

Circular 0038/2007

Rannóg Oideachais Speisialta
An Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta
Cor na Madadh
Átha Luain



Special Education Section
Department of Education and Science
Cornamaddy
Athlone

Circular 0038/2007

To the Management Authorities of Primary Schools

Criteria for Enrolment in Special Classes for Pupils with Specific Speech and Language Disorder.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this circular is to remind school authorities with special classes for pupils with specific speech and language disorder (SSLD) of the Department of Education and Science's (DES) criteria that must be met by pupils for placement in such classes. The recent evaluation of special classes for pupils with SSLD by the Department's inspectorate revealed that the criteria for enrolment in these classes were not being observed in some instances. The evaluation report may be viewed on the Department's website, www.education.ie.

It is recognised that, in any provision using eligibility criteria, there may be people who do not meet these criteria. It is important that the intensive level of resourcing provided in these classes is allocated to support the population for whom it is intended. School authorities should therefore ensure that pupils currently enrolled in these classes as well as those pupils who will be enrolled in the classes in the future satisfy the criteria outlined below. These criteria are also contained in [Circular SP ED 02/05](#).

2. Special classes for SSLD

Special classes for pupils with SSLD are attached to mainstream primary schools. Applications to establish such classes are considered by the special educational needs organiser (SENO) and those meeting the criteria for establishment are approved by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). A full-time teacher is assigned to each class, and classes operate with a reduced pupil-teacher ratio of 7:1. A minimum number of five eligible pupils is required for a school to retain a SSLD class. Eligible pupils may spend up to two years in such classes. An enhanced capitation grant of €785 is paid in respect of each pupil enrolled in these classes.

The Health Service Executive funds the provision of speech and language therapy services for the children attending these classes. It is expected that speech and language therapy services will be provided locally to these classes by the Health Service Executive.

3. Criteria for enrolment

A pupil enrolled in a special class for pupils with SSLD must meet *each* of the following criteria:

- a) The pupil 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 pupil has been assessed by a speech and language therapist 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 pupil'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.

4. Spare capacity

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 the recommendation of a speech and language therapist and/or 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 NCSE through the local SENO will monitor such situations.

5. Transport

In general, a child who is eligible for placement in a SSLD class on the basis of the provisions in section 3 or section 4 above is also eligible for free transport to the SSLD class nearest to his or her place of residence, subject to the terms of the School Transport Scheme.

6. Support for pupils with SSLD not enrolled in special classes

Any pupil who meets the criteria outlined in section 3 of this circular qualifies for additional teaching support where s/he is not enrolled in a special SSLD class. Applications for such support may be made to the local SENO. Pupils with mild speech and language difficulties may qualify for supplementary teaching support from the school's General Allocation teaching resources as outlined in [Circular SP ED 02/05](#).

7. School plan

It is recommended that the school include reference to the operation of the SSLD class in its school plan. This should include:

- a) a statement on how the class is organised,
- b) class objectives,
- c) the roles and responsibilities of those involved,
- d) the policy on staff collaboration, and
- e) the policy on inclusion of the pupils with SSLD.

A copy of this circular is also available on the Department of Education and Science website at www.education.ie

Teresa Griffin,
Principal Officer.
27th April 2007.

Note*** Section 6 of the circular has been superseded by Circular 0013/2017 which outlines the three levels of support available for SEN pupils (including those with SSLD or DLD) in their local mainstream school and the role of the Student Support File in coordinating this.

