICES for the ADMISSION POLICY for
DEVELOPMENTAL LANGUAGE DISORDER (DLD) / SPEECH SOUND
DISORDER (SSD) CLASS**

Appendix A link to Department of Education DLD/ SSD of unknown origin Language Class matrix

<https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/publications/special-classes-for-children-with-developmental-language-disorder-dld-or-speech-sound-disorder-ssd/>

Appendix B Link to GSNS Referral Pack documents for SLTs (including rating scales etc.)

https://www.goodshepherd.ie/web/application_forms/649857