



## Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) Policy and Guidelines

SNAs will be deployed by the Infant School in a manner which best meets the care support requirements of the children enrolled in the school for whom SNA support has been allocated. It is a matter for the Infant School to allocate the support as required, and on the basis of individual need, which allows the school flexibility in how the SNA support is utilised. (Circular 0030/2014) SNAs are not allocated to individual pupils but to schools, as a school based resource, in the same manner that teachers are allocated to schools.

Once allocated to our school, SNAs are important and valued members of the school community and are an important whole school resource. SNAs participate fully in the life of the school and may therefore also assist other children in the school who from time to time need assistance, or who have intermittent care needs, but who may not have been assessed as requiring SNA support on a permanent basis.

SNA duties are assigned at the discretion of the Principal, or another person acting on behalf of the Principal, and/or the Board of Management of the school in accordance with Circular 0071/2011.

The work of SNAs should, at the principal or teachers direction, be focussed on supporting the particular care needs of the student with special educational needs and should be monitored on an ongoing basis and modified accordingly.

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, will be required to sign a contract which lays out the terms of their employment.

### 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 **Muire Na DeaChomhairle Infant 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 class teacher
- 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**

### **The Principal has responsibility for**

- Assigning role specific and child specific tasks to the SNA in association with the class teacher
- Co-ordinating the integration and devising the role profile of the SNA
- Monitoring the effectiveness of the SNAs contribution to the needs of designated children
- Promoting in-service training. The Board of Management may, at their discretion, fund or part-fund this professional development.
- Managing areas of conflict which may arise, with the assistance of the Deputy Principal.

### **Special Educational Teachers**

- Assume responsibility for IEPs in consultation with all relevant parties including the parents, SNA, class teacher and principal.

### **Class Teacher**

#### **(point 5 of circular 0030/204)**

- Section 22 (1) of the Education Act 1998 states the primacy of the teacher in the education and personal development of students in schools. The classroom teacher is responsible for educating all pupils in his/her class, including any pupil with a special educational need. The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all pupils in his/her classroom, including pupils with special educational needs.
- It is the responsibility of the classroom teacher to ensure that each pupil is taught in a stimulating and supportive classroom environment where all pupils feel equal and valued. The teacher will have access to all information that is likely to be relevant to teaching or supervising a pupil with special educational needs. The classroom teacher also has a central role in identifying and responding to pupils with additional needs. These responses will be informed and assisted by collaboration with colleagues, parents/guardians and others such as the school's NEPS psychologist and the local SENO.
- The classroom teacher and resource /learning support teacher will consider ways in which the curriculum can be differentiated or adapted to suit the needs of individual pupils so as to make the best use of the additional teaching hours. This may also involve identifying the most appropriate teaching strategies and programmes to meet the child's needs. Parents are typically consulted as part of this process.
- Resource/learning support can be provided in a variety of ways. The support teacher might team-teach by working in the classroom with the class teacher or withdraw students

in small groups and/or individually for a period of time (depending upon the nature of pupils needs) for intensive teaching of key skills

- Ensure SNA support is available for those who need it in a class situation and identify the appropriate tasks to be completed by the SNAs
- Provide a suitable seating arrangement for the SNA and child in the mainstream setting
- Collaborate with the SNA with regard to planning and timetabling
- Devise a list of classroom tasks to be undertaken by the SNA when time is available

### **SNA's**

The SNA scheme is designed to provide schools with additional adult support staff who can assist children with special educational needs who also have additional and significant care needs.

SNA duties are assigned at the discretion of the Principal, (in accordance with Circular 0071/2011) and should be focussed on supporting the particular care needs of the student with special educational needs and should be monitored on an ongoing basis and modified accordingly. The purpose of the SNA scheme is to provide for the significant additional care needs which some pupils with special educational needs may have.

Their role is not to act as a constant personal assistant to individual children, who need to be able to develop independent living skills and to associate independently with their classmates. Neither is the role of an SNA to act as an alternative teacher for children with special educational needs, who are required to be taught by the class teacher with additional support from resource/learning support teachers in schools.

**Examples of the primary care needs which would be considered significant - and which might require SNA support are:**

- Assistance with feeding: where a child with special needs requires adult assistance and where the extent of assistance required would overly disrupt normal teaching time
- Administration of medicine: where a child requires adult assistance to administer medicine and where the extent of assistance required would overly 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 (See also section 9) 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.

**The following tasks are the type of secondary care associated tasks which SNAs will often perform, but only once they have been allocated on the basis of the primary care support tasks listed above. The indicative list of secondary associated tasks listed below is not definitive and is reflective of the tasks detailed in Circulars 08/02 and 71/2011.**

- The associated support tasks which may be carried out, but which would not in themselves normally constitute a reason for the allocation of SNA support include:
- 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.

**The care role of the SNA, in instances where SNA support is sanctioned to assist with behavioural related care needs, is concerned with assisting the teacher to meet the care needs of the child by:**

- preserving the safety of the pupil and others with whom the pupil is in contact
- assisting to ensure the prevention of self injurious or destructive behaviour
- reinforcing good behaviour on the child's part and acting as a positive role model for the child
- Assisting with recording data in relation to pupil behaviour and behavioural development

### **Confidentiality**

Information received on children, and observations made in classrooms, need to be handled sensitively and carefully and are often only to be shared with particular members of staff.

It is very important therefore, that the SNA recognises the rules of confidentiality which govern her role as a member of the school staff. No discussion of the child, the teacher, the class or the events of the school day should take place without consultation and agreement with the class teacher/principal.

### **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
- Daily diaries or diaries recording significant events are essential
- An atmosphere of mutual understanding and respect is fostered
- Meetings with the principal/deputy principal and the SNAs are good opportunities to discuss issues and address concerns

### **Contract of Employment**

While SNAs are not specifically assigned to an individual child but rather to the school as a whole, it is important that during lunch break each SNA must have direct responsibility for a **particular child**. The school operates a 'last in, first out' policy. However, it must be noted that all positions are up for regular review in association with the DES, the BOM, NEPS, and NCSE.

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### **Seniority**

The sequence in which special need assistants are appointed to the school determines their seniority. Seniority is important in determining which special need 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.

### **Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures**

We follow the Procedures for SNAs that have been agreed by all parties (IMPACT, SIPTU, Management Bodies and Department of Education and Skills). These procedures are contained in Circular 0072/2011.

### **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 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2014

The plan will be implemented by the teachers and SNAs supported by the Board of Management from 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2014