



FSS Iardheiscirt
HSE South West



**Information leaflet on Developmental Language Disorder/ Speech Sound Disorder Classes
for
HSE Community Healthcare Networks (CHN) 11-14
(Updated July 2025)**

What is a DLD/SSD Class?

A DLD/SSD Class is a class for children with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) and/or Speech Sound Disorders (SSD). There is a maximum of 7 children in the class, with a full time teacher, input from a HSE Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) and access to an SNA.

There are currently 4 DLD/SSD Classes in HSE Community Healthcare Networks 11-14:

Two in Greenmount National School (Eircode T12HE14)

One in Shanbally National School (P43W990)

One in Scoil Barra National School in Ballincollig (P31H578)

The classes serve the geographical area currently defined by the HSE Community Healthcare Networks 11-14.

What Happens in a DLD/SSD Class?

The children follow the mainstream curriculum of their equivalent class as appropriate. The 7 children in the DLD/SSD Class are part of the school and can be integrated for some subjects, where appropriate. They are involved in typical school activities along with the other pupils of the school.

The Speech & Language Therapist works closely with the teacher to provide therapy that can be integrated into the child's school day. The teacher can modify his/her teaching to suit each child's unique speech, language and learning needs.

What is Developmental Language Disorder?

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*' (Bishop et al., 2016b). The language disorder is of **unknown origin** and is not associated with a known differentiating condition e.g. Autism, Down Syndrome, Cleft Lip and Palate, Hearing Impairment or Intellectual Disability.

What is a Speech Sound Disorder?

'Speech sound disorder' (SSD) is an umbrella term to describe a range of speech delays and disorders including phonological speech disorders (consistent and inconsistent), articulation disorder and Childhood Apraxia of Speech (CAS).

For a small but significant group of children, their persistent and severe speech sound disorders can impact on literacy, learning, social participation and well-being.

For referral to a DLD/SSD class the speech sound disorder must be of **unknown origin** and not associated with a known differentiating condition e.g. Autism, Down Syndrome, Cleft Lip and Palate, Hearing Impairment or Intellectual Disability.

What do we know about DLD/SSD?

- DLD is very common, more common than Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Autism (Bishop, 2010).
- DLD may be life-long for many individuals with effects on their academic, social and emotional development.
- Some children may present with persistent and severe speech sound disorders in isolation and others have co-occurring language difficulties including DLD.
- Children with DLD/SSD can have co-occurring challenges with motor, sensory and learning skills.

Eligibility Criteria for enrolment in a DLD/SSD Class

The Department of Education & Skills (DES) has established the criteria for Enrolment in Special Classes for Children with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) or Speech Sound Disorder (SSD) See <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/circulars/criteria-for-enrolment-in-special-classes-for-children-with-developmental-language-disorder-dld-or-speech-sound-disorder-ssd/>

Children who meet the following 2 criteria may benefit from the intensive and collaborative approach to meeting their therapeutic and educational needs that is offered in a DLD/SSD Class.

Criteria 1:		Criteria 2:
The child has a conclusive diagnosis by a Speech and language therapist of Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) and/or Speech Sound Disorder (SSD) of unknown origin		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.
DLD • 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)	SSD • 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.	

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.

Is a DLD/SSD Class suitable for my child?

Not all children with a clinical diagnosis of DLD/SSD will meet the Department of Education and Skill's eligibility criteria for a DLD/SSD Class placement.

Not all children with a clinical diagnosis of DLD/SSD will require placement in a DLD/SSD class. Other models of educational and SLT provision may be more appropriate. It is recommended that you discuss this with your child's Speech & Language Therapist.

The study of Irish

Pupils eligible to attend a DLD/SSD Class have an automatic entitlement to an exemption from the study of Irish under Circular 0054/2022, 'Exemptions from the Study of Irish – Revising Circular 0052/2019'

Having regard to pupils' language difficulties, the pupils in the DLD/SSD Class are exposed to a limited amount of spoken, conversational based Irish.

What is the Application Process?

Applications are made directly to the school.

For further information and to access the Application Forms please make direct contact with the school(s):

Scoil Barra NS, Innishmore, Ballincollig, Co. Cork

Tel.: 021-4873459

E-mail: info@scoilbarra.ie Website: www.scoilbarra.ie

Greenmount N.S., Green Street, Cork

Tel: 021-4966242

Email: principal@greenmount.ie Website: www.greenmount.ie

Shanbally NS, Shanbally, Ringaskiddy, Co. Cork

Tel.: 021-4378178

E-mail: office@shanballyns.ie Website: www.shanballyns.ie

Children applying for a place in a DLD/SSD Class need to have the following reports available by the assigned closing date for applications:

- (1) Speech & Language Therapy Report
- (2) Parent report
- (3) School or Pre-school Report (supplied in DLD/SSD class Application pack)

A group called the **Advisory Admissions Committee** (AAC) meets to discuss all referrals and to make recommendations to the relevant school's Board of Management (BOM) regarding the possible offer of available places in the DLD/SSD Classes to appropriate candidates i.e. the AAC may recommend placement but the BOM retains ultimate responsibility for offering/refusing enrolment places.

The AAC comprises of the following:

- School Principal of each school that has a DLD/SSD Class.
- HSE Speech & Language Therapists from the DLD/SSD Classes.
- HSE Speech & Language Therapy Manager/Designated Officer.
- DLD/SSD Class Teachers.

Following the Advisory Admissions Committee meeting and in accordance with the decisions of the BOM, the parent/guardians of successful applicants are notified in writing by the relevant school principal with an offer of a DLD/SSD class placement for their child for the following academic year.

The parent/guardians are invited to bring their child to visit the DLD/SSD class to meet with the staff.

Applicants may not be offered a place in a DLD/SSD class if:

- a) They do not meet the Department of Education and Skills Eligibility Criteria, or
- b) There are insufficient places available to meet the demand. In this situation a prioritization process is applied.

How long does a child spend in a DLD/SSD Class?

In accordance with DES Circular 0024/2025, eligible pupils may spend up to 2 years in a DLD/SSD class.

During the school year, each child's progress is reviewed in the second term, recommendations are made by the **Advisory Discharge Committee** for the DLD/SSD class to the BOM as to whether or not a child should be offered a second year in the class. The BOM takes cognisance of such recommendations but retain ultimate responsibility for deciding on the child's continuing enrolment or otherwise in the DLD/SSD Class.

The membership of the **Advisory Discharge Committee** comprises of some or all of the following professionals: School Principal, DLD/SSD Class Teacher, DLD/SSD Class Speech & Language Therapist, and SLT Manager/Designated Officer.

Is Transport provided?

Transport for pupils attending a DLD/SSD class may be provided through the Dept. of Education and Skills' Transport Section. Applications for transport to and from the DLD/SSD Class are submitted by the school to the SENO. Bus Éireann School Transport Department implements the

decisions at a local level. Apart from making the initial application, schools have no further role with regard to arranging school transport.

What happens when a child leaves the DLD/SSD Class?

Most children go to their local primary school. Additional educational supports may be provided by the mainstream school if deemed necessary.

Further Speech & Language Therapy, if deemed necessary may be provided by an appropriate service.

Please note:

Enrolment in the DLD/SSD class confers no entitlement to enrolment in a mainstream class in the host school upon discharge for the DLD/SSD Class. Any such applications will be processed in accordance with an application for admission to a mainstream class.

Further reading:

More information about DLD can be found in IASLT's Position Paper and Guidance Document called 'Supporting Children with Developmental Language Disorder in Ireland' which is available <https://www.iaslt.ie/advocacy/supporting-children-with-dld-in-ireland-position-paper-and-guidance-document/>