



West Coast Language Development Centre

Changing Futures

Referral Information Booklet

for parents, caregivers and professionals

West Coast Language Development Centre (LDC)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What are Language Development Centres (LDCs)?

LDCs are Department of Education (DOE) schools that cater for children with a Developmental Language Disorder (DLD). West Coast Language Development Centre (WCLDC) provides specialist early intervention for children with average intelligence whose academic performance and social skills are significantly impacted by their language difficulties. The schools also have an outreach arm which supports schools and teachers in the metro and country regions. Within Western Australia there are five LDCs that each have a specific catchment area, and together cover the metropolitan area. Children attend the LDC that covers their geographical area - they cannot cross LDC boundaries. The boundaries for the West Coast LDC (WCLDC) are west of Wanneroo road and north of the Swan River; if you are uncertain about boundary restrictions please call us. Along with the main LDC site at Padbury, WCLDC has satellite classes at East Hamersley, Quinns Beach and Poseidon Primary Schools.

Who is eligible to attend an LDC?

LDCs cater for a population of children who have significant **primary** language impairment but who have nonverbal intelligence within the average range and have sound adaptive behaviour. The term used to describe this impairment is Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) and was previously referred to as Specific Language Impairment (SLI). It refers to children who have moderate to severe difficulties in learning language which can lead to significant difficulties in acquiring literacy (ie. learning to read and write). Children with DLD may also have difficulties developing social skills and peer relationships. The term DLD will be used throughout this leaflet.

There are some children who may not meet LDC placement criteria, who have language difficulties associated with alternate disorders for whom the LDC is not the most appropriate placement. The learning difficulties of some children are not confined to the area of language but fall across many areas. Children may have difficulty acquiring English as an additional Language (CALD). Differential diagnosis for these children can be difficult, and may involve collaboration between a number of professionals (eg. speech pathologists, psychologists, ESL specialist staff - provided by the Department of Education). Although an LDC may not be the most appropriate placement for these children, the Education Department of WA has a range of services and placements that may better meet these children's needs. These options are best explored through discussion with the child's local school principal.

If my child is not offered a place at the LDC, are there any other options for support?

The Department of Education is committed to providing the best learning environment for every child and thus a range of interventions and services are available for children who are having difficulty learning. These largely focus on mainstream schools developing a program under Students at Educational Risk (SAER) process. The best person to discuss this with is someone at your child's local school (eg. principal). Each Language Centre has Outreach services that work within the metropolitan and country education regions to support public schools to develop language and literacy programs. The focus is on building the capacity of schools and their staff to enable them to cater for student needs.

How much does it cost?

The LDC is a government-funded education support facility. School voluntary contributions are set as a maximum of \$60.00 as legislated by the Education Act 2000. There are also additional charges which are set each year and the payment of these occurs when a student is involved in a particular activity such as an excursion or incursion.

How is a child referred to an LDC?

Parents/caregivers, speech pathologists, psychologists or teachers can initiate a referral for an LDC assessment. Standardised referral packages containing all the required information and forms are sent to referring professionals by each LDC every year. The referral application consists of three/four parts:

- Speech Pathology assessment conducted by a Speech Pathologist
- Psychometric assessment conducted by a Psychologist (compulsory for PP/Yr 1 applications) or developmental assessment conducted by a Paediatrician (preferred for Kindy applications)
- Teacher/Carer questionnaire completed by the child's classroom teacher (if currently attending school), carer if in day-care and/or parents.
- Behaviour Checklist completed by a psychologist in consultation with the teacher (PP/Yr 1 applications)

Referrals are required by the closing dates. Referrals are considered by the Placement Committee at the LDC, which consists of the LDC principal, the LDC speech pathologists and the school psychologist. The Placement Committee usually meets early in term 4 of each year. Parents and referring professionals are notified of the Placement Committee's decision in mid Term 4.

When are the closing dates for referral to the LDC?

The closing dates for 2024 (for placement in 2025) are as follows:

Pre Primary/Year 1

Friday 6th September 2024
(Term 3 - School Week 8)

Kindy

Wednesday 18th September 2024
(Term 3 - School Week 10)

How many places are available at the LDC?

Each year the number of available places and the number of children referred vary and is dependent on the numbers of children who exit each year; the number of referrals received for each year level and the number of referrals received for each catchment area. Current LDC students are assessed to determine their eligibility to remain at the centre and then estimates can be made regarding possible places for the following year. This information is usually provided to referring agencies in Term 2. These estimates provide a rough guide on the number of places the Centre may have in each year level for the next school year. Sometimes LDCs are in the position of having many appropriate children referred and may not always be able to place all appropriate referrals. We endeavour to place the highest priority students; sometimes parents may be offered a place at an alternative site.

What classes are there at the LDC?

WCLDC currently enroll children from Kindy to Year 1, (Year 2 classes will be run in 2025, however enrollments will be for Kindy to Year 1 applicants only). Kindy students attend the centre 2.5 days (2 days one week & 3 days the following week). Pre Primary, Year 1 and Year 2 students attend full time – 5 days a week.

When do children enter the LDC?

Children start the LDC at the beginning of the school year after the application has been made.

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE LDC?

Is an LDC like a mainstream school?

Whilst the LDC has many similarities to a mainstream school, the overall focus tends to be more specific and explicit. The classroom curriculum is an adapted mainstream curriculum with a major emphasis on oral language and literacy development. Specific oral language sessions are held during the week to develop skills in particular language areas (e.g. narrative, semantics, social skills, syntax, phonological awareness and comprehension). A wide range of specialist teaching strategies and resources are used, including small group work and targeted oral language activities. Children are encouraged to learn through the provision of explicit, systematic, intensive and visual teaching approaches.

How big are the classes at the LDC?

The class sizes at WCLDC are small – on average 12-15 students. This allows for significantly more adult - child interaction. Often additional adults are present in the classroom for a particular lesson e.g. education assistant, speech pathologist which increases the ratio of adult support.

Are the teachers at the LDC specially trained?

All teachers at the Centre are members of the Western Australian College of Teaching. Although there is no special qualification for teachers at LDCs, all the teachers have a special interest in the area of DLD and some have additional qualifications in related fields. There is also an intensive professional development program at the LDC ensuring the teachers have current knowledge and skills in the area of DLD. Teaching positions within the LDCs are highly sought after and thus the selection procedure is highly competitive. This ensures a high calibre of teaching staff at the LDC.

Do the LDC children integrate with mainstream children?

At the WCLDC the children integrate with the mainstream school children during playtime and lunchtime, at some sporting events (e.g. sports day), assembly and any special joint functions.

How will my child's progress be reviewed at the LDC?

At WCLDC each child's progress is monitored closely through a number of measures including:

- **Oral Language Assessment:** each child receives individual oral language testing by the speech pathologists and teachers. The results are plotted onto developmental rubric grids and this information is used to set individual (and group) goals for the children.
- **School Reports:** (end of Terms 2 & 4). These provide a means of informing parents of their child's progress within oral language and all curriculum areas. This is in line with the government assessment and reporting policy.
- **Case Conferences** (Term 3/4- kindy and pre-primary): this involves a meeting between the child's parents/caregivers, teacher and an LDC Leader. The meeting provides a verbal summary of the child's progress over the year and also a chance to discuss future placement (i.e. whether the child will stay at the LDC next year or exit to another school).
Exit interview (Term 4- years 1 and 2) Between the class teacher and parents.
- **Exit testing:** The speech pathologists conduct a standardised oral language assessment to determine students' language skills. A report is completed and sent to parents and the student's new school.

How long will my child stay at the LDC?

The length of time a child stays is highly variable between individual children and depends on a number of factors, such as the severity of the language difficulty, the age of entry into the LDC, the child's progress whilst at the LDC, and the parents' wishes. The only variation to this is within the kindy program. There is no automatic entry into Pre Primary after a Kindy placement at the LDC. Kindy students are considered for Pre Primary placement based on their development and ability to access the program. Most students spend 3 years at the centre.

Can I be involved in the LDC Program?

The staff at WCLDC believe that children cannot achieve their potential without parent support and therefore parental involvement is actively encouraged.

The Centre runs a number of parent information sessions and programs throughout the year and all parents are strongly encouraged to attend. These sessions focus on helping parents to understand their child's language and literacy difficulties and also gives them 'hands on' strategies to support language development in daily routines and activities. Empowering parents in this way will also assist them in advocating for their child once they transition into mainstream school.

Do I have to transport my child to the LDC?

LDCs are classified as Special Schools and thus students from Pre-Primary to Year 1 are eligible to apply for transport from the Public Transport Authority (School Bus Services) if they live in a suburb other than that in which the campus is situated. In some instances, Kindy students may also be considered. Students are picked up from home in the morning and dropped off at home in the afternoon. The children are supervised on the bus journey by a bus aide. Whilst every attempt is made to place children on buses, this cannot be guaranteed. Parents must apply directly to the Public Transport Authority (School Bus Services) as soon as they accept a place at the LDC. Parents of Kindy students and those who choose to transport their child to school themselves may be paid a conveyance allowance to help offset the cost of transport. If your child is placed at an 'out of boundary' site, they cannot access bus services.

Do students wear a uniform at the LDC?

All LDC students wear the uniform of the mainstream school.

LDC SPEECH PATHOLOGY SERVICES

What type of Speech Pathology services are provided at the LDC?

Each LDC has the services of speech pathologists, who are involved in assessing the children's language skills, collaborating on specific oral language objectives for the children's programs, providing professional development for LDC teachers, running parent language information sessions and programs, and providing class-based intervention in collaboration with teachers.

At the WCLDC speech pathologists work in a collaborative model. A significant amount of their time is spent in-servicing teachers and being involved in joint planning to ensure that the children's language needs are met in the classroom program throughout the day. The speech pathologists run whole class and small group sessions with the teacher, focusing on specific oral language goals.

Will my child get individual speech therapy at the LDC?

Individual speech therapy is generally not available, however in some instances students with severe difficulties may be seen individually by a speech pathologist. Provision of these services is limited and will be prioritised according to severity, personal circumstances and other factors. Parents are strongly encouraged to continue accessing external speech therapy services.

Will my child still have to attend outside therapy whilst attending the LDC?

Children who are in the Kindy or Pre-Primary program receive **language** intervention from the LDC, but are strongly encouraged to continue accessing their speech pathology service (e.g. at their local government speech pathology clinic or private speech pathology service) if they require work on their **speech** development (i.e. if they are having difficulty pronouncing speech sounds). With all outside therapy appointments, we ask that parents/caregivers attempt to make bookings outside of LDC hours (e.g. after school or on the weekend). This ensures that children do not miss out on crucial programs and lessons at the LDC.

Will my child receive other types of therapy at the LDC?

No. Children who require other therapy services (e.g. Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy) will need to access these services through private or local community therapists. This should be negotiated directly by the parent or caregiver.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN MY CHILD LEAVES THE LDC?

How will I know when my child is ready to leave?

There are a number of factors which determine when an individual child is ready to leave the LDC. Some children make significant progress and the decision may be made that they will benefit more from the learning environment in a mainstream setting. For other children there may come a time when their language difficulty may no longer be the primary difficulty and thus an alternative placement may be sought. Other children may remain at the centre until the end of Year 1 or Year 2 (i.e. the highest year level at the LDC).

Will my child be 'cured' of their language difficulties?

Research suggests that language impairment is a life-long disorder, however the nature of the disorder may change over time. Children with DLD cannot be 'cured' of their language disorder - at the LDC our aim is to provide early intervention that will optimise language development and learning. We provide children with strategies to support their language disorder and meet the demands of the classroom.

Will my child get support when they leave?

After children leave the LDC, their mainstream school is provided with transition information and access to professional learning. Schools are also encouraged to access support from the LDC Outreach service. Some children may need to be referred back to their local government speech pathology clinic or private speech pathology service for review appointments to monitor their progress. If ongoing therapy is required, this will be discussed with the parents/caregivers at the final case conference.

Further information, including a virtual tour of the LDC is available on our website:

<https://westcoastldc.wa.edu.au>

Catherine Regan
PRINCIPAL

Julia Cronje, Polly Prior and Sarah Morrey
SPEECH PATHOLOGISTS

Dylan Roggio
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST

(West Coast Language Development Centre Placement Committee 2024)