Policy for Speech and Language Class

Introductory Statement

C.B.S. Primary School has a Language Class, which caters for the needs of children with specific language disorder. The maximum enrolment in the class is seven pupils. The class is staffed by a full time teacher, a part time speech and language therapist and has SNA support. The pupils in the Language Class are integrated with the other pupils at playtime and they are also timetabled for inclusion with a specific class group for non core subjects. Pupils follow the primary curriculum but do not study Irish. They receive intensive group and individual speech therapy. There is also a purpose built Language Therapy Unit in the Language Class for this purpose.

Rationale

This policy has been drawn up by the Admissions Committee for the Speech and Language Classes in C.B.S. Primary School and the Holy Family Junior School, Ennis, to

* *Review current practice*
* *To regulate procedures for referrals, admissions to, and discharge from, the Speech and Language Class*
* *To outline the structure and organisation of the speech and language class*

The core of the policy is that there is clarity and understanding in how the Language Class is operated, with particular emphasis on procedures for:

* Admission
* Referral
* Review
* Discharge
* Complaints Procedure
* Best Practice in speech and language class

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

C.B.S. Primary School aspires to achieve the full potential of each child with particular concern for those who are disadvantaged or marginalised. It is our intention that the procedures identified in this policy will contribute to best practice in the management of the Language Class and that clear and concise guidelines will help to make the process of referral, admissions and discharge more accessiblefor all involved in the process.

Aims

The primary aims/objectives of the policy are;

* To ensure that there is clarity and uniformity in the referral process
* To draw up agreed criteria for selection
* To draw up specific guidelines and procedures for the workings of the Admissions Committee
* To monitor efficacy of the Speech and Language Classes
* To generate baseline data that can be used to monitor achievement over time
* To standardise approaches in both Language Classes
* To agree on a complaints procedure

Guidelines

1. **Referral Procedure**

Children may only be referred to the Admissions’ Committee if:

* A speech therapist refers a child using the specific procedures as outlined in Appendix A. A full referral pack is available on request from the Speech and Language Department, St. Joseph’s Hospital, Ennis.
* Psychological assessment clearly supports a diagnosis of specific speech and language impairment with the child’s potential presenting within the average range, as per Department of Education guidelines, *Circular 38/2007*. Appendix B.
* The child has spent at least one year in a structured early educational setting
* Specific speech and language impairment is the primary disability
* Full and complete applications have been submitted to the Speech and Language Department, St. Joseph’s Hospital, Ennis, by the closing date. The date will be notified to all speech and language therapists

It is essential that the most up to date version of assessment is used and all reports must be valid

The speech and language report and the educational psychological report must include tabulated results, highlighting standard scores and percentiles for each subtest administered.

1. **Admissions Committee**

* The Admissions Committee will consist of the speech and language therapist attached to the language class, speech and language area manager, NEPS educational psychologist, language class teacher and principals of both schools.
* The Admissions’ Committee meeting will take place on the Wednesday of the third week of May at the N.E.P.S. office in Ennis. The principals of both schools will liaise with regard to the arrangements for this meeting.
* The positions of chairperson and secretary will rotate.
* The format of the meeting will follow agreed guidelines. *Appendix C*
* The minutes to be circulated to all members prior to new academic school year.

1. **Selection Criteria**

Specific criteria for admission to the language class will apply for all applicants. All referrals to the Admissions Committee will be discussed and applicants will be rated and listed in order of most suitability for the language class.

See *Appendix D.* Canvassing is not allowed.

1. **Notification of Admissions Board Decision**

Formal offers of placement will be sent to parents/ guardians within five working days of the Admissions Committee meeting, following ratification by the Board of Management.

* On behalf of the Board of Management, the Principal will write to the parents of the children who have secured a place in the speech and language class
* Parents of all candidates will be notified in writing of the decision of the Admissions’ Committee by the Secretary of the Admissions Committee
* Parents/guardians are asked to return a letter of acceptance/non-acceptance within one week of the offer to secure a place for their child
* Where an offer is declined, the next child on the list will be offered a place
* All pupils are accepted on the understanding that they and their parents/guardians fully commit to the work of the language class and are willing to accept the school’s code of discipline and all other relevant polices currently in place.

1. **Appeal Process**

Parents have the right, under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1988, to appeal a decision to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills. Forms for this purpose can be obtained from the Department of Education and Skills, Friar’s Mill Road, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath.

1. **Placement Reviews**

Children’s speech and language skills and academic progress are monitored regularly and are reassessed on an annual basis (towards the end of the academic year) by the class teacher and the speech therapist. Taking into consideration the progress of the child, a recommendation is then made regarding whether the child should

* spend a second year in the class,
* return to his/her base school
* attend a more suitable alternative education placement

The typical placement of a pupil is for a period of two years. However, this may be extended in very exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the Admissions’ Committee.

Spare capacity children are not automatically entitled to a second year without going through the application process again as per the Spare Capacity Circular 2007.

1. **Discharge from the Language Class**

Following on from the placement review, a child may be discharged from the Language Class when:

* The Admissions’ Committee considers that the pupil is ready to return to mainstream education.
* The Admissions Committee deems that the language class is no longer the most suitable placement for the pupil
* The parents/guardians request a discharge from the speech and language class
* The Admissions Committee decides that the child is no longer benefitting from the placement
* In accordance with school guidelines on behaviour and attendance
* The pupil has reached the upper class limit for attendance in the junior language class (second class)

Prior to discharge, the class teacher and speech therapist will carry out the relevant assessments to ensure that all the necessary information is available for the Admissions’ Committee and the mainstream school to which the pupil is returning. The exit report will be forwarded to the mainstream school before the beginning of the new academic year.

1. **Best practice in the speech and language class**

Pupils in the speech and language class will experience and participate in the normal day to day happenings of the school life. The class teacher will follow the primary school curriculum and the pupils will also receive intensive speech and language therapy, individually and in a group setting. See *Appendix F*

1. **School Transport**

The Schools’ Transport Service facilitates the children attending the Language Class in the same manner as children attending other special classes/schools. The school has responsibility for the applications to the Department of Education and Skills.

1. **Transfer to mainstream school**

To ensure continuity for pupils transferring from the speech and language class to the mainstream school, the following procedures are in place:

* The exit reports of pupils will be issued to the mainstream school prior to the commencement of the new academic year. Signed parental permission will be sought.
* A school visit is organised by the language class teacher and the mainstream school to facilitate the child’s transfer and integration back into mainstream schooling.

Success Criteria

This policy is considered successful if there are;

* + Agreed procedures for referrals to the Language Class
  + Clear and concise criteria for admission to the language class
  + Systems in place to ensure that the needs of pupils with a specific speech and language impairment are being met
  + Guidelines for best practice in the language class
  + Efficient transfer of information between Language Class and mainstream schools

## Roles and Responsibility

Language Class Teacher, Speech and Language Therapist, Educational Psychologist, Parents, Principal, Board of Management and Admissions Committee assume shared responsibility for the successful implementation of this policy.

* It is the responsibility of the speech and language therapist to ensure that the guidelines for referral are disseminated to all the speech therapists in the county *(Appendix A)*
* The speech and language class teacher will work with the speech and language therapist and the parents to draw up educational plans for the language class pupils
* The principal will ensure that all necessary resources are put in place for the language class.
* It is the responsibility of the parents to cooperate with the language class teacher and the speech and language therapist in working with the child outside of school. Parents will commit to the intensive homework required to enable the child to progress and to maximise the potential of the speech and language placement.

Timeframe for Implementation

The procedures outlined in this policy will be in operation for the first term of the 2013/2014 academic year.

Timeframe for Review

This policy will be subject to periodic review and amended as necessary by due consultation with the relevant stakeholders.

**Implementation**

This policy is effective from ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 2013.

**Ratification**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 2013.

Signed by Chairperson of Board of Management

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**Michael Gallagher.**

**Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**