



Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) Policy and Guidelines

SNAs are appointed by the Board of Management subsequent to the allocation of SNA hours for individual children by the SENO. Depending on the cumulative number of hours allocated to the school they may be appointed on a full-time or part-time basis.

All SNAs, whether full-time or part-time, are required to sign a contract which lays out the terms of their employment.

The Policy is guided by the relevant legislation such as The Education Welfare Act 2000 and the EPSN Act 2004 and DES Circulars 07/02, 08/03, 24/03, 13/04, 02/05.

Rationale

The policy was formulated:

- To provide staff and parents with clear guidelines and expectations with regard to the SNA role and responsibilities within the school
- To ensure each SNA appreciates and understands the important role they have in contributing positively to the learning experiences of the children and the overall efficiency of the school
- To ensure best practice and continuity in how we work in **St. Comán's Wood Primary School.**

Aims

- To facilitate the recognition SNAs as valuable members of staff in a whole school context
- To ensure the effective deployment of SNAs in enhancing the social skills and self esteem of the children with Special Educational Needs
- To enable the SNA to be an effective support to the school
- To provide optimum learning experiences for all children through judicious use of the skills and talents of the SNA
- To clarify the tasks and duties to be undertaken by the SNA
- To ensure accountability and effective record keeping.

Staff Roles

Staff Roles

While the Principal has prime responsibility for the following, she is assisted by the Deputy Principal in:

- Assigning role specific and child specific tasks to be completed by the SNAs in association with the class teacher.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of the SNAs contribution to the needs of designated children
- Devise a list of classroom tasks to be undertaken by the SNA during pupil non contact time e.g. Staff meetings, 10 minutes before/after school, etc.
- Promoting in-service training for SNAs
- Managing areas of conflict which may arise, with the assistance of the Deputy Principal
- Provide a suitable seating arrangement for the SNA and child in the mainstream setting.

All teachers/staff:

- Treat all information relating to pupils with access to SNA support confidentially and to share such information only with those who need to know.
- Release the SNAs from break time supervision duty punctually so that SNAs can return to their classroom and care duties without delay after their break.

Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (Assistant Principal I)

- Ensure in consultation with the Principal and Deputy Principal that SNA support is available to those who need it in a class situation within the parameters allocated by the DES.

Special Educational Teachers

- Assume responsibility for convening planning and consultation meetings with the SEN child's class teacher and other relevant parties including the parents, SNA, and the principal. The purpose of these meetings will be to develop and revise the child's 'School Support Plan' (formerly known as the child's IEP).
- Implement that part of the child's School Support Plan assigned to the Special Education Teacher which is developed in consultation with all relevant parties.
- Monitor, record and report progress to the child's class teacher informally and at planning/consultation meetings.

Class Teachers

- Assume responsibility, in collaboration with the class SNA, for developing and revising an inclusion/care plan for those children with access to SNA support.
- Ensure tasks he/she allocates to the SNA adhere to the tasks listed in this policy and allocated by the principal/DP.
- Consult and collaborate with the SNA with regard to planning, review and timetabling. The SNA will have insights into the 'child's' strengths and learning needs which may inform teacher decisions. Planning together is recommended and will inform better professional practice.
- Share information with the SNA about the 'child' with access to SNA support that is relevant to the performance of his/her duties.
- Contribute to planning and consultation meetings convened by the child's special education teacher (SET) for the purposes of developing and reviewing the child's School Support Plan when appropriate.
- Co-ordinate, review and maintain the record of the child's 'School Support Plan', keeping the 'log of actions' up to date
- Provide a suitable seating arrangement for the SNA and child/children in the mainstream setting

Guidelines for Special Needs Assistants

Hours of Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The hours allocated may be appointed on a full-time (32 hours - full post) or part-time basis (27 hours - .83 post). SNAs are contracted to be in the school 15 minutes before the official opening time of the school (8.30 - 8.45 am) and 15 minutes after the official closing time (2.30 - 2.45pm for 3rd - 6th classes and 1.30 - 1.45pm for infant classes.) In addition the DES requires that 12 additional days per year outside of the normal school year be worked. However, these days may be reduced at the discretion of the Board of Management in consultation with the Principal. The principal in promoting in-service training for SNAs will identify suitable training courses, inform the SNAs of such courses and SNAs will keep a record of attendance at these courses. SNAs identifying their own training needs, is encouraged, but if attendance is to be reckoned as part of the 12 additional days, it must be first agreed with the principal. <p>The record of extra hours worked and daily notes are available to the principal 'on request'. If the principal notes a 'lack of' or disparity in the number of additional days/hours worked by individual SNAs, either through attending training or other work, she will assign duties, so that there is a parity of hours worked by all SNAs over the course of the year. SNAs who have not made up the hours through training or work by the 30th June will be required to do so before the 1st day of the following new school year. As noted this may be up to 12 additional days, at the discretion of the principal, in consultation with the BoM. This ensures that all SNAs work the same number of extra hours over the course of the year, thus ensuring justice and fairness to all.</p>
Confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due discretion is expected in all matters of a confidential nature.
Times and Timetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SNAs will be given a timetable by the Deputy Principal at the start of the year. Full time SNAs have a 10 minute break in the morning and a 30 minute break for lunch, similar to time allocated to teachers for breaks. An infant day SNA has a shorter lunch break. Sometimes special arrangements are made in consultation with the classroom teachers and principal. As part of the SNA contract, SNAs are required to be in school fifteen minutes before/after school official opening and closing times. Class teacher will give the SNA a copy of the class timetable also pointing out where the child will work with class or at their own level during the day. Suitable times for time-outs will also be identified.
Planning and Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SNAs should document progress in the individual SNA record book provided by the school. This record book remains the property of the school. This record book should also record any incidents where the care needs of the child are evident. This book is always available to the teacher or principal on their request. Substitute SNAs will use this book to also record. The SNAs time-table and plan should be given to the SET, Principal and Teacher. A copy of the IEP/s of the children SNAs are assigned to, should be accessible to the SNA. Time for the teacher to meet with the SNA re. planning should be organised by the class teacher once a month. Teachers should outline expectations for children and SNA. SNA must refer all matters on curriculum, classroom management, discipline or incidents of concerns etc. to the classroom teacher Time Out

Level and type of classroom Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information received on children, and observations made in classrooms, need to be handled sensitively and carefully. Filing cabinet in room • The focus will be on an "Enabling mode" and avoiding the "Velcro mode" • Avoid over-talking and providing a 'running commentary' of what to do next – this allows the child to concentrate and think independently • Explain how to do tasks but avoid giving the solution to a task or problem. Instead encourage the child to come up with the answer by questioning and prompting.
Physical contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to have as little physical contact as possible, if the child's attention is required, place a hand lightly on the child's shoulder TOUCH • Physical contact may be required to protect a pupil from harm to themselves or others depending on needs of child • Help where necessary with changing for PE etc. while encouraging independence • Actions of affection from a child towards an SNA should be handled sensitively but also appropriately • To carry out some activities, an SNA may need to guide the child's body. This should be done by gently touching the shoulder, back, arms, hands or lower leg only.
Parental contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNAs are encouraged to build a positive relationship based on trust with the parents of children with SEN • If required at the end of the school day, escort the child to the school door/school gate and greet the parent • It is helpful to chat about how the day went or upcoming events but do not pass on information regarding child's educational progress • Parents with questions, requests or concerns regarding school policy or practice should be referred directly to the class teacher or the Principal. This applies to direct face- to face communication or indirect telephone communication. Parents should contact teachers for information on the child's progress. • It is not appropriate for parents to have a private phone number of a member of staff or to contact the SNA outside of school hours unless agreed in exceptional cases by the BoM e.g. parent monitoring a child with diabetes. Special occasions - at discretion of principal • If there are any minor incidents put a note in the homework diary, which should be shown to the class teacher before going home. Any major incidents should be reported to the teacher.
Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SNA should never supervise alone in the classroom. If the class teacher leaves the room at any stage, the classroom door should remain open and the neighbouring teacher should be requested to supervise the class until the teacher returns. • Be mindful of danger of a 'flight-risk' child • SNAs should not use their personal mobile phones during class time or when supervising except in exceptional circumstances.
Timeout Sessions Different types of movement breaks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time out sessions should follow a specific timetable to be most effective. The content should be worked out with the help from Physiotherapists and/or Occupational Therapist in conjunction with the teacher and a specific programme should be followed. • Teacher should be informed of what's happening and of progress being made • Working one to one is best when helping a child to learn a new skill/game however working in pairs or with a small group may develop social skills, inclusion and teamwork. Due to short span of concentration, timeouts are necessary daily and should last 10 minutes approximately.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SNA's under the direction of the teacher may take children individually or in small groups, who require development of life/social skills to local shops, post office, bank, library, railway station etc in order for them to become familiar with the business of such places and be comfortable with accessing the service they provide. Life skills such as cooking simple meals, gardening, crafts etc may be overseen by the SNA under the teacher's instruction where this is seen as important for the child's overall development
Medication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school's Administration of Medicines Policy should be understood and followed at all times Administer medication discreetly in the classroom Only prescribed medication should be given Store all medicines appropriately in line with our Health and Safety Policy.
Relevant work	<p>SNAs work under the guidance of the principal/ deputy principal and classroom teacher. They may work on their own with children, provided that the work in question has been allocated by the class teacher, principal/deputy principal. Work may include any of the following:</p> <p>The primary duty of the SNAs at our school will be to meet primary and secondary care needs of our pupils with access to SNA support. The following are examples of primary care needs which are identified in Circ. 0030/2014: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistance with feeding: where a child with special needs requires adult assistance and where the extent of assistance required would overtly disrupt normal teaching time Administration of medicine: where a child requires adult assistance to administer medicine and where the extent of assistance required would overtly disrupt normal teaching time Assistance with toileting and general hygiene: (including catheterisation) where a child with special needs cannot independently self-toilet, and until such time as they are able to do so. Assistance with mobility and orientation: on an ongoing basis including assisting a child or children to access the school, the classroom, with accessing school transport (where provided, school Bus Escorts should, in the first instance, assist a child to access school transport), or helping a child to avoid hazards in or surrounding the school. (Every effort must be made by the school to provide opportunities for independence e.g. the removal of hazards.) Assisting teachers to provide supervision in the class, playground and school grounds: at recreation, assembly, and dispersal times including assistance with arriving and departing from school for pupils with special needs where the school has made a robust case that existing teaching resources cannot facilitate such supervision Non-nursing care needs associated with specific medical conditions: such as frequent epileptic seizures or for pupils who have fragile health. Care needs requiring frequent interventions including withdrawal of a pupil from a classroom when essential: This may be for safety or personal care reasons, or where a child may be required to leave the class for medical reasons or due to distress on a frequent basis. Assistance with moving and lifting of children, operation of hoists and equipment. Assistance with severe communication difficulties including enabling curriculum access for pupils with physical disabilities or sensory needs and those with significant, and identified social and emotional difficulties. Under the direction of the teacher, this might include assistance with assistive technology equipment, typing or handwriting, supporting transition, assisting with supervision at recreation, dispersal times etc.

	<p>The following are examples of secondary care needs which are identified in Circ. 0030/2014: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preparation and tidying of workspaces and classrooms or assisting a child who is not physically able to perform such tasks to prepare and tidy a workspace, to present materials, to display work, or to transition from one lesson activity to another. To assist with cleaning of materials. • Assistance with the development of Personal Pupil Plans for children with special educational needs, with a particular focus on developing a care plan to meet the care needs of the pupil concerned and the review of such plans. • Assist teachers and/or Principal in maintaining a journal or care monitoring system for pupils including details of attendance and care needs. Assist in preparation of school files and materials relating to care and assistance required in class by students with special needs. • Planning for activities and classes where there may be additional care requirements associated with particular activities, liaising with class teachers and other teachers such as the resource teacher and school Principal, attending meetings with parents, SENO, NEPS Psychologists, or school staff meetings with the agreement and guidance of class teacher/Principal • Assistance with enabling a pupil to access therapy or psycho-educational programmes such as anger management or social skills classes, under the direction of qualified personnel, including class teachers or support teachers. • Assistance to attend or participate in out of school activities: walks, or visits, where such assistance cannot be provided by teaching staff. <p>The above list is not exhaustive. The type of significant care needs that pupils may have can be varied and depend on the nature or level of the disability or sensory impairment that a child may have. Given the variety of medical conditions, learning disabilities and behavioural disorders that children may suffer from, it is not possible to list all of the care needs that may arise. The work that SNAs undertake will largely be in response to the needs of the children they support.</p>
<p>Pupil Inclusion/ Care Plan</p>	<p>A pupil inclusion/care plan- is maintained for each child with access to SNA support (see template Appendix A). This plan will record the significant care needs of each child with access to SNA support and list the routine interventions selected to meet those needs. The SNA will work to provide for these care needs under the direction of the child's class teacher. The class teacher may identify other duties for an SNA working with a child in his/her class which will allow for greater access to the curriculum, opportunities to practise skills, reinforce curricular content and develop social awareness, social skills and/or communication skills. The class teacher may also assign classroom organizational tasks and tasks related to the management of classroom materials and resources to an SNA to generate additional pupil teaching time particularly for those children with access. The engagement of the class teacher and the SNA in an open and regular professional conversation on the child's strengths, needs and progress will inform the teacher's decisions and be essential in the revision of the duties of the SNA. Both the teacher and the SNA must be vigilant to ensure that decisions taken will develop independence where possible and avoid doing for the child what the child can be reasonably expected to do for him/herself.</p>

Staff Meetings	SNAs may be required to attend Staff Meetings when issues of relevance to their own particular work are up for discussion. The Deputy Principal and/or Principal will have a structured staff meeting with the SNAs at least once per term. On days of In-Service, SNAs may be required to attend school to complete tasks laid out by class teachers/Principal.
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Developing the Role of the SNA

- It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that the SNA is clear about where help is needed. Planning together is essential
- It is also the teacher's responsibility to affirm and outwardly value the role of the SNA
- SNAs keep daily notes using the template attached (appendix B).
- An atmosphere of mutual understanding and respect is fostered
- Monthly meetings with the principal/deputy principal and SNAs are good opportunities to discuss issues and address concerns.
- So that children do not build an unhealthy dependency on the SNA it is desirable that the SNA, rather than work exclusively with one child, should work with the whole group of children around the designated child's table. In that way several children in the classroom get the benefit of the SNA's support.
- SNAs allocated to children with physical disabilities will support them as needs require both within the classroom and outside it. This may include shadowing the child while in the playground or helping him to make his way in and out of the school.
- On days when the teaching staff are attending In-service courses, SNAs will report for work as usual. They will be assigned duties to help the classroom organisation of the absent teachers i.e. preparation of classroom displays, organisation of the classroom libraries, preparation of teaching equipment, photocopying etc.

Contract of Employment

SNAs are not specifically assigned to an individual child but rather to the school as a whole. However, during lunch break each SNA may have direct responsibility for a particular child. The school operates a 'last in, first out' policy. However, it must be noted that classes/groups allocated to an SNA will be regularly reviewed as the need arises and in accordance with directives from the DES, the BOM, NEPS, and NCSE.

Seniority

The sequence in which special need assistants are appointed to the school determines their seniority. Seniority is important in determining which special needs assistant(s) should be offered reduced hours or have their employment terminated when the allocation of the school is reduced. The seniority listing will be used in determining 'last in, first out' for the purpose of redundancy.

The Board of Management determines the seniority based on special need assistants' date of commencement of duty as an SNA in a school.

Success Criteria

This policy is aimed at making a difference to the teaching and learning of children with Special Educational Needs in our school. We will know that the policy is achieving its aims when

- children with Special Educational Needs are included in whole school activities
- children are experiencing a safe and stimulating environment
- the children are becoming independent learners and acquiring life skills

- the child is reaching the targets set out in Individual Education Plans.

Ratification and Review

This plan was formally ratified by the Board of management on 13th February, 2025

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Marie Dooley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping 'D' at the end.

Chairperson, BoM

Time	Class	Pupils worked with	Work carried out
9.00	Playground Duty		
9.15			
9.30			
10.00			
10.45: BREAK & Playground Duty			
11:15			
11.30			
12.15: LUNCH BREAK & Playground Duty			
1.00			
1.30			
2.00			
3.00			