**What is a Language Development Centre (LDC)?**
A Language Development Centre is a public school for children who have speech and language difficulties. Children who attend the centre receive a *specialised language programme* created and delivered by speech and language trained teachers with support from speech pathologists.

**Where are the Language Development Centres?**
There are five LDCs located in the metropolitan areas of Western Australia. Most LDCs are located on a site of a mainstream school.

The North East Metropolitan Districts Language Development Centre (NEMLDC) is located in the Swan Education District. The centre caters for children attending school in Kindergarten, Pre Primary and Year 1. The school has sites located at the West Morley Primary school in Dianella and the North Balga Primary School in Balga.

**How is the LDC different from a mainstream school?**
Students at the LDC learn an *adapted mainstream curriculum*, which has a major emphasis on oral language and literacy development. The students are involved in all the learning areas covered by regular schools, including art, fitness and music; however, there is an increased emphasis on oral comprehension, semantic organisation and vocabulary, story telling skills, grammar, sound awareness and social skills.

Speech pathologists work within the centre each day. The main role of the speech pathologist is to support the teachers in developing speech and language skills of students. They also regularly assess and monitor student progress. Children are not usually withdrawn by speech pathologists for individual speech therapy. Instead, they participate in ongoing, group-based language work.

Class sizes are smaller in LDCs than in mainstream classes. There are usually around 12 students in each class. The students work in even smaller groups (4-8) when participating in the language programmes. At some sites, LDC students integrate with children attending mainstream classes at recess, lunch and other school events such as assemblies.

The teachers who work in LDCs have specialised training in speech and language. Teachers regularly participate in professional development (provided by speech pathologists and other relevant educational and health professionals) to enhance their skills and knowledge. The centre has a wide range of specialised speech and language resources and games to compliment the evidence based programmes delivered.

Workshops are provided regularly to parents throughout the year. These workshops are designed to help parents extend their skills in providing therapy at home. Additionally, parent meetings with the child’s teacher and speech pathologist are held throughout the year to provide feedback on individual student goals and progress.
What are the criteria for entry?
To meet criteria for entry a child must have a diagnosis of primary language impairment. Their language development should be the main developmental area of concern. A speech pathologist will need to complete a number of formal and informal speech pathology assessments to determine if a child is a suitable LDC candidate.

The child’s non-verbal skills (non-verbal intelligence) must be identified as falling in the average or above average range. A school psychologist should be contacted to perform a cognitive assessment if applying for a place in Pre Primary or Year 1. It is strongly recommended that children applying for a Kindergarten place are assessed by a paediatrician.

Children must also have sound adaptive behaviour skills. This means they need to demonstrate that they will be able to settle into the school environment and participate well.

Children with learning difficulties in areas other than language, global developmental delays or those learning English as a second language may be best supported through other services. Children who are learning English as a second language may be eligible for entry if there are also delays/difficulties in their primary (home) language. Speak to a speech pathologist if you are unsure if a child will be a suitable applicant.

Can we view the centre before deciding to apply?
The NEMLDC will be holding an Open Day early in Term 3. On this day families are invited to view the centre and ask questions about placement. Please contact the centre for details.

How long will my child stay in the LDC?
The LDCs are considered a short term educational facility. It is the aim to return children to mainstream classrooms as soon as they demonstrate age appropriate speech, language and social skills. A range of assessments and interviews are conducted to determine when a child is ready to exit the centre. Upon exit, a fully supported transition programme to a mainstream school is implemented.

What places are available?
Children can apply for entry to Kindergarten, Pre Primary or Year 1 place. Numbers of places available vary from year to year, although most places are generally available for children entering into Kindergarten and Pre Primary.

How much does it cost?
The LDC requests school charges and voluntary contributions to cover the costs of educational resources and the specialised learning programmes delivered. School fees and charges at the LDC are similar to those requested by a mainstream public school. Each term additional fees are requested for special events such as incursions and excursions.

Is transport available to and from school?
The School Bus Services branch of the Public Transport Authority (PTA) determines what form of transport assistance is provided to eligible parents who have children attending Language Development Centres. This may be a free bus service or conveyance allowance; an amount per kilometre paid to help meet the cost of transporting eligible students to and form school in a private vehicle.
**How to apply**

Please be aware that closing dates for LDC applications are usually at the end of September. As the referral package is quite comprehensive, it is important that the process begins well before this time. Notification of referral outcome is given in term 4 and successful applicants commence placement in term 1 of the following year.

After speaking with a speech pathologist and deciding to proceed with a referral, there are a number of assessments and forms to be completed as part of an application pack. It is important to commence the referral process a number months before the closing date. Late referrals will not be accepted.

✔ **Step 1: Developmental Assessment OR School Psychologist Assessment**

The purpose of the developmental or psychological assessment is to ensure that the LDC is the most appropriate option for the child. If the child is already attending school they should be assessed by the School Psychologist before the speech pathologist commences referral assessment. The School Psychologist will use an IQ test and a behaviour checklist. This assessment is a compulsory part of all applications for children already attending school. A parent can contact the school and request the assessment directly or they may ask your speech pathologist to contact the school on their behalf.

If the applicant is going into Kindergarten, a developmental assessment conducted by a Paediatrician is highly recommended. A GP can refer a child to a private Paediatrician and a Medicare rebate may apply. Alternatively, a speech pathologist may be able to refer for a developmental assessment through a local Child Development Centre. This service is free, but the wait is much longer. A developmental assessment is not compulsory for children going into Kindergarten, but can add weight to an application and is highly recommended.

✔ **Step 2: Speech Pathology Assessment**

A speech pathologist will perform the required speech pathology assessments and complete the necessary paperwork to support the application. Up to four appointments are needed to complete the formal and informal assessments.

✔ **Step 3: Parent/Teacher Questionnaire**

If the child is already attending school, their teacher will be asked to fill out a questionnaire. When completed the form can be sent directly to the LDC Referral Team or passed onto the speech pathologist. If the child is not attending school, a parent or carer will be asked to complete a form with the speech pathologist.

**Who decides if a referral is accepted?**

A placement committee consisting of the school principal, deputy principal, speech pathologists and school psychologist carefully considers all information provided in the application package. Each case is discussed individually. The decision to accept or decline the referral depends upon the applicant meeting entry criteria, priority ranking and the number of places available.

**When will parents be notified of the outcome?**

Letters indicating the referral outcomes are sent out in November each year. A pre-placement information session is held shortly after this time for those applicants who are successful. If the referral is not successful, parents are encouraged to speak to their speech pathologist about future management/educational placement options. Support for children with speech and language difficulties placed in mainstream schools is available through the Swan Speech and Language Service.

*Please talk to your speech pathologist if you have any further questions about the LDC.*