

Junior primary speech and language class placement and transition process

This document describes the process for placement of students in junior primary speech and language classes.

This process applies to all staff in preschools and schools (including speech and language programs), Student Support Services (SSS) and Disability Policy and Programs (DPP) staff.

This process is linked to the [‘Specialised education options for children and students with disability placement procedure’](#).

Overview

Speech and language classes (SLCs) are junior primary special options.

Each SLC has places for 8 students who present with severe developmental language disorder and/or a profound speech sound disorder.

The SLCs are staffed with a full-time teacher with support from a full-time school services officer and a part-time speech pathologist.

Eligibility and suitability criteria

The [speech pathology](#) and [psychology assessment and report guidelines](#) outline a holistic and collaborative approach when considering placement of a student in a junior primary SLC.

Eligibility

- The student will be or is eligible to start school and has completed no more than two years of junior primary schooling, with the expected pathway being that the student transitions from an SLC to a mainstream class in their local school
- The student has been diagnosed with a severe developmental language disorder and/or a profound speech sound disorder (according to the Department for Education’s ‘Speech and Language Severity Scales’) with indicators of the need for intensive support
- No other additional disability, syndrome or disorder known to cause or be strongly associated with language disorder or speech sound disorder and likely to impact on their ability to access and participate in the program has been identified (eg autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability or global developmental delay, other related neurological disorders, pervasive behaviour difficulties not related to developmental language disorder)
- Average visual/spatial/perceptual cognitive skills as identified through psychometric assessment
- Hearing thresholds better than 35dB binaurally or under 45dB if there is a unilateral loss as outlined in the [hearing assessment guidelines](#).

Suitability

Placement suitability considers the child’s social and learning needs, family needs, the functional impact of their communication needs and their response to intervention to date.

The student’s [One Plan \(personalised learning plan\)](#) should reflect the need for intensive and targeted support. The student will need to have the functional and adaptive skills to learn within this specialised group setting.



Application process

Only department speech pathologists and psychologists are authorised to recommend placement in an SLC.

Note: Department speech pathologists and psychologists can only complete assessments of students enrolled in department pre-schools, schools or affiliated pre-schools.

Referrers are encouraged to contact the senior speech pathologist at the local education office for the closest SLC to discuss the speech and/or language needs of the student.

Where external providers are involved the information below marked with an asterisk should be provided to the senior speech pathologist by **Friday, week 6, term 3 (ie 4 weeks before the complete application is due)**. For students attending a non-government school, a [‘Permission to exchange information’](#) form must also be completed and signed by the parent.

A department speech pathologist and psychologist will:

- observe the student and gather any additional information required, particularly concerning functioning in the current setting and suitability for placement. This information may already exist, or further assessment may be required.
- consider the information collated to determine if an SLC might be an appropriate option. The decision to recommend the class should reflect that the SLC will be the most inclusive and least restrictive environment to meet the student’s needs.
- meet with the parent/carer and childcare/pre-school/school leader to discuss placement and explain the panel process.

If the SLC placement is agreed to, the departmental speech pathologist and/or psychologist submit the completed application package below to the senior speech pathologist:

- Speech pathology report (within last 6 months)*
- Psychology report (within last 12 months)*
- Evidence of hearing assessment/screen (within last 12 months)*
- Current [One Plan \(personalised learning plan\)](#)
- [Request to Investigate Enrolment in a Special Option SE02: Speech and Language Class](#)
- [Director/class teacher information document](#)
- Other reports and plans as relevant*.

Other documents to include (if relevant):

- [Exploring suitability for a Speech and Language Class tool](#), if the information is not already included within the speech pathology and/or psychology reports
- parent/carer observations*.

The complete application should be provided to the senior speech pathologist by **Friday week 10, term 3** for placement commencing the following year. If applying to more than one SLC a copy of the application must be sent to the senior speech pathologist in each relevant local education office.

The pre-school/school is responsible for providing a copy of the application to the Inclusive Education Support Program (IESP) panel if the student has not previously been considered. An IESP package is not submitted for students attending or intending to enrol in a non-government school.

The placement panel process

The SLC speech pathologists and senior speech pathologist as required, meet prior to the placement panel meeting. They summarise application information using the ‘SLC Placement Rating Scale’. The summarised information facilitates panel discussions regarding eligibility, suitability and priority.

The senior speech pathologist convenes the placement panel. Membership of the panel should include:

- SLC speech pathologist
- psychologist/senior psychologist
- host principal (or delegate).

Other panel members could include SLC teacher and special educator/senior educator.

Each local education office convenes a panel process in week 2 of term 4 for placement commencing the following year.

Panel decision making

The purpose of the placement panel is to determine eligibility, suitability and priority of children referred to an SLC. Applicants are prioritised according to:

- the nature and severity of the communication disorder with evidence of the need for intensive support
- the functional impact of the communication disorder on learning, social interaction, adaptive skills and/or behaviour
- minimal responses and gains to established speech pathology intervention
- any other presenting factors related to the communication disorder.

Priority population groups

Children who are in priority population groups (eg Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or Children in Care) are prioritised for placement above other students if their needs in relation to the criteria are at a similar level to other students being considered.

Placement considerations

To construct an effective and stable learning environment the placement panel considers:

- the SLC closest to the child's home
- parent/carer information
- class configuration factors such as age and gender balance.

If there are more applications than available places, applicants are prioritised according to level of need. Placements must occur in accordance with the enrolment levels as stated in the department's Resource Entitlement Statement (RES) notes. No placements occur 'above base'.

After the panel meeting

The chair of the panel (or delegate):

- contacts the parent/carer, referrer and referring site to inform them of the panel outcome
- shares outcomes with relevant panels and coordinates communication with parent/carers (for applicants referred to multiple panels).

The parent/carer, referrer or current pre-school/school leader can contact the chair of the placement panel if they would like to discuss the outcome of the panel.

Placement offered

Parent/carers and students are invited to visit the class being offered and formalise the enrolment process. It is recommended that the parent/carer does not visit the class prior to an offer being made.

Following an acceptance of placement, the chair (or delegate) informs the host school principal of the student(s) who will be enrolling at their school.

Placement not offered

Applications for children deemed eligible and suitable but not placed can remain valid for two terms. Updated information from the referring speech pathologist may be required if being considered again by the placement panel. After this time a new application is necessary.

Within a week of the panel outcome the panel chair provides the names of these students to the senior advisor teaching and learning, Special Education Resource Unit (SERU) for collation and sharing with the IESP panel. The current pre-school/school leader organises a meeting to arrange the student's participation in mainstream education. The pre-school/school leader may involve key student support services staff in this meeting.

Other support options are also available for students who have high-level individualised needs in addition to speech and language needs.

Extraordinary placement panels

If the SLC has vacancies at any time during the year, an extraordinary placement panel is required to offer placement. The due date for applications is advised by the local education office panel. The senior speech pathologist makes sure that dates align with extraordinary placement panels being held in other local education offices as necessary.

Transport assistance

The parent/carer must contact the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to establish eligibility prior to applying to access the transport assistance program.

The department's [Transport Assistance Application form](#) requires a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) number for processing.

Further information is available on the [Transport assistance for children and students with disability](#) EDi page.

Transition

Transition between speech and language classes

Requests to transfer between SLCs can be made if a student moves geographical location.

The SLC speech pathologist and/or psychologist can:

- provide advice as to whether the student continues to meet the eligibility criteria
- explore factors that may impact suitability of placement.

The senior speech pathologist can negotiate a transfer if:

- there is a vacancy
- a vacancy arises within a term of the student moving. If it is greater than a term a full application needs to be submitted.

Principals are not to negotiate transfer of students between SLCs.

Transition out of a speech and language class

Parents are notified of the short-term nature of the class when signing the request to investigate a special option form. Discussions with parents will occur at least one term prior to a student transitioning from an SLC. Students may transition from an SLC to their local school or an alternate special option for a number of reasons including:

- speech and/or language is no longer the student's primary area of need. This includes where the student has made significant and sustained progress and no longer meets criteria for an SLC or receives an alternative diagnosis. If an enrolled student obtains an alternative diagnosis (eg autism spectrum disorder) the information will be provided to the relevant SLC panel members for review (including but not limited to the senior speech pathologist, principal, SLC speech pathologist, SLC teacher). The panel will confirm ongoing eligibility and suitability and as necessary identify possible pathways for support. Each case will be considered individually. An alternative diagnosis does not mean that a student is automatically transitioned from the class.
- the parent/carer states their intention to withdraw enrolment in the SLC
- the student is due to complete year 2 (with transition starting at least one term before the completion of year 2). Extension of time in an SLC is not standard practice. In extenuating circumstances, applications for extension can be considered by the SLC panel.
- the student's ongoing and unexplained attendance issues are impacting on their ability to gain benefit from the program. Any attendance issues should be addressed with the parent/carer by the school with involvement of social work – truancy if required. If attendance issues remain chronic over a two-term period, ongoing placement needs to be reviewed. The principal of the host school and senior speech pathologist have the joint responsibility for making this decision.
- the student presents with significant behaviour (of a social and emotional basis). Children with speech or language disabilities frequently display associated complex behaviours. Where behaviours remain complex (over a period of two terms) and/or put other children and students at significant risk the suitability of placement within the SLC will be reviewed by the senior speech pathologist and principal of the host school.

Transition to a mainstream department school

Students transitioning into a mainstream education department school automatically receive a Category 1 level of support for two terms to support transition. It is the responsibility of the new school to apply if a higher level of support is indicated or further support is required after two terms. The new school determines if the student is eligible to access site IESP grant funds and where eligibility for a category of funding should be explored.

The names of students transitioning are provided by the school to the senior advisor teaching and learning, SERU for collation and sharing with the SP panel, 1 term prior to the transition date. Names of students transitioning to a government school as part of the end of year process are provided by the end of term 3.

Transition meeting

The SLC teacher and speech pathologist facilitate a meeting with the parents/carer and relevant key staff from the new school. Support from the host school principal, senior speech pathologist and/or other SSS staff can be sought as required. The meeting should occur at least one term prior to the student's transition.

The SLC speech pathologist reviews the student's speech and/or language skills prior to transition from the SLC. The need for psychological assessment should be negotiated between the student's parent/carer, psychologist, the speech pathologist and the SLC teacher.

The agenda for the transition meeting may include:

- update of the student's One Plan (personalised learning plan) to identify the student's current needs
- planning of transition visits
- the review of the student's speech and/or language skills assessment, conducted by the SLC speech pathologist.

Information for families

Information for families is available in the [Speech and Language Class: Information for parents/carers document](#).

Roles and responsibilities

Executive Director, Early Years and Child Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ procedure owner
Director Disability Policy and Programs Director Student Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ monitor, evaluate and review outcomes
Preschool Directors and School Principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ consult Student Support Services regarding children and students with significant speech and/or language concerns ▪ the development, implementation, monitoring and review of One Plans (personalised learning plans) for children/students ▪ ensure the Director/Teacher Comments form is completed to accompany the Request to Investigate Enrolment if a Special Option SE02: Speech and Language Class form
Speech and Language Class School Principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ for children placed but not yet attending a department preschool or school, ensure a Student Support Services Record of Consultation is submitted ▪ ensure a transition meeting is held and the One Plan (personalised learning plan) is reviewed prior to exit
Student Support Services Psychologists and Speech Pathologist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ make recommendations about school placement ▪ discuss with parent/carer and preschool or school leaders the recommended education pathway ▪ support parent/carer and preschool or school leaders through the placement process ▪ for a child not attending a department preschool or school, observe the child as part of the placement process ▪ ensure the completed package is submitted to the Senior Speech Pathologist by the due date

Speech and Language Class Speech Pathologist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provide advice regarding the speech and language class, eligibility, suitability and placement process ▪ assist the Senior Speech Pathologist with advising families, the preschool or school and the Student Support Services staff of the outcome of the request ▪ enter all relevant placement panel information onto the state-wide speech and language class spreadsheet ▪ coordinate parent/carer visit to the speech and language class ▪ advise the Senior Speech Pathologist of students exiting or queries about continuing placement
Student Support Services Senior Speech Pathologist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ chair the Speech and Language Class Placement Panel ▪ provide advice regarding the speech and language class, eligibility, suitability and placement process ▪ receive application packages ▪ ensure the information contained in the requests is summarised utilising the Speech and Language Class Intake Rating scale ▪ ensure the families and the preschool or school and the Student Support Services staff are advised of the outcome of the application
The Speech and Language Class Placement Panels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ meet in the same week to determine eligibility, suitability and priority of application packages

Related links

[Director/class teacher information document](#)

[Exploring suitability for a Speech and Language Class tool](#)

[Hearing assessment guidelines](#)

[One Plan \(personalised learning plan\)](#)

[Permission for Exchange of Information](#)

[Psychology assessment and report guidelines](#)

[Request to Investigate Enrolment in a Special Option SE02: Speech and Language Class](#)

[Speech and Language Class: Information for parents/carers](#)

[Speech pathology assessment and report guidelines](#)

[Transport assistance application form](#)

[Transport Assistance Program](#)

Related legislation

[Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#)

[Disability Standards for Education 2005](#)

Related policy documents

[Specialised education options for children and students with disability placement](#) procedure.

Contact

Disability Policy and Programs Directorate

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