

## **Holy Family Junior School Speech and Language Class:**

### **Introduction:**

Holy Family Junior School Speech and Language Class is a class in a mainstream primary school, which caters for the educational and speech and language needs of children with specific speech and language disorder.

There are a maximum of seven children in a language class in any one year. Language classes follow the regular primary school curriculum with the exception of Irish. Children attending a language 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 SPECIFIC SPEECH AND LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT (SSLI) / DEVELOPMENTAL LANGUAGE DISORDER (DLD)?**

Specific Speech & Language Disorder/ Developmental Language Disorder 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. It is not caused by:

- General learning difficulties
- Hearing impairment
- Emotional difficulties
- Autistic spectrum disorder
- Physical disability

Children with SSLD may also experience literacy difficulties i.e. problems learning to read, spell and write.

### **Criteria for Admission:**

Children referred for Language Class placement consideration should meet the following criteria as described in the DES Circular 38/07:

- Child's score on one or more main areas of speech and/or language are 2 standard deviations below the mean.
- Non-verbal performance IQ or its equivalent is within the average range (SERC Report)

A prospective pupil for the Speech & Language Class would have had to have received a minimum of six therapy sessions to formulate diagnosis and determine suitability for language class placement. If

the child was not making sufficient progress with regular therapy, the parents may be informed about the Language Class and permission sought from them to put the child forward as a possible candidate at the next management meeting.

### **Referral to the Language Class:**

Referrals for Language Class placement are generally made by a SLT/ psychologist through the Spraoi Centre, Portlaoise.

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

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

### **Length of Placement:**

A full-time teacher is assigned to the class, and the class operates at a reduced pupil teacher ratio of 7:1. Eligible pupils may spend up to two years in such classes (DES Circular 0038/2007). It should be noted that the placement is for two years, with a possibility of leaving after one year.

The standard cycle for pupils is 1 – 2 years. Placement in the Language Class is reviewed annually. Parents are usually advised of their child's progress in November parent /teacher meetings and further discussed at the Admissions / Management Meeting.

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.

### **Spare Capacity**

In instances where there is spare capacity in the SSLI 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 would benefit from enrolment in the class for one year on a concessionary basis. Such placements must be supported by the recommendations of a Speech and 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.

### **Class Objectives:**

The aim of the Speech and Language Class is to address the pupils Speech and Language disorder through appropriate education and intensive Speech and Language Therapy, within the context of a broad and balanced Primary School Curriculum, which enables the child to reach their full potential.

**Potential Assessments:**

1. As per the school's schedule of assessments in the Assessment policy

**Inclusion of the pupils with SSLI**

Inclusion is very much part of our policy in the Holy Family Junior School. The children from the class eat and play with the other children; they participate in the school tours, school sports, school drama etc. Where appropriate, the children integrate with other classes.

**Right to Appeal:**

The BoM of Holy Family Junior 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.