

Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) Policy and Guidelines



Scoil Náisiúnta Mhuire, Ballyboden, D16.

Special Needs Assistants (Inclusion Support Assistants) are appointed to the staff of the school by the Board of Management subsequent to the granting of access to SNA support to individual children by the Special Educational Needs Organiser. Depending on the cumulative number of hours allocated to the school they may be appointed on a full-time or part-time basis. SNAs are appointed to the staff as a resource for the school to be deployed by the principal to enhance the educational experience all our pupils but in particular to assist those children with access in achieving their educational potential, accessing the broad primary school curriculum and reaching individual learning goals.

There are 13 full-time or part-time SNAs currently employed in Scoil Mhuire. Six are assigned to our two early intervention units and ASD mainstream class. The others to mainstream classes. They are considered to be valued members of the school team and carry out duties of a non-teaching nature. SNAs are important members of staff who have a key role in contributing to the delivery of a quality educational experience for all our pupils. The work of our SNAs helps to create and maintain an ordered and calm learning environment, enhances opportunities for learning and boosts learning outcomes for all our pupils.

Special Needs Assistants work cooperatively with all other staff members having a shared focus on the learning objectives of the primary school curriculum and the values and ethos of our school community. The class teacher should affirm and outwardly value the role of the SNA and both should ensure that an atmosphere of mutual understanding and respect is fostered at all times. Essential to success will be the adopting of a whole school approach to the development of the child, where all staff members adopt the highest possible professional standards, value diversity, foster inclusion, model friendship skills and remain constantly vigilant for the safety and well-being of our pupils.

Working in cooperation and maintaining the highest of professional standards, SNAs and all other staff members will place the best interests of the children at the centre of their work. A spirit of kindness, respect and concern will characterize interactions with our pupils. Staff members will listen to and value the child's voice and provide guidance, supportive of the school's ethos, values and code of behaviour. When it is necessary to correct children we address the child's behaviour rather than the individual. If a sanction is necessary the SNA will refer the matter to the class teacher, or the teacher on duty if the behaviour occurs at break times. An SNA should also regularly refer children to the relevant teacher for praise or reward when they notice children meeting or exceeding our behaviour expectations.

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 :-

- **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 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 are examples of secondary care needs which are identified in Circ. 0030/2014 :-

- 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.

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 be largely be in response to the needs of the children they support.

The board recommends that a pupil inclusion/care plan be maintained for each child with access to SNA support. 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 practice 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.

The Board of Management appreciates the commitment and professionalism of our SNAs evident in the flexible work practices in place in our school, for the benefit of all our pupils. In particular the board wishes to acknowledge daily break time supervision duties, time spent before reception and after closing in the preparation of work spaces, materials for learning and classrooms, willingness to redeploy to areas of greater need at short notice and readiness to change work practices and develop new skills as the care needs of our children change, expand or diminish. The board also wishes to acknowledge the excellent work undertaken by SNAs which supports teaching and learning in our classrooms, at those times when they are not directly engaged with meeting the significant care needs of the 'child' with access to SNA support.

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

This policy was formulated following a consultative process with all interested parties, and is guided by the relevant legislation such as The Education Welfare Act 2000, the EPSEN Act 2004 and DES Circulars on provision and support for children with special educational needs, particularly Circ. 0030/14 issued in April 2014 and relevant circulars from Circ. 07/2002 to Circ. 0042/2017 issued in May 2017.

Rationale

This 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 Scoil Náisiúnata Mhuire, Ballyboden.

Aims

This policy was formulated:

- To facilitate the recognition of SNAs as valuable members of staff in a whole school context
- To ensure that the care needs of individual pupils with access to SNA support are met
- To provide for 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 of SNAs into our school staff and practice
- Devising and updating the role profile of the SNA
- Redeploying available SNA personnel to best meet the needs of the children with access when a child is absent or an SNA is absent or unavailable
- Making provision for regular planning and review time for teachers and SNAs
- Monitoring the effectiveness of the SNAs contribution to the needs of designated children
- Promoting in-service training. The Board of Management may fund or part-fund this professional development.
- Managing areas of conflict which may arise, with the assistance of the Deputy Principal and the SNA liaison person, generally the staff member holding the position of HSCL in our school.
- Treat all information relating to pupils with access to SNA support confidentially and to share such information only with those who need to know.

Special Educational Teachers

- Assume responsibility for convening and resourcing regular 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.
- Treat all information relating to pupils with access to SNA support confidentially and to share such information only with those who need to know.

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.
- Contribute to planning and consultation meetings convened by the child's special education teacher 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'.
- Open and maintain the 'Student Support File' for those children with access to SNA support who are on school support and school support plus of the continuum of support.
- Ensure SNA support is available to those who need it in a class situation and identify the appropriate tasks to be completed by the SNAs.
- Share information with the SNA about the 'child' with access to SNA support that is relevant to the performance of his/her duties.
- Provide a suitable seating arrangement for the SNA and child in the mainstream setting.
- 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.
- Communicate effectively with the SNA to ensure that the SNA is clear about where help is needed, the tasks to be undertaken and the timetable.
- 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.
- 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.
- Treat all information relating to pupils with access to SNA support confidentially and to share such information only with those who need to know.

Special Needs Assistants

- Assume responsibility, in collaboration with the class teacher, for developing and updating an inclusion/care plan for the children with access to SNA support.
- Provide assistance, encouragement and support to the 'child' with access to SNA support.
- The SNA must become familiar with the child's significant care needs.
- The SNA always works under the direction of the class teacher or the Principal.
- The teacher plans lessons and directs learning. The SNA provides support in assisting the pupil to access the curriculum.
- The SNA must maintain a written record of information relevant to a review of the 'child's' inclusion /care plan in a notebook or diary.
- The SNA should communicate relevant information efficiently to the class teacher. Care should be taken that teaching time is not diminished.

- Contribute at 'School Support Plan' meetings such information which may contribute to the identification of priority learning targets for the 'child' with access to SNA support.
- The SNA should be familiar with all relevant school policy, in particular the school Code of Behaviour and Child Protection guidelines.
- Treat all information gathered in the course of their duties confidentially and to share such information only with those who need to know.

Guidelines for Special Needs Assistants (Inclusion Support Assistants)

Hours of Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The full time SNA is expected to work 32 hours per week. SNAs on 'infant day' hours work 27 hours a week. The part-time SNA is expected to work the number of hours their contract specifies. In addition 12 additional days per year outside of the normal school year must be worked by full time SNAs. There is a pro rata reduction for SNAs not on full time hours. These days are at the discretion of the Board of Management in consultation with the Principal and SNAs.
Confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due discretion is expected in all matters of a confidential nature. Specifically any information received about children or their families and observations made in class or around the school must be treated sensitively and carefully and must not be discussed or shared with anyone apart from those who need to know.
Times and Timetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNAs will be given a timetable by the Principal at the start of the year. • SNAs have a mid-morning break of ten minutes and a lunch break of 30 minutes duration in line with their teaching colleagues. SNA break times generally precede or follow break times for the pupils and teachers. Decisions on when SNAs may take their breaks are made by the principal based on the needs of the children with access and the availability of cover to meet any critical care needs of children with access, while an SNA is on break. The board is grateful for the flexibility and generosity of SNAs in this matter. • As part of the SNA contract, SNAs are required to spend ten minutes each morning and evening preparing, tidying and organising the classroom. SNAs also work 12 days outside the school calendar at the discretion of the Board of Management and Principal. This is on a pro rata basis for part-time SNAs. • The class teacher will give the SNA a copy of the class timetable also pointing out where the child will work with the class or at own level during the day. Suitable times for breaks away from the classroom should also be identified. • On days of In-Service training SNAs may be required to attend school to complete tasks laid out by class teachers/Principal.
Planning, Record Keeping and Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNAs keep a record of significant observations in a notebook or diary during the course of their work. The date of the incident and the time, duration, intensity and frequency of the event, when relevant, should also be recorded. This record will be used to inform decisions on future learning and behaviour targets for the child. • The SNA should collaborate with the class teacher in developing and reviewing an 'Inclusion / Care Plan' for the children with access to SNA support. The 'Inclusion / Care Plan' will list the children in the class with access to SNA support, identify their priority care needs and list the routine tasks assigned to the SNA to meet these needs. • Appendix 1 contains a sample template for maintaining a weekly record of work undertaken by an SNA. • The SNA should record progress on learning targets set by the class teacher.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SNA should also record any incidents where the care needs of the child are evident. • These records should be available to all relevant parties attending 'School Support' and 'School Support Plus' planning meetings. • Time for the teacher to meet with the SNA re. planning should be organised at least once every six weeks. • Discussions with the class teacher should preferably not take place in front of the children or where children may over hear. • The SNA must refer all matters on curriculum, classroom management, discipline or incidents of concern etc. to the classroom teacher.
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. • The focus of assistance must be on enabling the child to reach his/her potential through fostering independence. Be careful to avoid what is often referred to as "Velcro mode", avoid doing things for the child that they could do for themselves. • 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 come up with the answer by questioning and prompting. • Allow the teacher to correct and check children's behaviour. Inform the class teacher of misbehaviour observed. The teacher will apply the appropriate sanction. This will help to maintain a positive and supportive relationship between the pupils and the SNAs. However SNAs must intervene when the health and safety of pupil(s) is at risk and alert the teacher without delay. • Interventions should be measured. Remain calm. Address the behaviour. Remind the child of the class rules that apply and of the behaviours expected in our school, based on our shared ethos and values. Be prepared to listen.
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 • Physical contact may be required to protect a pupil from harm to themselves or others • 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 an SEN • If required at the end of the school day, escort the child to the 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. • Requests for information on the child's progress must be referred to the class teacher • Parents with questions, requests or concerns regarding school policy or practice must be referred directly to the class teacher or the Principal • It is not appropriate for parents to have a private phone number of a member of staff or to contact a staff member outside of school hours • If any incidents occur during the school day which a parent should be notified about, inform the teacher. Any major incidents should be reported to the teacher without delay. The teacher will decide the means of reporting the incident to the child's parent(s)/guardian(s).
Seating Arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An SNA should only sit with a child with SEN when and where it is deemed necessary by the class teacher

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow some time during day where child doesn't have SNA sitting with him / her • Avoid blocking the view of another child • SNA should also have their own chair and table not beside the child.
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
Break time Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNAs in our school provide supplementary supervision cover at all break times • Supervise pupils from a distance when practical • Proximity to pupils encourages positive behaviours and reduces the incidence of anti-social behaviours • Supervision in the yard and at in the classroom at break times should promote social interaction and inclusion. • After break times the SNA should assist pupils to form a line on the yard outside the classroom door or at their designated spot and await the teacher's arrival. • SNAs at break times are required to prioritize the needs of the children with access by shadowing them where necessary or being vigilant from a distance when appropriate • Allow the teachers to correct and check children's behaviour. Inform the teacher on duty of misbehaviour observed. The teacher will apply the appropriate sanction. This will help to maintain a positive and supportive relationship between the pupils and our SNAs. However SNAs must intervene when the health and safety of pupil(s) is at risk and alert the teacher on duty without delay. • Interventions should be measured. Remain calm. Address the behaviour. Remind the child of the school rules that apply and of the behaviours expected in our school based on our shared ethos and values. Be prepared to listen. • SNAs can expect consistency from their teaching colleagues in the implementation of our 'Code of Behaviour' and the rules and practices for break times both in the classroom and in the yard. All staff members must be aware of school policy in this regard and are required to implement it and all revisions whether imposed by school management or agreed at a staff forum. • Be mindful of danger of a child absconding
Breaks from the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breaks from the classroom setting 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 provides opportunities to practice social skills, inclusion and co-operative skills. • The length of time away from the classroom will depend on the child's needs and will be decided by the class teacher. However ten minutes should be sufficient to return a child to an appropriate level of alertness and also a reasonable time span for children with attention difficulties to engage in intensive work.
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.

Role Allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Principal has complete discretion in the assignment of SNAs to children with access and to classes. However in keeping with our current practice for special education teachers the board recommends that an SNA should not work for more than two consecutive years with any one child with access unless there are compelling reasons to do so.
Relevant work	<p>SNAs work under the guidance of the classroom teacher and should not be left in sole charge of a pupil or class. They may however work on their own with children provided that the work in question has been allocated by the class teacher. Work may include any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparation and tidying up of classrooms• Assisting school children to board and alight from school buses• Assisting on out-of-school visits, walks, examinations and other similar activities and providing supervision and care on buses when the children go on excursions, field trips and visits further away from the school grounds.• Special assistance as necessary for children with particular difficulties e.g. helping special needs pupils with typing, writing, computers or other use of equipment• Assisting children to stay on task, follow classroom procedures and interact appropriately• Assisting children in establishing and maintaining a consistent routine• Assisting children to build self-esteem and to develop independence• Assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene and being mindful of health and safety needs of the pupil.• Assistance with accessing the curriculum as far as is possible for children with SEN.• Assistance with the use of technology in the classroom and elsewhere which improves access to curricular content, allows the child to engage more easily with learning tasks and present assignments.• Accompanying and supervising their assigned pupil to swimming or water safety lessons• Where direct assistance is needed to change into swimming gear, specific parental consent must be received in writing.• Promoting the importance of personal hygiene and reporting any difficulties to the class teacher.• Assisting the teachers in the supervision of pupils during assembly, recreation, transitions around the school and dispersal from the classroom for one reason or another.• Assisting the teacher in making and using visual cues to support communication with the child with access. These may include single cue cards or visual timetables.• Assisting the teacher in developing and revising behaviour and learning target charts for individual pupils, recording achievement and delivering incentives gained.• Assisting the teacher in the organisation and management of learning materials for the child with access and the class in general.• Accompanying individuals or small groups who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom for one reason or another.• General assistance to the class teachers, under the direction of the Principal, with duties of a non-teaching nature. (Special needs assistants may not act as either substitute or temporary teachers. In no circumstances may they be left in sole charge of a class or group of children).• Participation with school development planning, where appropriate, and co-operation with any such changes in policy and practice arising from the school development process.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with parents of special needs pupils in both formal and informal structures as required and directed by school management. • The encouragement of good attendance and punctuality • Acting as a positive role model for the children in their care • Other duties appropriate to the class level as may be determined by the needs of the pupils and the school from time to time. Special Needs Assistants may be re-assigned to other work appropriate to the grade when special needs pupils are absent or when particular urgent work demands arise.
Work away from the classroom and the child	<p>Where the class teacher believes that a child or children with access do not require constant attention, an SNA may undertake tasks away from their base classroom when such assistance contributes to the teaching and learning of our pupils. Examples of such work might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance with materials for SET lead in-class interventions such as literacy power hour, guided reading, maths activities etc. • Assistance with supervision / implementation of SET lead in-class interventions such as literacy power hour, guided reading, maths activities etc. • Providing support for children on the continuum of support in another classroom who have special educational needs but do not have access to SNA support. • Providing supplementary supervision for groups of children engaging in learning activities away from their classrooms. This will include monitoring individual children or groups of children on the continuum of support engaged in computer based learning in the computer room and/or individualized paper based learning programmes such as 'Toe by Toe', SNIP etc. identified in the school support plan for the child. • Other duties of a non-teaching nature which when undertaken by a SNA frees up the teacher or SET teacher to work more closely with the child or children with access.
Staff Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNAs at Scoil Mhuire go to the early part of all Staff Meetings where the principal can impart general information and updates relevant to all staff members. • Meetings for SNAs to discuss issues of relevance to their own particular work will take place at least once in each school term. • The Principal may delegate responsibility for chairing this meeting to the deputy principal or the HSCL teacher who also acts as liaison person and person of first call for all SNA queries and issues. • The SNA liaison person will attend all staff meetings for SNAs.
Absences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNAs are required inform the Principal, Deputy Principal and the class teacher of unavoidable lateness by text. • SNAs are also required to inform the Principal, Deputy Principal and the class teacher, by text message, of self-certified and certified absences from school.

Developing the Role of the SNA

The board welcomes the proposals of the NCSE review of SNA support in schools (30th May 2018). The focus of this review was on the role of the SNA. The proposed name change to Inclusion Support Assistant indicates an expansion of the role of the SNA (Inclusion Support Assistant) in schools from primarily a physical care model to educational access model. The board will welcome all professional development and upskilling opportunities for our 'Inclusion Support Assistants' which will enable them to provide enhanced access to the curriculum for our children with special educational needs and to collaborate more effectively with their teaching colleagues.

The regular meetings with the principal/deputy principal/SNA Liaison person and the SNAs are good opportunities to discuss issues and address concerns. These meetings will also be an opportunity to endorse good professional practice and to explore making changes to our practice which may improve learning outcomes for our pupils with access.

To foster independence for our pupils with access, it is desirable that the SNA, rather than work exclusively with one child, should work with a group of children around the designated child's table. In that way several children will benefit from SNA support. Where practical it is preferable that an SNA not be identified as a support for a particular child in the minds of the class pupils but rather as a support for the teaching and learning of the whole class. However SNAs allocated to children with physical disabilities and medical conditions will support them as needs require both within the classroom and outside it. This may include shadowing the child while in the playground and helping him to make his way in and out of the school.

The board recommends that teachers and SNAs adopt good communication practices and engage in regular collaborative planning. Appendix 2 and 3 contain examples of templates for formal short review meetings between SNAs and teacher colleagues. These meetings cannot replace the invaluable ongoing professional conversations occurring daily and throughout the day in our classrooms. They may however help to provide a focus and facilitate changes in practice which could improve learning outcomes for our pupils.

Our whole school approach to the education and well-being of our students means that all staff members and not solely the SNA assigned to the child have a duty of care. This particularly applies to our most vulnerable children i.e. those with access to support. Staff members must remain vigilant and intervene when rules are broken, health and safety is at risk or the well-being of one or more members of our school community is threatened. Please refer to the school's 'Code of Behaviour' policy, our guidelines on **DfL** and to the post-holder responsible for the implementation and revision of **DfL** for clarification of our policy and procedures.

On days when the teaching staff are attending In-service courses, SNAs will normally report for work as usual. They will be assigned duties around the school by the principal and/or classroom duties by the class teacher such as the organisation of learning resources, 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 will have direct responsibility for the safety of a particular child or children. The school operates a 'last in, first out' policy to determine seniority. However, it must be noted that all positions are up for regular review in association with 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.

Job Sharing

The board implements the provisions of DES Circular 0041/2014 on Job Sharing for SNAs. Decisions by the board on job sharing applications by SNAs at Scoil Mhuire will be based on the same policy as applies to teachers in our school applying to job share. The restrictions and conditions applying to teachers in this regard will also apply to SNAs. SNAs working in our reception classes and with our sixth class groups may not work in a job sharing capacity. For practical reasons only one job sharing arrangement may operate in a class group. The SNA or the teacher will be a full time member of staff. No more than three job sharing arrangements may operate in our school in any one academic year. Applications to job share at Scoil Mhuire will be considered by the board on a case by case basis and each request will be considered in order of receipt of the application.

A special needs assistant may make an application to share a whole time post on a 50:50 basis i.e. 16 hours per week.

There are two options for a job-sharing arrangement,

- Two special needs assistants in the same school apply to job-share or
- One special needs assistant in the school applies to job-share where the board is willing to recruit a special needs assistant for the remaining available hours on a specified purpose (fixed term) contract.

The minimum period for which a job-sharing arrangement may occur is one school year i.e. commencing when school reopens after the summer break and ending on the 31st of August of the following year.

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 children are reaching the targets set out in School Support Plans.

Publication, Ratification and Review

- ❖ This policy is available to staff members on the school's website and the ICT network server. It is available to parents and guardians from the office on request.
- ❖ The policy will be implemented by the teachers and SNAs supported by the Board of Management from the 1st of September 2018.
- ❖ This policy will be reviewed again before the end of 2022 or before then if the board deems it is important to do so and as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this policy refers.

✦ This policy was reviewed and approved by the Board of Management on the:

Date: 19th October 2021

Signed:



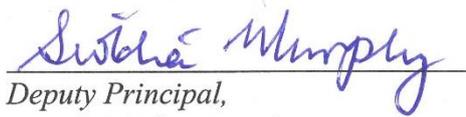
Chairperson, Board of Management
Fr. John Hughes, OSA

Date: 19/11/2021



Principal
Mr. Owen McLoughlin

Date: 19/10/21



Deputy Principal,
Ms. Siobhán Murphy

Date: 19/10/21



SEN Coordinator
Mr. Francis Roche

Date: 19/10/2021

Appendix 1



CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT

SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANTS (Primary)

Sample

1. Parties

1.1. This Contract of Employment is made the *30th day of August 2021* between the following parties:

1.1.1. Employer: Board of Management of Scoil Náisiúnta Mhuire, Ballyboden, (hereinafter called “the Board”).

Address: Scoil Náisiúnta Mhuire, Ballyboden, Rathfarnham, Dublin 16.

1.1.2. Employee: _____

2. Conditions of Service

2.1. The post is full time/part time and, subject to the clauses stated hereunder, your employment will commence on (date) _____ and will continue into the future unless and until terminated as hereinafter provided.

2.2. You will be on probation for six months with effect from _____. At the end of the said period your appointment may be confirmed, probation may be extended for a further period not exceeding twelve months or your employment may be terminated as the Board of Management may determine. In the event that your performance is unsatisfactory during the probationary or extended probationary period, your employment may be terminated by one week’s notice.

2.3. The salary scale for the post shall be in conformity with the salary scale applicable to SNAs as determined by the Department of Education and Science from time to time. Increments will be awarded after each year of satisfactory service in an approved post as a Special Needs Assistant in a recognised school.

2.4. Salary will be paid fortnightly in arrears.

2.5. You will be required to work normal classroom hours including class break periods and in addition to attend before and after school in order to help with the preparation and tidying up of classrooms, reception and dispersal of children etc. The hours of work will normally be from **08:40hrs** to **14:40hrs** daily during term time. Normal work break entitlements will apply in accordance with the provisions of the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997. The times at which these breaks are taken will be at the discretion of the Principal.

2.6. The school premises will normally be the place of employment. However, there may be occasions when children with special needs are required to attend at another venue outside the school, and in such cases, you may be required to accompany them to and from such venue.

2.7. Confidentiality. You are expected to maintain and treat all matters relating to school business and your work in the school as an SNA, as strictly confidential. Any breach of this requirement will be treated as a serious matter of misconduct.

2.8. The nature of the work to be performed by you at the direction of the Principal or other senior person acting on behalf of the Employer is as set out in Appendix 1 attached hereto.

2.9. The sick leave provisions pertaining to the post are as set out in Appendix 2 attached hereto.

2.10. The maternity leave arrangements pertaining to the post are as set out in Appendix 3 attached hereto. You are required to comply with the terms of Circulars in relation to Special Needs Assistants which are issued by the Department of Education and Science from time to time.

2.11. Pension arrangements shall be in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Department of Education and Science in relation to pensions for Special Needs Assistants as determined from time to time. The terms of the Public Service Superannuation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2004 shall apply in relation to retirement age.

2.12. Holiday periods will normally be those which apply to the schools to which the Special Needs Assistants have been assigned. In addition you are required to be available for a couple of days at the start and finish of each school term. These days (12 in total) may be combined at the discretion of school management to be utilised flexibly throughout the year for work appropriate to the grade including training. These days will not exceed five consecutive days and will immediately follow or precede school terms or occur within a couple of days thereof.

3. Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures

3.1. Grievance Procedure

You shall be entitled to invoke grievance procedures as are collectively agreed from time to time.

Disciplinary Procedure

Your employer shall have the power to suspend, to impose disciplinary sanctions and terminate your appointment in accordance with such disciplinary/dismissal procedures as are collectively agreed from time to time.

You may be dismissed from *Scoil Náisiúnta Mhuire, Ballyboden* for:

- 3.1.1.1. Incompetence or poor performance;
- 3.1.1.2. Misconduct (serious or persistent);
- 3.1.1.3. Incapacity;
- 3.1.1.4. Failure to carry out reasonable instructions;
- 3.1.1.5. Any breach of trust; and
- 3.1.1.6. Some other substantial reason.

4. Notice of Termination

4.1. Except in circumstances justifying immediate termination of your employment by the Board you will receive the appropriate period of notice set out in the Minimum Notice and Terms of Employment Acts 1973-1991 as appropriate. Your employment may be terminated by way of redundancy. In such circumstances the terms of any collective agreement regarding redundancy will apply.

4.2. Your employment may be terminated without notice for serious misconduct.

4.3. When terminating your employment, you are required to give four weeks' notice.

4.4. Nothing in this agreement shall prevent the giving of a lesser period of notice by either party where it is mutually agreed.

4.5. At the discretion of the Board salary may be paid in lieu of notice.

5. Agreement

5.1. I accept and agree to all of the above terms and conditions of my employment:

Signed: _____ *Special Needs Assistant*

Dated: _____

Signed: _____ *Chairperson, Board of Management*

Dated: _____

Signed: _____ *Principal*

Dated: _____

Appendix 2

Sample Template for meetings of Teachers with Special Needs Assistants



Professional Conversation
15 minute review and planning meeting

Review

Time	Who?	What?
5 mins	BOTH	Some things that are going well:
		Some things that have not been going well:
1 min	Teacher	I am feeling because ...
1 min	SNA	I am feeling because ...

Action Plan

2 mins	Both	Brainstorm next targets and actions:
2 mins	Both	Prioritize next targets and actions: (2)
4 mins	Both	Agree actions and responsibilities:

Set date of next consultation meeting:

Appendix 3

Sample Template for meetings of Teachers with Special Needs Assistants



Reflective Teamwork: Structure for 15 minute review and planning meeting

Review

Time	Who?	What?
2 mins	SNA	At least 2 things that are going well: 2 things that have not been going well:
1 min	Teacher	Summarize what the SNA has said:
2 mins	Teacher	At least 2 things that are going well: 2 things that have not been going well:
1 min	SNA	Summarize what the teacher has said:

Action Plan

2 mins	Both	Brainstorm targets and actions:
2 mins	Both	Prioritize next targets and actions: (2)
5 mins	Both	Agree actions and responsibilities:

Set date of next consultation meeting:

Appendix 4

SNA Weekly Timetable School Year 20__ - 20__

Name: _____ **Month:** _____

Week 1 2 3 4

Time	Class	Pupils worked with	Work carried out
8.50	Playground Duty		
9.00			
9.30			
10.00			
10.25: BREAK & Playground Duty			
10.55			
11.30			
12.00: LUNCH BREAK & Playground Duty			
1.00			
1.30			
2.00			
Late Day: Tasks & Class worked with:			
Additional information:			