Communication, Language & Literacy Policy

Of

Libermann Spiritan School Templeogue (LSST)

Templeville Road,
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Roll number: 20563J

Libermann Spiritan School Templeogue
For Autistic Students and Students with Complex Needs, Aged 4-18
Speaking and Non - Speaking Communication Focused
School Motto: "Believe, Belong, Become"

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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

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1. Introductory Statement and Rationale

1.1 Introductory Statement

At Libermann Spiritan School (LSST), we are dedicated to fostering an environment where every student feels valued, included, and capable of communicating. We place huge emphasis on a total communication approach to ensure all students have the best opportunity to develop strong communication skills. We view “behaviour” and dysregulation through a communication lens, recognising that behaviours of concern often reflect unmet communication needs. Our Communication, Language and Literacy (CLL) Policy enacts the new Language Specification (2025) and aligns with the Primary Language Curriculum (2019) and is designed specifically for Autistic Students and Students with complex needs, many of whom are non-speaking. This policy reflects our school motto: Believe, Belong, Become:

- **Believe** in the potential of each student to develop communication skills
- **Belong** to a supportive school community that embraces a total communication approach
- **Become** individuals who are empowered to express themselves and engage with the world around them

The development of a whole school plan and policy for CLL in LSST commenced in the academic year 2024/2025. We recognise and embrace that CLL differences are part of the natural diversity within the autistic community. These differences can present in many ways, and each autistic student will communicate uniquely. Some students may demonstrate strengths in aspects of CLL, while others may be developing their CLL skills in ways that suit their individual needs and neurotype. At LSST, we honour and embrace the uniqueness of CLL profiles of every student.

Many autistic students process and interpret language in ways that are unique to their neurotype. They may understand language more literally, and their recognition of non - speaking communication such as gestures, facial expressions, or tone of voice may differ from neurotypical norms. Some students may use a smaller range of gestures, while others may prefer not to use eye contact. These are all valid communication styles that can sometimes be misunderstood by others. When autistic students do not yet have access to communication methods that feel meaningful or effective for them, they may experience frustration when trying to express their feelings, knowledge, or needs. This frustration may be communicated through vocalisations or behaviour, which are important signals that support or adaptation is needed. These communication differences, combined with misunderstandings from others, can influence a student’s emotional wellbeing and their opportunities for comfortable, successful interactions. At LSST, we aim to create a

supportive, responsive communication environment to help our students express themselves authentically and participate in ways that feel safe and empowering.

This policy outlines a whole school approach to teaching of CLL. It will also inform and support other members of the school community of the approach and methodologies used in our school. The policy will form the basis for teachers long and short-term planning as outlined below:

Junior School: 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).

Senior School: 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 (Priority 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.

1.2 Rationale

- **To benefit teaching and learning:** Enhance teaching and learning across the school by providing all staff with clear, practical guidelines for the teaching of CLL ensuring consistency, continuity, and high-quality 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 Guidelines.
- **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).

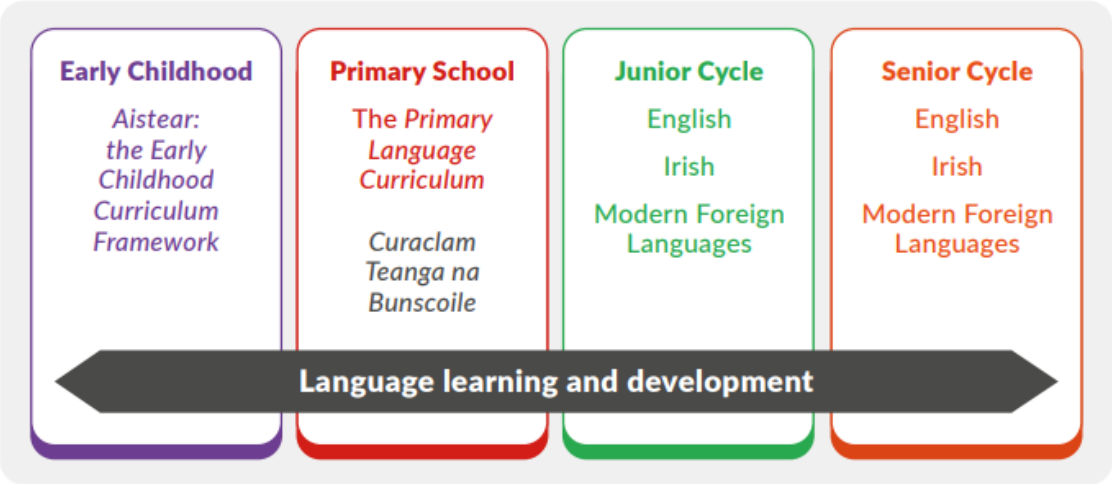


Figure 3: The *Primary Language Curriculum* in the context of curriculum provision from birth to 18 years

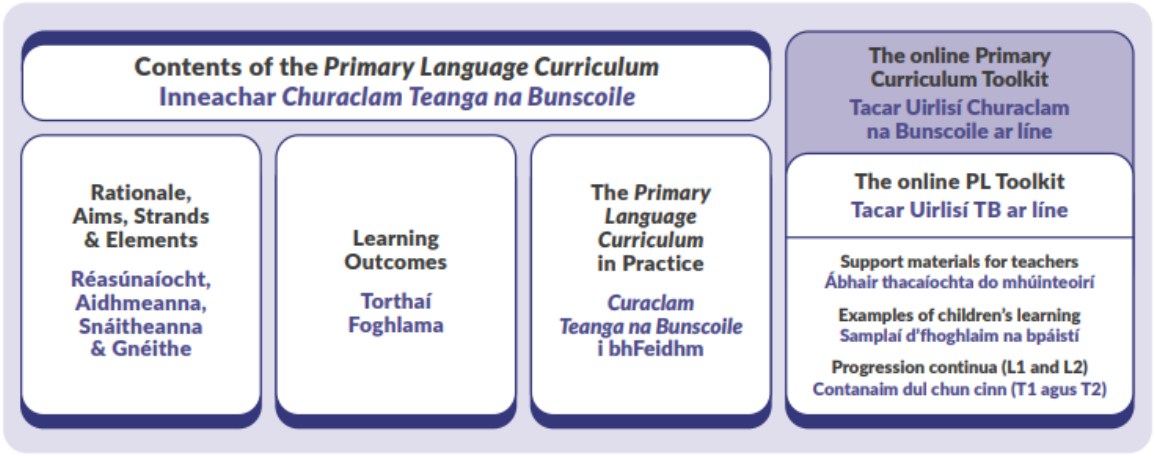


Figure 2: Contents of the *Primary Language Curriculum*

2. Vision and Aims of the Policy

2.1 Vision

Our vision is to create a positive learning environment, through using a total communication approach, which 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 CLL 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.

2.2 Aims

1. **Individual Communication Profiles:** To support each student's individual communication profile by identifying, implementing, and regularly reviewing personalised CLL targets within their Student Support Plan (SSP) ensuring goals remain relevant to their current level of communicative initiation and response.

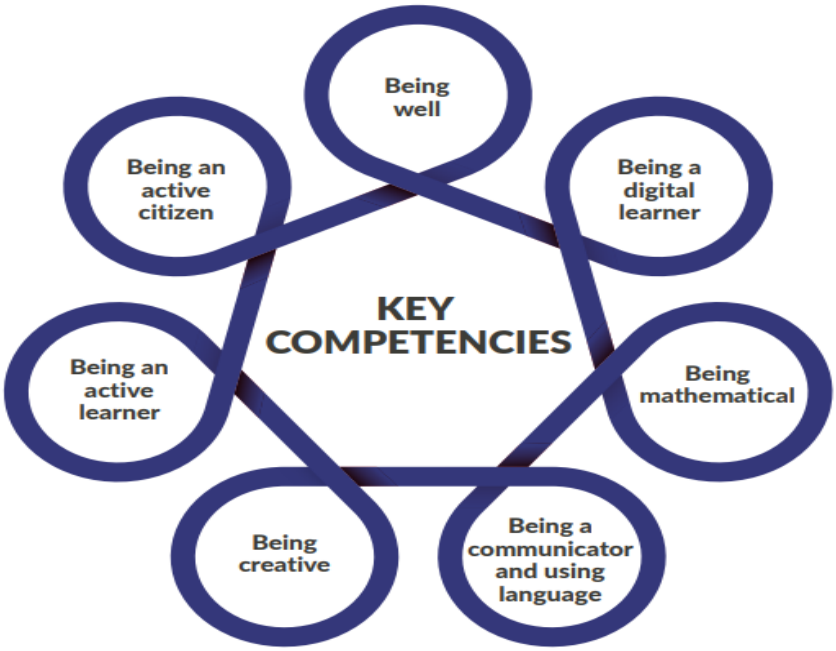
2. **Total Communication Approach:** To provide a consistent total communication environment in which all forms of expression are valued and supported, enabling students to understand, express and engage meaningfully. This is achieved using visuals, AAC, Lámh, gestures, oral language and facial expressions whilst also respecting diverse processing and learning styles, including Gestalt Language Processing.

3. **Universal Design for Learning (UDL):** To maximise participation and reduce barriers to learning for all students by applying the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, using multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression so that students can access learning in ways that are meaningful, accessible, and suited to their individual CLL and learning needs.

4. **Language Across the Curriculum:** CLL 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.

5. **Collaborative Support Systems**: To work collaboratively with parents, guardians, caregivers, professionals, and the wider school community to support CLL development.

6. **Assessment and Progress Monitoring:** To monitor and support student progress in CLL through a continuum of assessment that includes intuitive assessment, planned interactions, and assessment events, alongside appropriate standardised tools, with evidence gathered through work samples, checklists, and student portfolios.



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3. Guiding Principles for our Communication, Language and Literacy Policy

3.1 Guiding Principles

3.1.1 Communication as a Right

Article 21 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) affirms that everyone has the right to freedom of expression and communication and to seek, receive, and impart information in the mode of communication of their choice. This explicitly protects and recognises all forms of communication including:

- Non-Speaking modalities
- AAC systems (PECS, communication devices, sign, symbols, etc.)
- Gestures and body language
- Behaviour as communication
- Any other form of self-expression

Furthermore, Article 21 also reinforces that:

- Communication partners (Teachers, SNAs, professionals and families) have a responsibility to learn, respect, and respond to the child's communication system.
- A child's communication method is not optional or "less than."
- Access to AAC is a human right, not something to be "earned".

3.1.2 Universal Design for Learning: (UDL)

Universal Design for Learning provides a framework which maximises learning for all students by using a variety of teaching methods to enhance participation and to remove barriers to learning (Meyer *et al*., 2014). The approach emphasises the need to provide information in more than one format to ensure accessibility and to offer flexibility in how students interact with learning material and demonstrate their learning. It also advocates for different ways to motivate students by responding to their interests, giving them choices, and making learning tasks relevant and meaningful.

The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework promotes inclusivity and accessibility in education through three core principles:

1. Multiple Means of Engagement (Why of Learning),
2. Multiple Means of Representation (What of Learning),
3. Multiple Means of Action and Expression (How of Learning)

3.1.3 Communication Practices in Our School Community

Individualised Approach: CLL is a highly individual process. We recognise and respect the unique ways each student communicates and will provide supports tailored to their specific needs and preferences.

Teacher Autonomy: Teachers have the freedom to make instructional and curricular decisions that best suit their student's needs.

Professional Judgment: Teachers use their expertise and knowledge to make informed decisions about teaching strategies, assessment methods, and classroom management.

Collaboration: Teachers engage with colleagues, students, parents, management and therapists, where available to create a shared vision for student success.

Reflection: All staff engage in reflective practice in order to continuously improve and innovate their approach to CLL.

Advocacy: All staff advocate for their students, their profession, and the resources necessary to improve access to education and the curriculum.

Language Across the Curriculum: We integrate communication support across all areas of the curriculum. CLL development is not confined to language lessons but is a fundamental component of all subject areas, social interactions, and daily routines.

Multi-Modal Communication: At LSST, we adopt a multi-modal approach to communication, supporting non-speaking students with a wide variety of neuro-affirming and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) options including:

- Low Tech AAC (e.g. Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS))
- High Tech AAC (Grid, Tobii Dynavax)
- Sign Language (e.g. Lámh)
- Gestures and Body Language
- Symbol-Based Systems (e.g., Picture Communication, Widget picture communication)
- Any other communication system that we can support as a school, e.g. Gestalt, S2C

3.1.4 Communication Strategies

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC): At LSST, we provide individualised AAC systems for each student, including both low-tech (e.g., PECS) and high-tech options (e.g., iPad with communication apps). Teachers and staff will receive training in the use of AAC systems to ensure consistent, effective use across all settings. This training will be sought from the CDNT and/or program-based supports.

Visual Supports and Communication Boards: Widget is the communication platform used across the school. Visual aids such as communication boards, symbols, and visual timetables, schedules, social stories, choice boards, first and then boards will be used in the classrooms to support understanding and expression. Staff will integrate visual supports into lessons, allowing students to access and engage with the content more effectively.

Social Communication and Peer Interaction (Consistent modelling without expectation): Opportunities for structured social interaction will be embedded into daily routines. This will include peer communication activities, Attention Autism sessions, small group work, and role-play to develop social communication skills. Community links with local schools and sports clubs is also a way that we aim to further enhance and engage in social communication for our students. Additionally, individualised social stories will be used to enhance understanding of social situations and appropriate responses. Consistent modelling on AAC systems, without requiring an immediate response, remains a core focus for our non-speaking students.

Environmental Supports: The classroom environment will be adapted to support CLL development, including quiet areas for students who need calm spaces, sensory resources, and clear visual supports. Consistent routines, visual cues, and clear instructions will support comprehension and participation in the classroom environment. https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/NCSE-Physical-Classroom-Environment.pdf

Total Communication	Observation	Collaboration
Use choice boards, communication boards, photos or objects.	Where in the classroom students spend a lot of their time, be reflective of this and incorporate this space more into their learning.	Ask their family or previous teachers what they think may be beneficial in the classroom environment to enhance participation.

4. Context of the Communication Language and Literacy Policy

CLL are at the heart of the curriculum. Children learn language, and they also learn through language. This supports their understanding of themselves and the world around them, both in school and beyond. The importance of oral language is recognised in the curriculum, where it plays a key role in both teaching and learning. For further information, support and insight, please refer to NCCA planning, Primary Curriculum, Junior and Senior Cycle Planning tools:

www.nccaplanning.ie

www.jct.ie

Our CLL policy will be developed under the following headings:

1.1 Strands and Elements (Primary Level) and Elements (Junior Cycle/Senior Cycle)

1.2 Language Programmes
1.3 Assessment and Record Keeping (see assessment policy for more detail)
1.4 Homework
1.5 Resources and ICT (Including communication systems)
1.6 Individual Teacher planning and reporting
1.7 Parental Involvement
1.8 Continuing Professional Development of staff
1.9 Community Links

4.1 Strands and Elements

The teaching of CLL is based around the newly published Language Specification for Primary and Special Schools 2025. The curriculum divides into three strands: **Oral language**, **Reading** and **Writing**. A web of interconnections exists, not only among the elements but also across the strands. While each strand supports the development of the other, the oral language strand, which includes listening and speaking, requires specific attention in the early years of primary school as it is fundamental to the development of reading, writing and learning across the curriculum.

- **Oral language:** This strand focuses on how students understand and use spoken language. It includes listening, speaking, building vocabulary, asking and answering questions, and developing the ability to communicate ideas, feelings and information clearly.
- **Reading:** This strand supports students in learning how to read and understand texts. It includes decoding (how words work), comprehension, developing a love of reading, and using reading to gain information and enjoy stories.
- **Writing:** This strand develops student's ability to create written texts. It includes handwriting, spelling, planning and organising ideas, writing for different purposes, and using writing to communicate meaning effectively.

Furthermore, within each strand the curriculum focuses on three key elements: **Communication**, **Understandin**g and **Exploring & Using**. It is through an awareness of the interrelationships between the elements and across the strands that the potential of the integrated language curriculum is realised.

- **Communication**: focusing on developing students' knowledge and understanding of how we build and share meaning together in communicative relationships. As listeners and speakers, and as givers and receivers of information.

- **Understanding**: focusing on developing the ability of students to create and interact successfully with texts using increasingly sophisticated knowledge and understanding of the content and structure of language.

- **Exploring and Using:** prioritising the development of students' ability to explore and use language for a wide range of purposes, in a variety of genres, and with a range of audiences, familiar and unfamiliar.

4.1.1 Oral Language

Element: Communication

- Engagement, listening and attention
- Motivation and choice
- Social conventions and awareness of others

At LSST, we recognise and value the diverse language and communication profiles of our students. This policy reflects our commitment to creating a linguistically rich, supportive, and inclusive environment through a total communication approach. We prioritise using CLL that is accessible, meaningful, and respectful, and we model positive social communication in all interactions. To support understanding, we incorporate visual tools and a range of CLL supports that enable students to engage confidently and express themselves in ways that best suit their individual communication styles.

We understand and recognise that some students may process spoken language differently, which can influence their ability to attend to speech, follow instructions, or organise information. These are not deficits, but natural variations in communication that may require additional supports. Developing our students understanding of spoken language is therefore an important focus within LSST. Skills are introduced in developmentally appropriate ways, beginning with simple, one-step directions supported by visuals, prompts, and co-regulation, and gradually progressing to more complex language as students' confidence and readiness grow.

Students who are non-speaking or have emerging speech are immersed in both high-tech and low-tech AAC systems to ensure they always have an effective way to express themselves. Speech and language therapists through the CDNT are providing ongoing support in approaches such as LÁMH and AAC systems. Training opportunities may also be available to staff through external professional bodies. All staff are encouraged to use core-word modelling and a total communication approach integrating AAC modelling, spoken language, LÁMH signs, gestures, visuals, and other supports. This ensures that students experience consistent, authentic communication input throughout the school day.

Current Communication Techniques used in LSST:

- Facial expressions
- Oral Language
- Gestures/body language
- PECS

- LÁMH
- Intensive Interaction
- Attention Autism
- Consistent modelling without expectation
- Gestalt Language Processing
- Pictures and text (Widget)
- ACC Apps/devices (TOBI, GRID, GOTalkNow)
- Talking Tiles
- Other programs used by individual students

Element: Understanding

- Sentence structure and grammar
- Vocabulary
- Demonstration of Understanding

The whole school policy for LSST regarding competence and confidence in using language is to develop our student's ability to use language as a speaker, a writer, a typer and a reader. Competence and confidence in using language extends across all curricular areas and therefore students are given a variety of opportunities to develop their oral language. Students have individual programmes which equip them with the appropriate responses and greetings that are needed in daily life. The whole school policy then endeavours for students to initiate conversations and express their needs and emotions.

Element: Exploring and Using

- Requests, questions, and interactions
- Categorisation
- Retelling and elaboration
- Playful and creative use of language
- Information giving, explanation and justification
- Description, predication, and reflection

In this element, the focus is on supporting students to use language as a tool for learning. Much of what students come to understand about themselves, others, and the world emerges through meaningful interactions that combine language and experience. Through naming, describing, classifying and exploring ideas students deepen their knowledge and expand their expressive and receptive language (Primary School Curriculum, NCCA, p.6).

Many autistic students may process or use WH- questions differently, and therefore this skill is explicitly supported through structured approaches such as Marian Blanks Levels of Questioning and Colourful Semantics. These approaches help our students build understanding at their own pace, offering an accessible pathway for developing both comprehension and expression. At LSST, we recognise that reading fluency and

comprehension may develop at different rates, so comprehension is supported as intentionally as technical reading skills.

Autistic students engage with imagination, play, and creative activities in ways that differ from neurotypical expectations. These differences are valid and meaningful expressions of their thinking, interests, and ways of experiencing the world. At LSST, our whole school approach aims to support imaginative development in flexible, respectful ways, ensuring students feel safe, regulated, and prepared for new or unfamiliar activities. Predictability, visual supports, and pre-teaching help to reduce anxiety and enable our students to participate comfortably.

For younger students, imagination is nurtured through structured and child-led play programmes. Older students engage with a wide range of stories, poems, rhymes, songs, and creative media. Strategies that support emotional understanding and imaginative development including Attention Autism, Circle time, Drama, Music, Art activities, and other multimodal approaches that offer students diverse ways to explore ideas and express themselves.

4.1.2 Reading

Element: Communication

- Engagement
- Motivation and Choice

The whole school policy for CLL concentrates on enabling the student in making sense of deriving pleasure from all kinds of visual and tactile representations. The students are exposed to a variety of visuals including print and picture to increase comprehension and understanding of words and imaged with meaning.

We are building a whole school library, with adapted readers and personalised talk books that will be available to students. Students can choose preferred books to engage with as appropriate. Class trips to local libraries and a monthly visit from the South Dublin Mobile Library are also used to encourage the love of reading. Fostering enjoyment in reading includes listening to and engaging with sensory stories and looking at and handling books. Functional reading involves attending to and discriminating objects, pictures, symbols and texts.

Element: Understanding

- Conventions of print and sentence structure
- Vocabulary
- Phonics, Works recognition and word study
- Phonological and phonemic awareness

A total communication approach is delivered in a highly individualised way at LSST. This ensures that vocabulary and content are directly relevant to each student. The approach

builds on personal experiences so that language becomes purposeful and connected to the student's life. Our Senior students create portfolios documenting their activities and learning across their Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle programmes, helping them build ownership and understanding through real-life, meaningful texts.

Sight vocabulary is supported through regular, natural exposure across all subject areas. Words are selected based on each student's needs, interests, and experiences, beginning with personally meaningful vocabulary before progressing to core words, common words, high-frequency lists (e.g., Dolch), and social sight vocabulary. The school environment is intentionally print-rich: signage, object labels, location labels, and Widgit-supported visuals help students link text with meaning and increase confidence in recognising and using words.

Phonics instruction is supported through the Jolly Phonics programme, See and Learn Programme and a range of other multimodal, engaging methodologies. Phonological awareness is developed through action songs, rhymes, concrete materials, and structured learning experiences. Where beneficial, students may engage in Oro-motor activities and targeted sound exploration tasks to support approximate sound production in a comfortable, supportive setting. Additional personalised programmes such as Reading Eggs, NALA and Edmark are incorporated according to student need to reinforce phonics, blending, and early reading skills.

Element: Exploring and Using

- Purpose genre and voice
- Comprehension
- Response and authors intent
- Fluency and self-correction

At LSST, we use a variety of reading materials such as the See and Learn programme, Rainbow reading programme, NALA literacy resource, eBooks, sensory stories, TTRS, HWT and The Autism and Comprehension Programme. These are used to expose students to reading to develop their receptiveness to language. These also provides our students with the opportunity to talk about reading and expose them to the conventions of print. The criteria that we use in choosing relevant reading schemes are individual interests, age appropriateness, teacher observation and accessibility of all students. Students in the senior end of our school are encouraged to read novels and participate in DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) time daily.

The rainbow reading programme, EDMARK level 1 and 2, and the See and Learn programme are available at present to the whole school. As per advice from our NEPS, senior educational psychologist, we may require several reading schemes to encompass all readers and as such we have a number of schemes available.

Social Stories are developed for the needs of the individual students and/or the class to prepare them for situations with which they may not be comfortable, such as a haircut. The use of these social stories can alleviate anxieties and help prepare students for stressful situations.

4.1.3 Writing

Element: Communicating

- Engagement
- Motivation and Choice

For autistic students with complex needs, writing may develop differently and can involve a wide range of strengths and support needs. Factors such as fine motor development, symbol decoding, oral language processing, and understanding the purpose of written communication can all influence how a student engages with writing tasks. These differences are recognised and respected within LSST's approach to literacy.

Writing is embedded across subject areas and supported through a broad range of methods that honour students' diverse communication styles. At Libermann Spiritan School, writing is understood as an expressive process that does not rely solely on pen or pencil use. Instead, a multisensory, flexible approach is adopted, incorporating objects, pictures, symbols, and ICT to ensure that all students can participate in meaningful written expression.

To support students' access to writing, programmes such as HWT (Handwriting Without Tears) and TTRS (Touch-Type Read and Spell) are used alongside other personalised strategies. These tools help students develop confidence, motor skills, functional typing skills, and alternative means of written communication at a pace and level appropriate to their individual profile.

Through the class writing programme, students are be enabled to experience and enjoy a print rich environment with displays of students own writing, colouring, posters, symbols and text. Students are supported to write for expression; to communicate, wants/needs and teachers use students own experiences and interest to encourage writing.

Element: Understanding

- Conventions of print and sentence structure
- Vocabulary
- Spelling and word study

The students in Libermann Spiritan School are encouraged to use all forms of written expression for example, scribbling, colouring, drawing, shapes, letters, numerals. Prewriting activities that take place include but are not limited to plasticine, play doh, sand, sandpaper,

paint, magnetic letters, pegs, screwing and unscrewing, threading, tearing, cutting and thera- putty. Students are given support from the CDNT occupational therapist to improve their fine motor and writing skills.

Students are introduced to the concept of writing through being exposed to a print rich environment and where their attention is bought to realise signs and symbols give us information. Activities and learning experiences include but are not limited to:

- Developing an understanding of left to right, top to bottom orientation of writing
- Develop a satisfactory grip of writing implements
- Matching letters to letters, words to words
- Tracing and copying letters and words from samples
- Students can write using whatever system works for them
- In some cases, students may be given homework to practise their writing
- Using labels to name familiar people and things
- Writing letters and words form memory
- Developing the confidence to use approximate spelling (using phonics based in ability)

Element: Exploring and using

- Purpose, genre and voice
- Writing process and creating text
- Response and authors intent
- Handwriting and presentation

At LSST out Students are encouraged to write/type

- Marks, Shapes, Letters, Names
- Core words
- Nouns
- Sentences
- Descriptions
- Labels
- Notes
- Recipes
- Menus
- Shopping lists
- Invitations
- Summarise stories
- Their news

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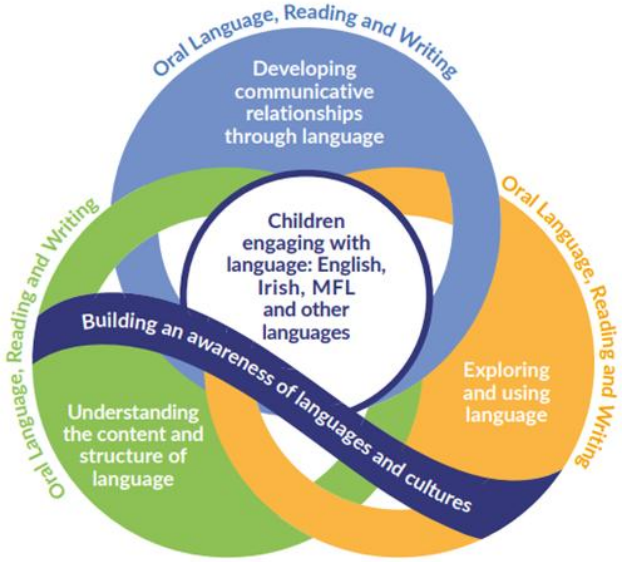
Teachers provide students with frequent, meaningful opportunities to develop their spelling skills, offering the level of support each student needs to progress confidently. Spelling is approached in flexible, individualised ways that reflect the diverse strengths and communication profiles of our students. A range of strategies are used across LSST, including the use of AAC devices with keyboard functions, typing programmes, reinforcing key words from texts, Jolly Phonics sound-blending and sight-word learning. These approaches ensure that students can engage with spelling through methods that are accessible, motivating, and aligned with their preferred ways of learning and communicating.

4.2 Language Programme



LSST is a school that supports autistic students with complex needs, each with their own unique communication and learning profiles. Students across the school may communicate and use language in diverse ways, and these differences guide how we design and deliver learning.
Because of this diversity CLL is a core focus of teaching and learning in LSST and it is prioritised within every Student Support Plan (SSP). In supporting the development of communication, language and literacy skills, it is essential to consider the following:

- Prioritising each student's individual communication system, ensuring they have a reliable and meaningful way to express themselves in all environments
- Supporting the social aspects of CLL, such as turn-taking, shared attention, and reciprocal interaction, through explicit teaching and modelling
- Providing direct teaching of non-speaking communication skills, including gestures, facial expressions, vocal initiation, and body language, recognising these as valid and important communicative tools
- Using a total communication approach that incorporates facial expression, LÁMH, TEACCH supports, PECS, AAC devices, Gestalt Language Processing approaches, functional language strategies, pictures, symbols, body language, and spoken language reflecting the full range of methods students may use to communicate effectively
- Offering clear, manageable, and individualised directions and instructions, presented through the communication system that best suits each student's needs and supports their understanding

At LSST, we have access to a Speech and Language Therapist through the visiting Children's Disability Network Team (CDNT), as well as support from the NEPS Educational Psychologist. In addition, an NCSE Behaviour Practitioner is assigned to our school. These professionals contribute to the development of our whole-school approach to CLL. They provide guidance on interventions for individual students and class groups, offer staff training, and advise on strategies and activities that support the implementation and progression of our CLL programmes throughout the school.

4.3 Assessment and Record keeping

Assessment is integral to the learning process. At LSST we utilise the NCCA continuum of assessment which includes:

- Ongoing assessment of students individualised language and learning goals
- Teacher observation
- Teacher designed tasks and tests derived from the NCCA curriculum assessment tool
- Work samples - Permanent products
- Digital portfolio - video and photographic evidence of observations/learning
- End of year reports
- Assessments such as MOTAS, ABLLS and other assessments identified by teacher to suit individual students.

Advice from the NEPS Senior Educational Psychologist emphasises the importance of prioritising teacher observation and teacher-designed assessments over standardised testing within our school context. As outlined above, assessment practices in LSST follow the support pathways from experiencing to generalisation, ensuring that students skills are observed and documented in meaningful, authentic ways.

A literacy checklist is currently being developed to support teachers in identifying each student's level of literacy performance. This checklist will be stored in each student's individual assessment folder, alongside records of programmes and approaches the student has already engaged with.

The school will also maintain a portfolio of each student's work, stored either on the school server or as a hard copy. This portfolio may include work samples, videos, and photographic evidence demonstrating learning across the year. Each assessment method contributes valuable information that helps track individual progress and build a comprehensive profile of each student's strengths, learning journey, and engagement of CLL. LSST is currently developing a full-school Assessment Policy to guide this process.

Students receive the required daily time allocation for CLL, based on guidelines from OIDE/NCCA. Teachers further support language development by integrating CLL naturally across all daily activities. While dedicated teaching time is scheduled, opportunities for

meaningful language and communication learning also occur incidentally throughout the school day.

4.4 Homework

At LSST, homework is assigned at the teacher's discretion following consultation with parents. It may include oral language activities, reading, sight vocabulary and written tasks. Homework is tailored to each student's individual ability and home context and is based on the skills currently being developed at school. Activities typically focus on previously mastered material to support success and confidence at home, while also helping students maintain and generalise these mastered goals. We also recognise that some students actively enjoy having homework for routine and structure. Teachers will provide appropriate tasks to support this motivation where suitable. Homework may be provided through workbooks, teacher-designed materials, or by sending home familiar resources that replicate those used in school.

4.5 Resources and ICT

We recognise the significant role that ICT plays in supporting the teaching and learning of CLL. ICT enhances our print-rich environment and supports the development of word identification, spelling, comprehension and broader reading skills. Every classroom is equipped with a laptop and an iPad, each containing a range of CLL apps that can be trialled and used for student learning, communication, and staff training. Teachers and SNAs use ICT intentionally to increase access, autonomy and engagement for our students.

Some examples of ICT and software used in LSST to support CLL include HWT, AAC (such as GRID, Go Talk Now, LAMP and PECS), Twinkl, rainbow reading programme, see and learn, autism and comprehension programme, YouTube, TTRS, IXL and NALA. These tools support a personalised, strengths-based and multi-modal approach to learning.

4.6 Individual Teachers Planning and Reporting

This policy, alongside the primary and post-primary curriculum documents and the relevant guidelines for autistic students with complex needs, informs and guides teachers in both their long- and short-term planning for CLL. In the junior and middle primary classes, teachers follow the National Primary Language Curriculum and progress through it based on each individual student's developmental stage, strengths, and learning needs. Teachers regularly evaluate student work using observation, teacher designed assessments and ongoing formative practices, and this information directly shapes future planning.

In the senior classes, CLL continues through the Junior Cycle Level 1 Learning Programme and for some students, Level 2. At the end of each school year, an end-of-year report is prepared for every student and shared with parents/guardians. This report provides a clear description of the students' progress across all subject areas and includes suggestions for

supporting learning at home. Any formal assessments used such as ABLLS or AFLLS are communicated to parents. SSP (Student Support Plan) targets are discussed at SSP meetings and at review meetings throughout the year. When a student masters a target, this achievement is also communicated to parents/guardians so progress can be celebrated and shared.

4.7 Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is considered essential in supporting students in LSST to access CLL to the best of their abilities. We view parents as an integral part of each student's progress, recognising the unique insight and expertise they bring to our students learning. We maintain regular communication with parents through phone calls, platforms such as Seesaw and Aladdin, communication diaries and parent teacher meetings. Parents are encouraged to contribute meaningfully to the development of their child's SSP, ensuring that goals reflect the child's strengths, needs and preferred ways of communicating. Parents are also offered training opportunities to support CLL development at home, promoting a consistent and collaborative approach between school and family.

4.8 Continuing professional development for staff

Staff development needs are identified primarily through review and discussion at teacher and staff meetings. Teachers engage in professional development through attendance at courses and training provided by a range of support services including NCSE, CDNT and local education centres. Staff are encouraged to share the knowledge and skills gained with their colleagues to foster a collaborative learning environment.

Training undertaken by LSST staff includes, but is not limited to, PECS, LÁMH, Jolly Phonics, and GRID training. In addition, the in-house CDNT Speech and Language Therapist provides ongoing training and guidance for all staff. Professional development takes place in a supportive environment where teachers and SNAs can consult, collaborate, and learn from each other, ensuring that new skills are applied effectively to support student CLL outcomes.

4.9 Community Links

All students are provided with opportunities to develop and extend their CLL skills within the wider community. These opportunities take place in a variety of contexts, including student enterprise programmes, community links programmes, educational trips, and shopping trips. Where appropriate, some students also participate in integration programmes in mainstream settings, supporting their transition and building connections with other schools as links are developed. These experiences allow students to practice CLL in authentic, meaningful, and socially rich environments.

5. Success Criteria

The success of this policy will be evaluated through teacher's planning and preparation, and by reviewing the extent to which the procedures outlined in this plan have been implemented consistently across the school. Success will be measured by the extent to which students are supported to achieve the aims outlined in this plan, and by evidence that their learning and communication skills have developed in the following ways:

Oral Language/AAC

- Increased confidence and competence in communicating through oral language and AAC systems, for both students and staff
- Improved listening, attention, and engagement skills
- Greater ability to initiate communication with peers and adults
- Use of appropriate social language across a variety of contexts (e.g., greetings, requests, sharing information)
- Evidence of students applying newly learned vocabulary and phrases in meaningful interactions
- Consistent use of PECS, objects, picture symbols, AAC systems, and LÁMH signs by both staff and students throughout the school
- Students demonstrating improved ability to communicate needs, choices, and ideas
- Increased comprehension of signs, symbols, and gestures used by staff and peers
- Evidence of students using AAC or alternative communication to engage socially and academically
- Students showing greater independence in using communication systems to participate in classroom routines and activities

Reading

- Progress in reading skills in line with each student's abilities, including accuracy and fluency
- Improved comprehension of texts, including the ability to answer questions, retell stories, make predictions, and infer meaning from context
- Increased engagement and motivation with reading materials across subject areas
- Active involvement of parents in supporting classroom learning at home
- Evidence of generalisation of reading skills in functional and real-life contexts (e.g., following signs, identifying words in the environment, using print to support routines)
- Interaction with a variety of reading formats, including adapted texts, digital books, and personalised talk books
- Development of independent reading strategies and confidence in self-directed reading

- Use of reading as a tool for communication, exploring ideas, and connecting with peers
- Evidence of applying reading skills collaboratively and independently in authentic learning contexts

Writing

- Progress in writing or typing skills
- Greater fluency and clarity in expressing ideas in written or typed form
- Use of functional writing to communicate needs, ideas, and preferences
- Evidence of students transferring writing skills across subjects and contexts
- Improved ability to structure sentences and organise thoughts coherently
- Increased use of appropriate vocabulary and grammar in written expression
- Development of spelling, punctuation, and handwriting or typing accuracy
- Use of writing as a tool for reflection, storytelling, and creative expression
- Evidence of students initiating written communication independently (e.g., notes, messages, requests)
- Engagement with personalised and meaningful writing tasks that motivate and support skill generalisation

The achievement of these success criteria will be monitored through a combination of teacher and parent feedback, ongoing observation and evaluation of student's engagement, and progress in individual goals and SSP targets. Evidence will also be gathered through work samples, portfolios, and recorded examples of CLL activities. In addition, students' ability to generalise and apply skills across different settings and contexts will be considered. This approach ensures that progress is captured in meaningful, authentic ways and reflects each student's unique learning profile and communication strengths.

Believe, Belong, Become
LSST

6. Review

6.1 Roles and Responsibilities

It will be necessary to review this plan on a regular basis to ensure optimum implementation of the Language curriculum in the school. Those involved will include teachers, students, parents, Board of Management and the Parent's Council.

6.2 Timeframe

This plan will be reviewed every 2 years unless curricular changes deem it necessary before this.

6. Ratification and Communication

The Board of Management of Libermann Spiritan School Templeogue ratified this plan on Nov 19th, 2025.

Signed: _____

Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: _____

Principal

Date: 19/11/2025

Date: 19/11/2025

Due for Review: November 2027