



## St Joseph's N.S. Language Class Policy

The Language Class began in 1995 and caters for seven children who present with Developmental Language Disorder and /or Speech Disorder. This class represents a unique form of co-operation between the Department of Education and Skills and the Health Service Executive. This special class is centrally located in St. Joseph's N.S. The current provision of speech and language therapy is scheduled for three mornings per week dependent on SLT availability. Children from the age of four to eight years are admitted to the class.

### Selection Process

#### Selection Criteria

The catchment area is the H.S.E.'s Louth community area. The criteria for the Language Class follow the D.E.S.'s guidelines, (Circular 38/2007).

- Children are assessed by a Speech and Language Therapist on a standardised test of language development.
- The performance in one or more of the main areas of speech and language development must be at least two standard deviations below the mean.
- *If a speech disorder is present, the disorder must be considered at least moderate i.e. often unintelligible.*
- The children are also assessed by the Psychologist on a standardised test of intellectual ability.
- *Their non-verbal performance IQ must be within the average range or above (i.e. 90 or above on the appropriate test as indicated by the D.E.S. Circular 38/2007).*
- The speech and language disorder must not be attributable to learning impairment, hearing impairment, emotional or behavioural disorders, physical disability or Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

When the assessments confirm these two criteria, the child's name is put forward for consideration by the *Language Class Admissions Committee*. Further reports are provided by play school leaders/teachers and other relevant medical reports are forwarded to the H.S.E. The Specialist SLT co-ordinates all the reports and the School Principal and other members of the committee expect to receive these reports two weeks before the Admissions Meeting. These reports include an up to date SLT report and a Psychology report, a priority rating scale filled in by the child's SLT and Specialist SLT as well as a preschool or school report. Any other relevant reports are included.

#### Admissions Meeting: May

This takes place in May. It is for both Language Classes in County Louth and is attended by personnel from the D.E.S. and H.S.E. The committee comprises the School Principals, Specialist SLT, Class Teachers, SLTs attached to the Class, HSE Psychologists, SENOs

- and any other person deemed relevant to the particular meeting and is acceptable to all those previously mentioned. All relevant documentation is perused.
- The committee selects those children who present with the greatest need for placement on the basis of agreed criteria including the nature and severity of the language disorder and/or speech.
  - Professional judgement is also applied to the priority rating scale and the allocation of placement is dependent on the consensus of the local Language Class committee.
  - Where two children present with the same rating on the scale, details of choice will be recorded to indicate the basis for selection.
  - In the event of the quota of places not being filled due to parents declining a place, the child not meeting the criteria or insufficient number of new referrals, an additional Admission's meeting is set up at the earliest convenience.
  - If the seventh placement is not filled, the D.E.S. has made provision that the place can be offered to a child who does not meet the full criteria for a period of one year on a concessionary basis, with consensus from the local Language Class committee. (Circular 38/07)
  - Where the number of children referred exceeds the number of places available, the child may be referred the following year, if appropriate.

### **Post Admissions Procedure**

- SLT informs the parents verbally on the day of the Admissions meeting regarding the children who are successful or unsuccessful.
- The School Principal on behalf of the Board of Management confirms the placement offer to successful candidates who receive a package from the school indicating school procedures, information on Open Day, etc.
- Children who are on the waiting list receive a letter to indicate that they will be offered a place if another child does not accept the place.
- Candidates who have not been successful also receive a letter from the B.O.M. indicating the child did not meet the criteria at this time.
- A *Welcome Day* is held in May to introduce the parents to the Principal, Teacher, SLT, SNA and other parents, hear how the class operates and to clarify any questions they may have.

### **Reviews**

- If needed, the Language Class may have access to an Educational Psychologist to review a child attending the class.
- *Suitability of placement is reviewed on a yearly basis.*
- In the case of a child who is not appropriately placed, a request for a review will also be made to the Psychologist and other relevant professionals. The School Principal consults with the Teacher, the SLT and relevant professionals as part of the decision making process.

### **Discharge Meeting: May**

- This meeting occurs prior to the Admission's Meeting in May and each Language Class has its own meeting. At this meeting, decisions are made regarding the

children who are leaving the class or who warrant a second year. It is attended by the Principal, Specialist SLT, Teacher and SLT from the class.

- If a child presents with a specific speech and/or language disorder initially and an underlying disability emerges during the year, e.g. Learning Disability or Autistic Spectrum Disorder, the recommendation will be for discharge at the end of the child's academic year.
- *Placement is deemed inappropriate when the child has made maximum gain within the Language Class setting, i.e. language skills have plateaued and are commensurate with the child's overall level of ability.*
- The maximum stay for a child is normally two years. For some children one year suffices.

## Language Class Staff

### Teacher, Speech and Language Therapist and Special Needs Assistant

The role of the **Teacher** is to manage the seven children in the delivery of the whole curriculum. It also includes consistent daily emphasis on social skills development, implementation of occupational therapy programmes for home and school, behaviour management plans and structured phonological awareness programmes. The teacher is also responsible for supervising the class at all times. A collaborative approach with regard to sharing, teaching and learning across traditional professional boundaries is integral to the class.

Within the classroom context, the **SLT** sees the children on an individual basis for two/three mornings weekly. She assesses, plans and implements programmes for individual children with a specific focus on speech and language. The role is also collaborative and consultative, engaging with the teacher and other professionals and discussing mutually defined challenges.

The Language Class has a full-time **Special Needs Assistant** who is an invaluable member of the team. She attends to the children's care and safety needs, supervising the children in the yard/classroom and escorts children to/from the taxi/classroom. Her role also includes organisation and preparation of class materials and activities, reinforcement of specific individual drills set up by the teacher, recording and reporting of notable incidences etc.

### Further training

The Language Class staff is committed to on-going training. Training provided by the D.E.S. and the H.S.E has enhanced the collaborative approach of the Teacher, the SLT and the SNA. The B.O.M is committed to the Language Class and supports the release of personnel to attend these courses.

## Class Organisation and Curriculum

### Planning, Assessment, Evaluation: September/March

An inter-disciplinary approach is intrinsic to the class. The Teacher and the SLT work

together to evaluate individual needs and to develop intervention plans for the children. Information from their separate assessments and plans is shared. Each implement their own section of their plan in relation to individual work and incorporate sections from the other's plan where possible. Shared language groups which respond specifically to the children's language needs are planned together in an interdisciplinary way and take place with the Teacher and SLT.

Children are initially assessed in September each year. The Teacher produces an ***Individual Education Plan*** which is discussed with the parents. The Speech and Language Therapist produces detailed ***Plans of Action***. Evaluation is on-going. Formal re-assessment and evaluation takes place in March annually.

## **Curriculum**

*The curriculum in the Language Class encompasses all subject areas in the normal curriculum in mainstream school.* As the child in the Language Class experiences difficulty in English, there is limited exposure to Irish in an informal way. Parents are made aware of this and can choose to have their child integrated for Irish if appropriate.

When leaving the class, *an exemption to Irish* is issued, when the child meets the DES criteria.

*All classes in the Language Class incorporate a language objective.* There is differentiation in speech and language interventions, specific to each child, woven seamlessly throughout all subjects areas, particularly reading and writing, maths concepts and discrete oral language activities. Opportunities for language expression with a variety of audience and use of different organisation settings promote language development in the class.

Integral to the delivery of the daily curriculum is the development of the child's self-esteem. The school staff is trained in the Incredible Years programme which promotes the child's emotional, social and behavioural wellbeing and encourages parents to be actively involved in their child's development. The creative arts, i.e. visual arts, drama, music, dance/movement are included in the class curriculum as a vehicle to promote the child's self-esteem, making friends and getting on with others.

An ***Individual Assessment Plan*** is drawn up in accordance with each child's needs. It is developed in accordance to diagnostic assessments of age appropriate reading / writing / number/ language skills, assessment of how each child learns, particular difficulties in terms of fine and gross motor co-ordination, attention difficulties, short-term memory skills, sensory processing issues, attention difficulties, sensory processing issues, behaviour issues, social skills, etc.

## **Professional Support**

Liaison for support and intervention is sought from audiology, occupational therapy, medical and clinical psychology services of HSE, when the need arises. Professionals are free to come and discuss the child and the option of seeing the child in the school is always available. Occupational Therapists assess the children and provide school programmes with strategies of how to regulate each child's energy to keep them alert, active and open to learning. These targets are incorporated into everyday routines by the Teacher and the

O.T. exercises are extended to home programmes.

## **Integration**

- *Children from the Language Class are integrated into mainstream classes depending on their needs, level of functioning and timetable constraints etc.*
- Duration, consistency and subject choice of integration is informed by the child's needs.
- Children are integrated for specific purposes in a planned and monitored fashion.
- The teachers in the mainstream classes are informed of the needs of the children in order to support them.
- Regular feedback is given to the Class Teacher, who also receives a formal evaluation of the integration process.
- Difficulties encountered by the child in their integrated class are addressed and supported prior to the end of the placement in the Language Class.

## **Re-integration to Mainstream**

- The Teacher and SLT visit the child's new school in June.
- Both furnish up to date reports on the child's current level of functioning in appropriate areas and general progress. This includes the child's experience of integration in the school.
- Recommendations for addressing possible difficulties that may be encountered in the upcoming mainstream class are made. Information is given to the school regarding working with children with DLD.
- The SLT reviews the child in the following Autumn and further therapy in a community setting is offered if necessary.

## **Parental Involvement**

- Parents are active partners in their child's learning and they are involved in goal setting for their child.
- The service provided by the Language Class is dependent on effective parental support and collaboration in the learning process. Co-operation, support and active involvement in homework, speech and language programmes, behaviour modification programmes, occupational therapy programmes, paired reading, self-esteem and behaviour programmes, etc. are essential for the child.
- It is our understanding on enrolment that parents will co-operate with and support such initiatives in a consistent and on-going manner.
- Parents of children in the Language Class are included in St. Joseph's whole school parental programmes, e.g. National Parents' Council training and Incredible Years Training. Parents have opportunities to see specific reading, language and speech skills being modelled by Language Class personnel where appropriate.
- Invitations to see shows, displays of work, attend world book days, book fairs, participate in computer classes, art classes etc. are a regular feature in the school year.

## **General Communication**

Meeting for new parents takes place with the Welcome Day in May/June, prior to the child's entry to the class.

Formal one hour parent meetings take place in October, January and April. Parents receive school reports in January and June.

Information on events and school activities is available on the school website/Aladdin Connect .

The Principal, teachers and office staff will communicate general school information through Aladdin, text message system and/or notes in bags, where necessary.

## **Homework**

- The **homework diary** is exclusively for matters related to homework.
- Weekly homework is given on a Monday and signed off in full on a Friday. Homework always includes drills, reading, maths and sound work.
- Parents are requested to do the homework assigned on a daily basis and to sign the diary each night.
- There is a section in the diary for parental comment relating to the child's experience of homework.

Parents are fully informed of all procedures in relation to their child in the Language Class, (admissions, review, discharge, integration, progress etc.). Parents are made aware of this document and it is readily available to them on request. Parents are expected to fully accept all school policies which are currently in place.

Aladdin Connect is used for notices of absences, appointments, illness, lateness and early pick-up etc. For general enquiries and queries regarding lunch, the office number is 042-9337170. Regarding first aid, a note goes home where a child is treated for a small injury in the yard, classroom or halla. In the case of serious injury, the parent is contacted immediately.

## **Communication between Parents/Guardians and Teacher**

Any matters of individual concern for the class teachers are directed to the Head of Department via the school secretary. An appointment can be made to speak to a class to speak to a class teacher through the Head of Department. These appointments are necessary in order that the class teacher can have the relevant information pertinent to the concern raised. An appointment can be made with the Principal through the office for queries relating to the general school. For parental complaints, the Parent Complaint Procedure Policy is available on the school website.

## **Transport**

Children accepted to the Language Class can avail of *free transport*. The only exception is a child who may be on a concessionary placement. Parents and school complete the NCSE form which is forwarded by the school to the DES via the SENO. The bus has an escort on each bus. CIE organise the route and times. A designated person must be at home at the agreed times for pickup and drop off.

## **Administration of the Class**

The Class Teacher is the administrator of the Language Class. This involves day-to-day organisation and correspondence, liaison with the School Principal and contact with appropriate external agencies, H.S.E., SENO, CIE, professionals working in a private

capacity, etc as the need arises.

## Funding and Resources

The Department of Education and Skills provides an annual capitation grant for all children attending the Language Class. The B.O.M. of St. Joseph's N.S. allocates a budget to the Language Class Teacher for provision of resources and materials deemed necessary for the running of the class. The SLT has access to these resources as well as stationery supplies, photocopying and computer facilities. The school has purchased a wealth of resources which are shared in mainstream classes.

**The Board of Management of St Joseph's N.S. reserves the right, in consultation with the education partners to review and modify the Language Class Policy as necessary.**

**This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

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Dr Roz Morris  
*Principal*

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Sr. Joan Watters  
*Chairperson, B.O.M*