**Definitions used in the document:**

**AAC**: Advisory Admissions Committee

**ADC:** Advisory Discharge Committee

**BOM:** Board of Management of St Felim’s N.S.

**DES**: Department of Education & Skills

**HSE:** Health Service Executive

**IASLT:** Irish Association of Speech & Language Therapists

**Parents:** Should be taken to include guardians

**SENO:** Special Education Needs Organiser

**SLT**: Speech & Language Therapist

**SSLD Class:** Specific Speech and Language Disorder Class

**SSLI:** Specific Speech & Language Impairment which also means a Specific Speech & Language Disorder

**The SSLD Class:** St Felim’s N.S.’s SSLD Class

**SNA :** Special Needs Assistant

**INTRODUCTION**

This policy is set out in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act, 1998. The Board of Management trusts that by so doing, parents will be assisted in relation to enrolment matters and procedures for the Specific Speech and Language Disorder Class in St Felim’s N.S.

**Specific Speech and Language Disorder**

Specific Speech and Language Impairment (SSLI), Specific Language Impairment (SLI), and Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) are the labels used interchangeably in the literature/clinically to describe this client group. Specific Speech and Language Disorder (SSLD) is the term used by the Department of Education and Skills (DES).

**What is Specific Speech and Language Disorder?**

Developmental language disorder or SSLD (as used by the department of education) is a disorder where a child’s ability to understand language or express themselves through speech or language is significantly impaired. Any or all of the following areas of speech/language may be affected: language comprehension; learning and using the rules of grammar; pronunciation; learning, storing and retrieving words; conversation and describing skills.

The speech/language difficulty is not primarily caused by other emotional or behavioural difficulties or physical disability e.g. Autistic Spectrum disorder or EBD.

One of the intervention options for children presenting with DLD or SSLD is attendance at a specific speech and language disorder class. Not all children presenting with DLD or SSLD will need to attend these classes and may attend other Speech and Language Therapy services.

Primary school aged children presenting with DLD or SSLD may be put forward for consideration for a place in an SSLD class by their Speech and Language Therapist.

**What is a SSLD Class?**

A SSLD Class is a class in a mainstream primary school which caters for the educational, speech and language needs of children with a diagnosis of SSLI, who meet the Department of Education’s (DES) criteria as per DES Circular 0038/2007.

The SSLD Class is staffed by a primary school teacher “**the SSLD Class teacher**”. A HSE Speech and Language Therapist “**the SSLD Class SLT**” provides a service to the class for a number of hours per week.

There is a maximum of seven pupils in a SSLD Class in any one year, as per DES Circular 0038/2007

A minimum number of five eligible pupils is required for the school to retain a SSLD (specific speech and language disorder) class. The organisation of the class is at the discretion of the Principal in conjunction with The SSLD Class teachers and the Speech and Language Therapists.

Further information regarding the operation of, and application for enrolment in a SSLD Class is available from the Speech and Language Therapy Department, Primary Care, Drumalee, Cavan 049-4353162.

**What Happens in the SSLD Class?**

* St Felim’s N.S. has two SSLD Classes, which cater for the needs of children with SSLD who live in County Cavan from Junior Infants upwards.
* St. Felim’s N.S. is a single sex boys’ senior school with over 250 pupils, however girls can attend the SSLD classes.
* The pupils in the SSLD Class are fulltime pupils of St Felim’s N.S. and follow the Primary School Curriculum, i.e. the mainstream curriculum of their equivalent class, with the exception of Irish .The mainstream curriculum may be differentiated as appropriate.
* Pupils may attend the SSLD Class for one or two years only.
* The pupils in the SSLD Class are integrated with their peers from mainstream classes for some subjects where appropriate, also during breaktimes and for school activities such as concerts, sports and activity days, school outings etc.
* The maximum enrolment in each class is in line with the Department regulations (i.e. 7 children per class) to allow for intensive educational and SLT programmes suited to the children’s needs.
* Each class is staffed by a full time teacher, and has designated time assigned to it by a speech and language therapist. Each class also has an allocation of a Special Needs Assistant (SNA).
* SLT is provided by arrangement with the HSE and the therapy delivery is integrated with the educational provision. At the time of revising this policy the SSLD classes are receiving 21 hours of SLT provision per week (including administration duty time).
* The SSLD Class Teacher and SSLD Class SLT work closely together to help promote integration of each pupil’s speech, language and communication skills in the educational setting. The SSLD Class SLT works closely with the SSLD Class Teacher to provide therapy that can be integrated into the pupil’s school day.
* There is a shared Speech and Language Therapy room in the school. At times the Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) and the SSLD Class Teacher both work together in the classroom.
* The SLT and the SSLD Teacher collaborate on a continuous basis throughout the year.

They hold formal and informal meetings in relation to:

* Individual Education planning in conjunction with parents, Principal, SNA and other relevant professionals.
* Monitoring pupils’ progress.
* Inclusion
* Integration Programme prior to return to base school
* Parent Information events
* The SSLD Class Teacher can modify his/her teaching to suit each pupil’s unique speech, language and learning needs.
* If a child enrolled in the SSLD Class requires onward referral to another service, a referral may be made, in consultation with his/her parent, to further help the pupil. In this setting the pupil has the benefit of maximum therapeutic input integrated into the school day*.*
* As Mandated persons, the staff in the Language Class have two main legal obligations under the Children First Act 2015
  + - To report harm of children, above a defined threshold, to Tusla
    - To assist Tusla, if requested, in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report

**Aims of St. Felim’s N.S. SSLD Class**

1. To provide a learning environment which encourages the students to:

* Develop as self-confident and effective communicators.
* Achieve their individual potential in their various curricular areas.

1. Where appropriate, to return the children to mainstream education with improved communication and language skills.
2. To facilitate parents in their understanding and management of their child’s specific speech and or language difficulties.
3. To provide Speech and Language Therapy to the children attending the class in collaboration with teachers and parents.

**Objectives of St. Felim’s N.S. SSLD Class**

1. To provide an optimum learning environment for children with a Speech and/or Language Disorder, i.e. one that is secure, nurturing, stimulating, challenging, inclusive and fun.
2. (a) To foster the child’s self-esteem.

(b)To improve their speech intelligibility (where appropriate).

(c)To improve their understanding and use of oral and written language.

3 To encourage close links between home and school.

4 To maintain close links between the child’s base school and the SSLD Class in St..Felim’s.

**Criteria for Enrolment in the SSLD Class**

Criteria 1: Department of Education and Skills Criteria

The DES has established criteria to identify children who are eligible for admission to a SSLD Class as outlined in **DES Circular 0038/2007** (Appendix 1**)**

**An applicant who wishes to be enrolled in St. Felim’s N.S. SSLD Class must satisfy each of the following criteria:**

**a)** The applicant has been assessed by a psychologist on a standardised test of intellectual ability that places non-verbal ability within the average range or above (i.e. non-verbal IQ of 90, or above).

**b)** The applicant has been assessed by a SLT on a standardised test of language development that places performance 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).

**c)** The applicant’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.

**d)** Emotional and behavioural disorders or a physical disability are not considered to be primary causes.

Criteria 2: Local Criteria

The Advisory Admissions Committee (AAC) under the direction of the Board of Management (BOM) of St. Felim’s National School has the final decision in the enrolment of children in the SSLD Classes (subject to allowable appeals). Along with the DES criteria, additional local criteria must be met by each applicant. The local criteria are:

1. North East Region Language Class Admission Criteria (Appendix 2)
2. A child must be 4 years on/before the 1st of September in the year of their enrolment.
3. In order to fulfil criteria requirement (d) of DES Enrolment in SSLD Class, in instances where significant concerns regarding emotional or behavioural difficulties have been raised by a Teacher/ Psychologist/Speech and Language Therapist or other external professional, the child may not be offered a place in the SSLD Class.

Criteria 3: Priority Rating Scale

The Priority Rating Scale for SSLD Class Admissions is used during the Advisory Admissions Committee Meeting. (Appendix 3)

All children are listed in order of priority. Those children at the top of the priority list will be recommended for places in the class for the academic year commencing in September of that year.

Where the number of children referred exceeds the number of places available, names are placed on a prioritised waiting list for that admission year.

**St. Felim’s N.S. SSLD Language Class Referral Procedure:**

* The Speech and Language Therapist Co-ordinator for The SSLD Class requests that all Speech and Language Therapists (in consultation with parents) in the catchment area put forward the names of all appropriate candidates seeking admission for The SSLD Class. (Appendix 4)
* Parents will complete a consent form allowing the Speech and Language Therapist to put them forward for consideration for a place in the Language Class.
* The SLT coordinator refers children for a hearing screen if hearing test has not been completed recently.
* The SLT coordinator seeks a report from the current class teacher/ preschool leader.
* Following initial referral, the Speech and Language Therapist writes to individual therapists giving details of assessments required and final date for receipt of reports.
* From this, children who are considered to have a speech and/or language disorder are referred for a psychological assessment. The psychological assessment is one component of the overall assessment, with the intake decision being made by the Admissions Committee. This assessment determines if the child falls within the guidelines laid down by the Department of Education. ( Appendix 1)

**Advisory Admissions Committee (AAC)**

The Advisory Admissions Committee (AAC) is a multi-agency group made up of a group of professionals working for either the DES or the HSE who decide which referrals are selected for places in the SSLD classes. The AAC is comprised of the following:

* School Principal of St. Felim’s N.S. and SSLD Class teachers, all of whom have been authorised by the Board of Management to assist with the ranking of applicants using Speech and Language approved ranking scales and other relevant criteria and factors in collaboration with the Speech and Language representatives.
* SLT assigned to work in the SSLD Class
* Speech & Language Therapy Manager HSE
* Senior Clinical Psychologist (HSE)
* Other professionals may be invited as required.

The AAC discusses the clinical and educational needs of the applicants for SSLD Class placement based on the information provided in the reports outlined above. It prioritises the applicants for allocation to the available places in the SSLD Class.

**Advisory Admissions Committee Meeting.**

This meeting takes place in spring each year. This is the meeting at which the AAC makes recommendations on the allocation of places in The SSLD Classes.

The number of new places becoming available each year will vary depending on the number of children discharged from the class. The maximum number of places available at any one time is in line with DES regulations.

Initially the AAC check that each child meets

* DES Criteria (Appendix1)
* Local Criteria (outlined above.)

The Advisory Admissions Committee then applies the Priority Rating Scale for each child who meets the DES and Local Criteria.

All children are then listed in order of priority.

Those children at the top of the priority list will be recommended for places in the SSLD Class for the academic year commencing in September of that year.

Where the number of children referred exceeds the number of places available, names are placed on a prioritised waiting list for that admission year.

The AAC will then proceed to the enrolment stage.

The recommendations of the AAC are conveyed in writing to the parents of all applicants. This letter is signed by the School Principal on behalf of the BOM.

* The Principal writes to the Parents/Guardians of children who have been successful in obtaining a place in the SSLD Class. They are formally offered a place for the following year and are asked to complete an acceptance form within an allocated number of days. (see Appendix 5a)
* The Principal writes to the Parents/Guardians of children who have not met the eligibility criteria but have been deemed suitable for enrolment in the SSLD Class for one year on a concessionary basis. They are formally offered a place for the following year and are asked to complete an acceptance form within an allocated number of days ( Appendix 5b).
* Parents/Guardians of children who have met the criteria for admission but because of the number of places available have not been successful in obtaining a place in the SSLD Class are informed by the Principal that a waiting list has been established and that places will be offered in ranked order should spaces become available in The SSLD Class.

(Appendix 5c)

* Parents/Guardians of children who have not met the criteria for admission to the SSLD Class are informed by the Principal that their application has been unsuccessful.( Appendix 5d)

Admissions to the SSLD Classes under spare capacity provision

The DES has outlined (in Circular 0038/2007) a spare capacity provision for SSLD class admissions.

*“In instances where there is spare capacity in a SSLD class because of insufficient 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 year on a concessionary basis. Such placements must be supported by a speech & Language therapist and /or a 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 through the local Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO) will monitor such situations

The Board of Management (BOM) of St. Felim’s N.S .has the final decision in the enrolment of children in the SSLD Classes.

**Pupils who are offered a place in the SSLD Class**

Each parent/guardian whose child has been offered a place will have an opportunity to visit The SSLD Class on Open Day before confirming that they will accept this place.

On Open Day:

* Parents/guardians and children will meet with SSLD Class teacher, SLT school Principal and current SSLD Class pupils.
* Parents/guardians are asked to fill out the School Enrolment forms if they are happy to proceed with enrolment. *Forms pertaining to enrolment in SSLD in St. Felim’s N.S. (Appendix 6)*
* Parents/guardians are asked to fill out School Transport form if they are happy to proceed with enrolment.
* All pupils are accepted on the understanding that they and their parents/guardians fully accept St. Felim’s N.S. Code of Behaviour, and all other school policies (e.g. Healthy Eating, Anti-bullying ) currently in place or which may be drawn up from time to time by the School’s staff and/or Board of Management.
* At this meeting parents are briefed on school routines and have an opportunity to ask any questions they may have.

Following receipt of formal acceptance of a place in The SSLD Class, The SSLD Class Teacher where appropriate will communicate with the current mainstream teacher of selected candidates regarding their SSLD Class placement.

Where an offer of a place is declined, the next child on the prioritised waiting list will be offered a place.

**Pupils who are not offered a place in the SSLD Class**

In such cases parents/guardians are advised that under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, they are entitled to appeal the decision to the Secretary General of the DES.

Referrals are not carried forward from one year to the next and children who are unsuccessful in securing places in the SSLD classes must be referred again if they are to be considered for the following year.

**How long does a pupil spend in a SSLD Class?**

DES Circular 0038/2007 provides that eligible applicants may spend up to two years in a SSLD Class. The typical placement duration is for two academic years. For some pupils, one year in the SSLD Class is sufficient. Each pupil’s placement in the SSLD Class is reviewed in their first term of each academic year of attendance. In the second term, the Advisory Discharge Committee (ADC) reviews each pupil and recommendations are made regarding the most appropriate placement for the child for the following school year.

It should be noted that enrolment in the SSLD Class confers no entitlement whatsoever to enrolment in a mainstream class in St. Felim’s N.S. upon discharge from the SSLD Class. Any such application will be processed in accordance with an application for admission to a mainstream class.

**Discharge Procedure for the SSLD Class:**

A Discharge Meeting is held in the second school term with respect to each pupil’s placement in the SSLD Class. The purpose of the meeting is to consider if the SSLD Class remains the most appropriate placement for the pupil. Discharge will have been discussed and agreed with parents prior to this meeting.

The members of the Advisory Discharge Committee (ADC) comprises of the following professionals:

School Principal

SSLD Class Teacher.

SSLD Class SLT.

Each pupil is discussed individually at the Discharge Meeting. The most up to date reports/information available on the pupil are presented to the multidisciplinary team. The pupil’s current presentation and needs are then discussed by the team.

The discharge of a pupil is a team decision. The criteria considered pertain to the North East Region Language Class Discharge Criteria (Appendix 7)

**Discharge from the Language Class will occur at the end of the academic year if a child meets any one or a combination of the following:**

1. On a battery of standardised speech and language assessments the majority of speech and language skills are within normal limits. The child is scoring –1SD to +1SD (SS=7 to 13).
2. The primary diagnosis is no longer Specific Speech and/or Language Impairment. As a result of diagnostic assessment/therapy, the child’s current profile may be one of:

**-Attention Deficit Disorder etc.**

**-Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.**

-**Autistic Spectrum Disorder.**

-**General learning disability.**

-**Specific learning disability etc.**

1. The child is no longer of National School going age.
2. The child has made maximum gain within the Language Class setting i.e. language skills have plateaued and/or are commensurate with overall level of ability.
3. The child’s needs would be more appropriately met in another educational setting e.g. special class.
4. Parents have requested that the child be discharged.
5. The maximum length of placement within a Language Class is two years, but in exceptional circumstances a final third year may be sanctioned by the Admission/Discharge committee.
6. The child was granted a one year concessionary place and therefore is discharged after one year.

Prior to discharge from the SSLD Class the Principal of St Felim’s N.S will liaise with the Principal of the child’s mainstream school and the SSLD Class Teacher will liaise with the child’s new teacher to facilitate an integration programme in the last term and to discuss the child’s progress.

Prior to discharge from the SSLD Class, speech and language and academic assessments will be carried out. The SSLD staff will give feedback on assessment results and recommendations to parents/guardians on the pupil’s discharge.

Upon completion of their time in the SSLD Class the child is referred back to Speech and Language Therapy services where required.

**Transition to Mainstream**

Towards the end of their time in the SSLD Class, (May /June) pupils take part in an Integration Programme where they attend their mainstream school for one day a week. The Speech and Language Therapist facilitates the Integration Programme for children returning to their mainstream schools. (Appendix 8)

The Principal of St. Felim’s N. S. corresponds with the Principal in the child’s mainstream school in relation to the facilitation of the Integration Programme. Thereafter the SSLD Class teacher and the teacher in the child’s mainstream school liaise closely in relation to the child’s progress

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**School Transport**

In general, a child who is eligible for placement in a SSLD class on the basis of DES criteria or spare capacity provision is also eligible for free transport to the SSLD class assigned by the AAC, subject to the terms of the School Transport Scheme.

The Schools Transport Service facilitates the children attending this class in the same manner as children attending other Special Classes/Schools.

#### It is a parent’s responsibility to ensure that a child is ready for collection at the agreed time in the morning and that there is someone to receive the child on return home in the evening.

**Home School Links**

The role of parents in their child’s education is recognised and valued. Every effort is therefore made to maintain effective communication with parents. Informal contact takes place through the homework diary.

A language class placement is a privileged one. To ensure a child reaches his/her maximum potential, it is essential that parents be fully committed to helping the child in every way.

To facilitate this we require parents to commit to meet regularly with the SSLD Class Teacher and Speech and Language Therapist as follows:

1. Parent Information Evening hosted by SSLD Class staff in Term 1.
2. Parent-Teacher-SLT meeting in Term1 and Term 2
3. Parents are invited to attend SLT sessions with their child
4. Parents are invited to Christmas and end of year Drama and Dance Displays performed by the children in the SSLD Class

We advise that parents ring the school to arrange an appointment if they wish to speak to the SSLD Class Teacher.

**Homework**

Homework is assigned in line with the School guidelines. SSLD Therapist takes account of homework policy guidelines when assigning homework.

**Inclusion**

The SSLD Class is an integral part of St. Felim’s School.

As St. Felim’s NS is a Senior Boys’ School, inclusion takes place in so far as possible with classes in the mainstream. The Senior SSLD Class pupils integrate with their peers from mainstream classes for some subjects where appropriate. The SSLD Class Teacher and the mainstream teachers collaborate and organise timetables to facilitate this. The Senior SSLD Class pupils are also integrated with other pupils during playtime. All the children in The SSLD Classes are integrated with other pupils for school activities such as assemblies, concerts, sports and activity days, buddy reading programme, school trips and outings etc

Integration between the Junior SSLD Class and the Senior SSLD Class occurs on a daily basis.

(Appendix 9)

Pupils in the SSLD Class will be part of the normal day to day experiences, determined by the reality of school life, and the existing customs and practices. Every child in the school is bound by school policies, both those in existence and those developed from time to time by the staff and/or Board of Management.

From year to year, the allocation of teachers to classes is focused on the needs of the whole school, and consequently the school cannot guarantee long term continuity or predictability with regard to teaching staff.

**Assessment**

Formal and informal assessment takes place throughout the year in the SSLD Class. A wide range of Speech and Language assessments are carried out depending on the Speech and Language need of the child.

Results of these assessments are communicated to parents at Parent- Teacher -Therapist Meetings and in end of year Reports.

**Files**

Files on current pupils are kept in a secure locked cabinet in the Speech and Language Therapy Room.

School files relating to children who have left the SSLD Class are kept in a secure locked cabinet in the Speech and Language Therapy room.

The Speech and Language Files of children who have been discharged from the SSLD Class are transferred back to Primary Care Speech Therapy Services.

**Religious Instruction**

As the SSLD Class is non-denominational, formal Religious Instruction does not take place.

**Special Needs Assistant (SNA)**

Duties to be assigned by the School Principal in consultation with the SSLD Class teacher and approved by School’s Board of Management.

Evaluation takes place at the end of each school year in accordance with D.E.S. guidelines.

**School Policies**

St Felim’s N.S.’s BOM has a range of policies relevant to all pupils enrolled in the school, both in the mainstream and special classes, including, Child Safeguarding Statement, Anti-bullying Policy, Health and Safety Statement, Code of Behaviour, etc. It is a parent’s responsibility to familiarise themselves with such policies (available from the school secretary/school website). Parental acceptance of their child’s enrolment in the school is taken as acceptance of the procedures/details outlined in such policies.

##### Written acceptance by Parents of the school’s Code of Behaviour is a requirement of this Enrolment Policy. The BOM reserves the right to refuse a child’s enrolment in St. Felim’s N.S if his/her Parents refuse to accept the Code of Behaviour

##### **Board of Management**

All the decisions taken by the AAC and ADC are subject to the approval of the Board of Management of the school.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

This policy was co-ordinated by the SSLD Class teachers Maura Maguire and Eibhlin O’

Neill and the Speech & Language Therapist Shauna Smith.

**Implementation**

This policy was reviewed in January 2018

Review and Ratification of Policy

A comprehensive review of the Language Class policy will take place each February. The review will be instigated by the principal in consultation with the language class teachers and speech and language therapists. DES guidelines will also be taken into account in the updating of this policy.

This policy was ratified on......................................................

Signed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson, Board of Management