Whole School Plan for Communication, Language and Literacy

2025/2026

Of Libermann Spiritan School
Templeogue (LSST)

Templeville Road,
Dublin 6 W,
D6WNW94

Roll number: 20563J

Contents

Acronyms 3
Introductory Statement and Rationale 4
Introductory Statement 4
Rationale 4
Vision and Aims 5
Vision 5
Aims 5
Individualised Communication Profiles 5
Total Communication Approach 5
Universal Design for Learning (UDL) 6
Language Across the Curriculum 6
Collaborative Support Systems 6
Assessment and Progress Monitoring 6
Content of Plan 7
Curriculum Delivery 7
Timetabling and Curriculum Integration 14
Homework 14
Resources and ICT 14
Teacher Planning and Professional Autonomy 14
Parental Involvement 14
Continuing Professional Development (CPD) 15
Monitoring and Success Criteria 16
Ratification and Communication 17

Believe, Belong, Become
LSST

Acronyms

AA	–	Attention Autism
AAC	–	Augmentative and Alternative Communication
CLL	–	Communication, Language and Literacy
HWT	–	Handwriting Without Tears
LSST	–	Libermann Spiritan School Templeogue
NCCA	–	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCSE	–	National Council for Special Education
SSE	–	School Self Evaluation
SSP	–	Student Support Plans
TTRS	–	Touch, Type, Read, Spell
UDL	–	Universal Design for Learning
UNCRPD	–	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Believe. Belong. Become.
LSST

Introductory Statement and Rationale

Introductory Statement

At Libermann Spiritan School Templeogue (LSST), we follow a total communication approach to ensure our students are consistently exposed to environments rich in Communication and Language and Literacy (CLL). Staff use a combination of Lámh, gestures, visuals, AAC, oral language and facial expressions to model communication across all activities, always without expectation of an immediate response. We view "behaviour" and dysregulation through a communication lens, recognising that behaviours of concern often reflect unmet communication needs.

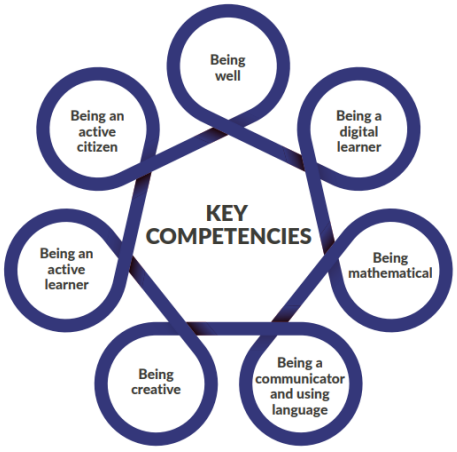
This plan was developed by the staff of LSST through collaborative planning during in service days. It is a working document informed by our Communication, Language and Literacy Policy in addition to monthly Junior/Senior school meetings and our School Self Evaluation (SSE) surveys. The plan serves as a foundation for both long and short term teacher planning across all class levels, ensuring a consistent and evidence based approach to CLL development.

Rationale

This process was undertaken to develop the student's language, communication, and literacy skills, thereby updating the existing plan to take account of new programmes, methodologies, and the changing learning needs of students in our school.

The rationale for this plan is:

- **To benefit teaching and learning:** Providing all staff with clear guidelines to ensure consistency and continuity of practice throughout the school.
- **To ensure inclusive access:** Meeting the needs of all students through a highly differentiated approach, ensuring each learner reaches their full potential.
- **To conform to national principles:** Following the Language Specification 2025, Primary Language Curriculum (2019), Junior/Senior Cycle Level 1 and 2 Learning Programmes (L1LPs/L2LPs), and the NCSE Autism Good Practice Guidance.
- **To provide a total communication approach:** Placing emphasis on the use of AAC (GRID), Lámh, visuals (Widgit), gestures, oral language and facial expressions to support our students.
- **To uphold communication as a human right:** Ensuring that every student at LSST has the tools and support to be understood, as enshrined in Article 21 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).



Vision and Aims

Vision

Our vision is to create a positive learning environment, through total communication approach, that celebrates each student's uniqueness and prioritises the initiation of communication. Guided by our motto "Believe, Belong, Become," CLL at Libermann Spiritan School supports each child in:

- **Believing** in potential to develop functional and meaningful communication skills.
- Feeling a true sense of **belonging** in a supportive school community that embraces diverse, multi-modal communication methods including Lámh, AAC, visuals, oral language, gestures and facial expressions.
- **Becoming** empowered individuals who can express their needs, engage with the world, and advocate for themselves.

Aims

These aims apply to all students from ages 4 - 18 and are differentiated at each stage to meet individual developmental needs. The school's primary objective is to provide a structured, multi-modal framework that ensures every student has a voice.

Individualised Communication Profiles

- Every student in the school has a unique language and communication profile.
- Specific CLL targets are identified and documented within each student's Student Support Plan (SSP).
- These targets are reviewed regularly to ensure they remain relevant to the student's current level of communicative initiation and response.

Total Communication Approach

The school implements a total communication environment where all forms of expression are valued and supported. This includes:

- **Visual Systems**: Using Widgit symbols for schedules, choice boards, and environmental signage to provide predictability.
- **Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)**: Utilising high-tech, specifically The Grid on school iPads, and low-tech options like visuals and core boards.
- **Gestures:** At LSST we integrate Lámh (using a whole-school "Lámh Combined" approach) alongside natural gestures, facial expressions and body language.
- **Diverse Processing Needs:** Acknowledging and supporting different learning styles, including Gestalt Language Processing.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

We use the UDL framework to remove barriers to learning and maximise participation for all students:

- **Multiple Means of Engagement:** Using student interests and meaningful, functional tasks to motivate communication.
- **Multiple Means of Representation:** Presenting information through spoken language, visuals, tactile materials, and digital media.
- **Multiple Means of Action and Expression:** Allowing students to demonstrate their knowledge through AAC, signing, oral language, visuals, typing, facial expressions, Lámh and gestures.

Language Across the Curriculum

- Communication and Literacy are not treated as isolated subjects but are integrated into every aspect of the school day.
- Oral language and AAC use are planned for and modelled by staff through all subjects, daily routines (such as lunch and transitions), and community based activities.

Collaborative Support Systems

- **Multidisciplinary Input:** The school maintains ongoing consultation with the CDNT Speech and Language Therapist, NEPS Psychologist, and NCSE Behaviour Practitioners to inform best practices.
- **Home School Link:** At LSST we recognise and value the significance of home school communication particularly around CLL. We prioritise regular liaison with parents and caregivers, ensuring they have input into their child's SSP and communication goals to support consistency across environments.

Assessment and Progress Monitoring

- **NCCA Continuum:** We emphasise continuous teacher observation and teacher designed tasks to track progress. At LSST we place significant value on the students needs and thus follow the continuum of assessment through Intuitive assessment, Planned Interactions and Assessment events.
- **Specialised Tools:** When appropriate, the school utilises standard assessments such as Motas/ABLLS/AFLLS and specific reading assessments (e.g., Schonell, Burt, or Oxford Owl).
- **Evidence Gathering:** Student progress is documented through work samples, checklists for phonics or symbol recognition, and portfolios containing photos and sample of work.

Believe, Belong, Become
LSST

Content of Plan

Curriculum Delivery

The following section of our whole school plan for CLL outlines the developmental pathway for students at LSST. While these are grouped by age, we recognise that our students biological age may differ from their developmental stages and therefore, teachers use these blocks to differentiate according to individual Student Support Plans (SSPs).

Junior School (Ages 4 - 8)

Several frameworks and curricula are used to guide teaching, learning and assessment in the area of CLL in the junior school. This ensures that CLL are accessible for all students at LSST and that learning environments are inclusive, using a total communication approach. These include Aistear, the Primary Language Curriculum (2019), and more recently, the new Language Specification (2025).

Oral Language/AAC:

- **Engagement:** Building capacity and working towards joint attention activities through approaches such as Attention Autism and intensive interaction. Supporting the children to develop an understanding of and responding to their own name.
- **Expressive/Receptive:** Supporting students to develop communication skills both expressively and receptively through consistent, multimodal modelling. This ensures students have the greatest opportunity to develop understanding and expression. Consistent modelling without expectation is provided through a total communication approach, including spoken language, AAC, visual supports, gestures, and facial expressions.
- **Vocabulary:** Students are exposed to early core words (e.g., more, finished, help, stop) using a total communication approach, including Lámh, grid, spoken language, visual supports, and gestures. Student's vocabulary is further developed and enhanced using the See and Learn programme.
- **Learning Programmes/Approaches:** see and learn programme, intensive interaction, modelling without expectation, GRID, rainbow readers, visuals (widgits) and attention autism.

Reading:

- **Awareness:** Providing a variety of opportunities for students to engage with and develop book handling skills through participation in and exposure to sensory stories, reading materials, catalogues, books, and magazines.
- **Visual Supports**: Students are consistently exposed to visual supports throughout the school environment. They engage in matching activities, such as photo-to-photo, object-to-photo, and object-to-object. Students are also supported to recognise personal names and visuals of core words such as stop, go, more, and help.

- **Phonics:** Students are exposed to and engage in early phonological awareness through a multi-sensory approach using programmes such as jolly phonics, see and learn, HWT and rainbow readers where appropriate.
- **Learning Programmes/Approaches:** rainbow readers, intensive interaction, see and learn, HWT, jolly phonics, core words, GRID, sensory stories and visuals (widgits).

Writing:

- **Fine Motor:** Students are provided with daily opportunities to develop their fine motor skills through a range of structured and play based activities. These include the use of playdough, threading tasks, sorting games, and sensory play such as toys, sand, paint and sensory trays. Students also engage with the Handwriting Without Tears foundations programme to support early prewriting and hand skill development.
- **Meaning:** Children explore mark making through a variety of structured and play based activities thus developing an understanding that text carries meaning. They engage in tracing shapes, copying letters from their name, and using choice boards to communicate their needs and preferences.
- **Learning Programmes/Approaches:** sensory play, mark making, HWT, tracing, copying, visuals (widgits), GRID, fine motor activities, play.

Strategy	Implementation at LSST
Total Communication Approach	Staff follow a total communication approach through the use of Lámh, spoken language, gestures, facial expressions, AAC, and visuals (Widgit). This approach is used consistently across the entire environment and in all interactions.
Modelling	Staff consistently model CLL without placing demands or expectations on students, ensuring that they are immersed in CLL rich environments throughout the day. Consistent modelling on AAC systems, without requiring an immediate response, remains a core focus for our non-speaking students.
Structured Environment	All classrooms have schedules that meet the needs of the students (visual, written, half/full day, first/then). Environments are labelled using visuals and displays are created with the needs of the students taken into consideration. All classrooms are set up to create universal learning spaces. https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/NCSE-Physical-Classroom-Environment.pdf
Aistear (Play)	Using Aistear's play based approach, staff provide CLL rich environments where students can explore, interact, and engage without pressure to respond. Through play, children are exposed to new vocabulary, sentence structures, and social communication routines, while staff model AAC use naturally and consistently. This

	approach supports comprehension, expressive language, and the functional use of AAC in meaningful, motivating contexts, helping non-speaking students develop confidence and understanding in their communication skills.
Daily Routines	Daily routines provide predictable and meaningful contexts that naturally support CLL development. Staff model spoken language and AAC consistently during everyday activities such as snack time, toileting, and transitions without placing expectation on our students to respond. Repetition of words, phrases, and social routines supports our students to understand meaning, practise functional communication, and build confidence. Routines also create opportunities for turn taking, requesting, commenting, and other social interactions, ensuring that all students at LSST are immersed in communication rich environments throughout the day.

Junior School (Ages 8 - 12)

Oral Language/AAC:

- **Expansion:** Students further develop oral language skills by progressing towards understanding two to three step instructions and expanding sentence length using colourful semantics and the autism and comprehension programme.
- **Social:** At LSST, we value the importance of social interaction between staff and students, and among our students themselves. To further develop oral language at this stage, students are supported to participate in paired and group activities, promoting turn-taking skills and listening to peers.
- **Questioning:** Using colourful semantics, see and learn, and the autism and comprehension programme, students are supported to develop understanding of who, what, and where questions as part of their oral language development.
- **Learning Programmes/Approaches:** see and learn programme, intensive interaction, modelling without expectation, GRID, rainbow reading programme, visuals (widgits), attention autism, the autism and comprehension programme, colourful semantics.

Reading:

- **Decoding:** Students are supported to develop early decoding skills through continued Jolly Phonics work, including blending, segmenting, and syllable activities. Students are also exposed to and supported to recognise and read early core words as part of their emerging reading development.
- **Sight Vocabulary:** Students develop sight vocabulary using the see and learn programme, Dolch word lists, core words, and functional “social sight” words (e.g., exit, push, danger). These are taught using a multimodal communication approach, including spoken language, AAC, visual supports, gestures, and Lámh, to support reading in real life contexts.

- **Comprehension:** Students develop early comprehension skills through activities such as matching sentences to pictures and answering everyday questions during group activities such as circle time and morning meetings. This is supported using the autism and comprehension programme, colourful semantics, and the rainbow reading programme to build understanding of key language concepts.
- **Learning Programmes/Approaches:** see and learn programme, modelling without expectation, GRID, rainbow reading programme, visuals (widgits), attention autism, the autism and comprehension programme, colourful semantics, Edmark, jolly phonics,

Writing:

- **Mark Making:** Students engage in mark making, tracing, copying, and handwriting activities using programmes such as Handwriting Without Tears (HWT), supported by motor skills, and typing through TTRS and Nessy. They explore a variety of implements and surfaces, placing marks, signs, symbols, or texts in correct sequences or orientations to convey meaning.
- **Communication:** Students use writing and mark making to communicate experiences, thoughts, opinions, and preferences with peers and adults, supported through a total communication approach that includes gestures, symbols, Lámh, spoken language, and AAC where appropriate.
- **Learning Programmes/Approaches:** TTRS, HWT, the autism and comprehension programme, rainbow reading programme, Nessy and GRID.

Strategy	Implementation at LSST
Total Communication Approach	Staff follow a total communication approach using Lámh, spoken language, gestures, facial expressions, AAC, and visuals (Widgit). This approach is used consistently across the entire environment and in all interactions.
Modelling	Staff consistently model CLL without placing demands or expectations on students, ensuring that they are immersed in CLL rich environments throughout the day. Consistent modelling on AAC systems, without requiring an immediate response, remains a core focus for our non-speaking students.
Structured Environment	All classrooms have schedules that meet the needs of the students (visual, written, half/full day, first/then). Environments are labelled using visuals and displays are created with the needs of the students taken into consideration. All classrooms are set up to create universal learning spaces. https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/NCSE-Physical-Classroom-Environment.pdf

Community Visits	Students are provided with opportunities to participate in community visits to the library, shops and cafes to support the development and generalisation of communication, social, and functional life skills in real life contexts.
Daily Routines	Daily routines provide predictable and meaningful contexts that naturally support CLL development. Staff model spoken language and AAC consistently during everyday activities such as snack time, toileting, and transitions without placing expectation on our students to respond. Repetition of words, phrases, and social routines supports our students to understand meaning, practise functional communication, and build confidence. Routines also create opportunities for turn taking, requesting, commenting, and other social interactions, ensuring that all students at LSST are immersed in communication rich environments throughout the day.

Senior School (Ages 13 - 18)

In the senior school at LSST, CLL remain a core focus. Teaching, learning, and assessment are guided by the Primary Language Curriculum (2019), the new Language Specification (2025) and both the Junior and Senior Cycle L1LP and L2LP frameworks. PLU 1 (Prior Learning Unit 1) within both L1LP and L2LP is used to ensure that students consolidate foundational language and literacy skills before progressing to more complex tasks. These frameworks ensure that all students continue to access language and communication learning in inclusive environments, using our total communication approach at LSST.

- **Developing Communicative relationships:** Our students develop awareness of sensory stimuli in their learning environment and learn to attend consistently to people and activities around them such as morning meetings and attention autism sessions. They are supported to engage in joint attention, demonstrate turn-taking, and use tone, body language, gestures, pace, vocalisations, and volume to communicate effectively. At LSST we encourage our students to initiate communication with familiar staff and peers and to engage in meaningful, enjoyable exchanges with communicative partners.

- **Understanding:** At LSST, students develop recognition of personal and standardised objects of reference and respond to speaking and non-speaking cues within familiar routines. They are supported to attend to and respond to increasing vocabulary in texts and consistently answer familiar factual questions using programmes such as See and Learn, The Autism and Comprehension Programme, Colourful Semantics, the Rainbow Reading Programme, TTRS, Nessy, and Edmark.

- **Exploring and Using:** Students clearly indicate preferred objects or activities and can refuse non preferred items. They are supported to request repetition, additional items or changes to events and to make requests or express needs using a total communication approach. Students participate in sharing familiar or personal stories, activities or events during morning meetings and community engagement, communicate feelings, and express interests and opinions using multimodal communication methods.

- **Reading:** Students demonstrate engagement and enjoyment within reading through library visits, mobile library sessions, and DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) time. They are supported to choose and handle books, showing familiarity with book handling skills, and to recognise and understand symbols, signs, logos, familiar words, letters, and visual representations using programmes such as the Rainbow Reading Programme, See and Learn, and The Autism and Comprehension Programme.

- **Written Expression:** Students show enjoyment while making marks or texts, using gestures, sounds, or words to focus attention and demonstrate an understanding that texts carry meaning. They engage in mark making activities tailored to their strengths, interests, and needs. Written expression is supported using programmes such as TTRS, Nessy and HWT.

Strategy	Implementation at LSST
Total Communication Approach	Staff follow a total communication approach using Lámh, spoken language, gestures, facial expressions, AAC, and visuals (Widgit). This approach is used consistently across the entire environment and in all interactions.
Modelling	Staff consistently model CLL without placing demands or expectations on students, ensuring that they are immersed in CLL rich environments throughout the day. Consistent modelling on AAC systems, without requiring an immediate response, remains a core focus for our non-speaking students.
Structured Environment	All classrooms have schedules that meet the needs of the students (visual, written, half/full day, first/then). Environments are labelled using visuals and displays are created with the needs of the students taken into consideration. All classrooms are set up to create universal learning spaces. https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/NCSE-Physical-Classroom-Environment.pdf
Community Visits	Students are provided with structured opportunities to participate in community visits, such as trips to the library, local shops, and cafes, to support early communication, social interaction, and functional life

	skills. These visits focus on foundational skills outlined in PLU 1 of L1LP and L2LP, including attending to people and activities, using preferred objects and routines, making simple requests through speaking or non-speaking methods, and engaging in supported social exchanges. Activities are carefully scaffolded by staff to allow our students to generalise skills learned in school to real life contexts, fostering independence, confidence, and meaningful participation.
Daily Routines	Daily routines provide predictable and meaningful contexts that naturally support CLL development. Staff model spoken language and AAC consistently during everyday activities such as snack time, toileting, and transitions without placing expectation on our students to respond. Repetition of words, phrases, and social routines supports our students to understand meaning, practise functional communication, and build confidence. Routines also create opportunities for turn taking, requesting, commenting, and other social interactions, ensuring that all students at LSST are immersed in communication rich environments throughout the day.
Portfolio	Students following the L1LP and L2LP frameworks maintain an individual portfolio that captures and illustrates their growth and development across Communication, Language, and Literacy. The portfolio provides a consistent record of progress over time at LSST, documenting achievements in all areas of CLL. It highlights the application of skills across different contexts, including classroom activities, community engagement, library visits, and real life functional tasks. The portfolio serves as a tool for reflecting on learning, planning next steps, and demonstrating progression in line with the student's personalised learning goals.

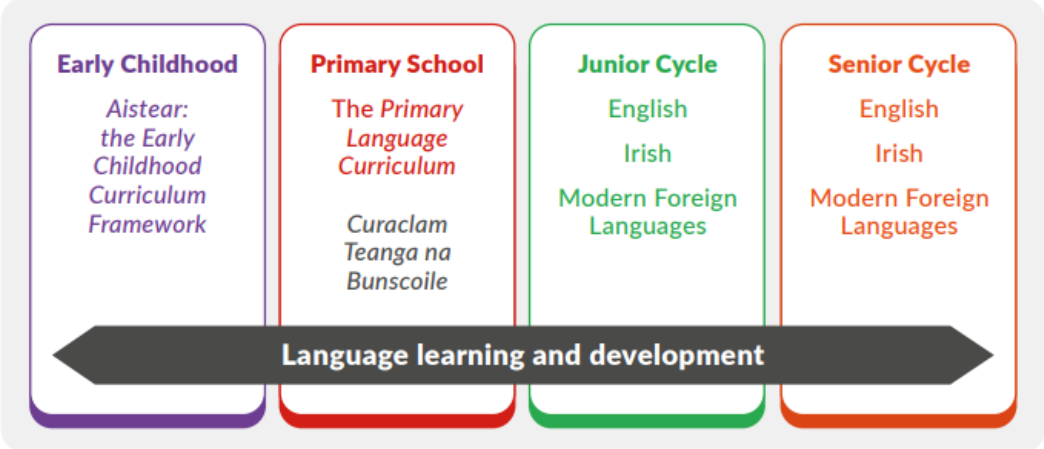


Figure 3: The *Primary Language Curriculum* in the context of curriculum provision from birth to 18 years

Timetabling and Curriculum Integration

Dedicated time is allocated daily for CLL in line with NCCA and OIDE guidelines. To support our students, CLL goals are not restricted to these periods but are explicitly embedded across all other curriculum blocks, including STEM, Wellbeing, SPHE, PE, SEES and Arts Education. This ensures that opportunities for communication are integrated into every subject area, daily routine, and community based activity.

Homework

Homework in CLL is set at the teacher's discretion and in collaborative agreement with parents. The primary focus of homework is the generalisation of mastered skill such as applying sight words, functional reading, AAC use, and basic writing in the home environment. Homework aims to maintain student engagement with books, visuals and AAC systems while ensuring the work is manageable and reflects the active, experiential nature of CLL.

Resources and ICT

The school utilises a Total Communication approach supported by a wide range of specialised resources:

- **Whole School Visual's:** We implement the Widgit platform across all classrooms and shared spaces for standardised communication boards, visual schedules, and environmental labels to ensure predictability for all learners.
- **Communication Systems:** Following a total communication approach, students are encouraged and exposed to multimodal communication to include Lámh, visuals, AAC (GRID) and social stories. High-tech AAC is prioritised using GRID on 32 personalized school iPads.
- **Literacy and Writing Tools:** At LSST, we implement a variety of programmes including Jolly Phonics, Edmark, See and Learn, Reading Eggs, Nessy, Rainbow Reading Programme, The Autism and Comprehension Programme, HWT and TTRS.

Teacher Planning and Professional Autonomy

Teachers at LSST utilise this whole school plan in conjunction with the new Language Specification (2025), Primary Language Curriculum (2019), the Junior/Senior Cycle Level 1 and 2 Learning Programmes (L1LPs/L2LPs) and NCSE Autism Good Practice Guidance to develop their long and short term plans. All plans are highly individualised and informed by the specific targets set in each student SSP in collaboration with students, parents, CDNT and any other professionals involved. Progress is recorded through regular teacher assessment (Intuitive Assessment, Planned Interactions and Assessment Events) and a Cuntas Míosúil to track the effectiveness of teaching.

Parental Involvement

Recognising parents as the primary educators, at LSST, we foster strong homeschool links through communication diaries, Seesaw, Aladdin, phone calls and formal parent teacher and SSP meetings.

We encourage parents to avail of opportunities for training in areas such as Widgit symbols, Lámh, AAC, and home reading strategies to ensure consistency between school and home.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Staff development is a continuous priority at LSST. Regular training is provided in areas such as autism best practice, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and specific communication tools like Lámh, Jolly Phonics, and GRID. In house training is supplemented by coaching from the visiting Children's Disability Network Team (CDNT) Speech and Language Therapist and Behaviour Specialist from the NCSE ensuring staff feel empowered to implement the school's CLL vision.

Monitoring and Success Criteria

The success of this plan is evaluated through its impact on our students' ability to "Believe, Belong, and Become". Key success criteria include:

- The use of a total communication approach apparent across the whole school environment
- Increased initiation and confidence in spontaneous using of AAC, Lámh, gestures, visuals, facial expressions and oral language
- Improved standards in listening, functional reading and writing relative to each student's individual ability
- Consistency in the use of and approach in the use of visuals and signs across the entire school community

This plan will be formally reviewed every two years by the principal, staff and Board of Management or sooner if required by curricular changes or the evolving needs of our students

Ratification and Communication

The Board of Management of Libermann Spiritan school Templeogue ratified this plan on 19/11/2025.

Signed: _____

Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: _____

Principal

Date: 19/11/2025

Date: 19/11/2025

Due for Review: November 2027