

# Solas Chríost National School

## Admission to the Specific Speech and Language Disorder Classes - Admission's Policy

(To be read in conjunction with the School Admission's Policy available on [www.solaschriost.ie](http://www.solaschriost.ie))

### Introduction

Solas Chríost National School has two Specific Speech and Language Disorder (SSLD) classes. The school has one Junior Class (for children from Junior Infant to 2<sup>nd</sup> Class level) and one Senior Class (for children from 3<sup>rd</sup> class to 6<sup>th</sup> class). Each class has a full-time teacher with a reduced pupil-teacher ratio of 7:1 as well as having designated time assigned to it by a speech and language therapist (SLT). A child must be at least 4 years of age on/before 1<sup>st</sup> September of the enrolment year. *'Eligible children may spend up to two years in such classes'* (DES circular 0038/2007). All offers of places to the class are subject to National Council for Special Education (NCSE) approval through the schools Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) as well as Department of Education (DES) approval.

### Terminology

The term specific speech and language disorder (SSLD), specific speech and language impairment (SSLI) and 'Developmental Language Disorder' (DLD) are used interchangeably in this document to describe a child's speech and language presentation. Heretofore known as SSLI in Ireland, the term DLD is favoured by the Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists (IASLT, 2017) and is used in the following definition:

### Definition

*"Developmental Language Disorder' (DLD) describes "children likely to have language problems enduring into middle childhood and beyond, with a significant impact on everyday social interactions or educational progress"* (Supporting Children with Developmental Language Disorder, IASLT, 2017)

### The objectives of the language class:

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.
3. To ensure the child experiences meaningful integration 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.

### What happens in the SSLD Class?

1. Pupils follow the regular primary school curriculum to the level at which they can access it.
2. Pupils will be taught Irish in the school unless the child has an exemption from Irish.
3. Teachers and Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) work together in the class to support the students' language learning in order that they can successfully access the curriculum. Individual goals for the student are developed together with the pupil, parent, teacher, and SLT.
4. Pupils will receive intensive group and/or one to one Speech and Language Therapy.
5. Pupils are integrated with their peers in mainstream classes for some subjects, school activities and break times.
6. Parent involvement is a key part of achieving students' goals.

7. Parents are required to attend parent-teacher meetings outside formal school hours. Meetings with the SLT may be held within school hours.

### **Criteria for Enrolment**

The criteria for enrolment in special classes for pupils with specific speech and language difficulties have been set by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) as well as local criteria as set out below:

#### DES Criteria: (Circular 0038/2007)

A pupil enrolled in a special class for pupils with SSLD should meet each of the following criteria:

1. The pupil has been assessed by a psychologist on a standardized test on 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 speech and language therapist on a standardized test of speech and language development that places performances 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. (A pupil with emotional and behavioral disorders or a physical disability (or presenting with possible emotional and behaviour disorders based on the information provided in the application) must have it stated in the child's professional reports that emotional and behavioural disorders or a physical disability have been ruled out or have it stated in the professional reports, that they are not considered the primary causes for speech and language difficulties).

#### HSE Criteria:

5. Diagnosis of Developmental Language Disorder must be established and evidence submitted that a child has attended a recent episode of speech and language therapy (minimum 6 sessions).
6. Developmental Language Disorder must be the child's primary need.

Applicants who meet the above criteria will be prioritized at the Admissions Advisory Committee (AAC) meeting using the (AAC) Priority Rating Scale for Solas Chríost NS with reference to the information provided in the child's Social, Emotional and Behavioral Rating Form and the necessary documents required for referral outlined below.

### **Referral Process**

Referral Packs including the relevant speech and language class admission's policy will be available from the first working day of November for the following school year's enrolment. Referral Forms for the correct year of referral will only be accepted. Incorrect referral form templates will be returned to the application referrer. Referrals to the SSLD class in Solas Chríost National School are accepted from speech and language therapists, psychologists, school principals or parents (in conjunction with the speech and language therapist working with the child), with the following information:

- Parent/Guardian signed consent form for the referral.
- Speech and Language referral form.
- School report detailing educational progress, behaviour, social skill and current school supports.

- Recent Speech and Language Therapy Assessment report, supporting a diagnosis of DLD (not less than 9 months old – on application closing date).
- Recent cognitive assessment report (within 2 years – of application closing date).
- Evidence that a child has attended a recent episode of speech therapy (minimum 6 sessions).
- A child's most recent school report card.
- Social, Emotional and Behavior Rating Form

It is recommended but not essential that applicants have completed one year in a recognized primary school.

The referring person is requested to send **three copies of all the reports and forms** to Solas Chríost NS on or before **the last working day of February** of the year of enrolment (Solas Chríost National School, Belgard, Tallaght, Dublin 24. D24 C621) All referral packs received are dated and stamped in the school office and one copy will be passed straight over to the school's SLT. All professionals involved in the Admissions Advisory Committee (AAC) Meeting will receive a copy of all reports two weeks in advance of that meeting.

### **Successful Candidates**

Depending on the number of places available in the Speech and Language classes and based on the outcome of the prioritization which takes place at the AAC meeting, a final list of successful candidates and a priority waiting list will be drawn up and sent to the Board of Management (BOM) for approval. All candidates will be notified of the outcome by the school principal, in writing, within 10 working days of the AAC meeting. This will be cc'd to the person who referred the child. Successful applicants who wish to accept a placement must do so in writing, within five working days. The waiting list will remain open until the 30<sup>th</sup> of September of the year of enrolment. After that the waiting list will be closed and unsuccessful applicants will have to reapply again when the application process opens for the following school year – which will follow the speech and language enrolment policy and referral process in force at the time of further applications.

### **Unsuccessful Candidates**

If an offer of a placement is declined, the next eligible child on the priority waiting list will be offered a place in the SSLD class. In line with Section 28 of the Education Act 1998, parents who are dissatisfied with an enrolment decision may appeal to the Board of Management. This appeal must be addressed, in writing, to the Chairperson of the Board, stating the grounds for the appeal, and lodged within ten days of receiving the refusal. Parents, if unhappy with the result of this appeal, may appeal to the Department of Education and Science under Section 29 of the Education Act on the official form provided by the Department. An appeal form will be issued, on request, by the school to parents/guardians. This appeal must be lodged within 42 days of receipt of the refusal from the school to enrol.

### **Concessionary Places**

In instances where there is spare capacity in a SSLD class because of an insufficient number of eligible children, 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 class for one school year, on a concessionary basis. Such placements must be supported by the recommendation of a speech and language therapist and /or psychologist. The question of the continued enrolment of these pupils for a second year can only be considered once all eligible pupils have been accommodated. The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) through the local Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) will monitor such situations. A child who is offered a place through discretionary capacity may/may not be eligible to receive speech and language therapy.

### **What happens when a pupil leaves the SSLD Class?**


Decisions regarding the discharge of a student from the SSLD class, rests with the school principal, the SSLD class teachers and the SLT. A child may attend the SSLD class for up to a maximum of two years. Placements in the SSLD class will be reviewed annually and whether or not a child is to be offered a second and final year in the class will depend on whether or not the child continues to meet all of the criteria as outlined in the 'criteria for enrolment' listed above. During a child's first year in the class, parents will be informed by the end of February whether or not their child is to be offered a second year in the class. The school team (principal, the SSLD class teachers, and the SLT) may recommend relevant onward referrals as appropriate. The school team will support families to organise a smooth transition from the SSLD Class to the child's school of origin/return.

### **Ratification of this Specific Speech and Language Disorder Classes - Enrolment Policy**

This version of the policy was adopted by the Board of Management on the 23rd August 2021 and refers to enrolment to the school's speech and language classes for the August/September 2022 intake.

**Signed:**   
Chairperson of Board of Management

**Date:** 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2021

**Signed:**   
Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

**Date:** 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2021