

Scoil Mhuire gan Smál, Cill Choirle



Special Needs Assistant Policy

Policy Details

Name of Policy: Special Needs Assistant Policy

Date developed:

Signed by

Date Reviewed: 15/02/2021.

Chairperson: Geraldine K.

Ref Code: TBA

Principal: Donna Kirby

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1. Policy Statement

Scoil Mhuire gan Smál is committed to providing an environment where the uniqueness of every child is respected in a spirit of equality and inclusivity. We wish to ensure that each pupil can access the curriculum in a manner appropriate to his/her ability. Our Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) are a key part of this endeavour. This policy sets out the role of the SNA in the school community.

This policy is guided by relevant legislation such as the Education Welfare Act 2000, the Epsen Act 2004, Education for Persons with Special Needs Act 2004, and DES Circulars including 0030/2020 and 0049/2020.

2. Policy Purpose

- To provide staff, parents and SNAs 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 Mhuire gan Smál.

3. Relationship to School Ethos

- This policy applies to all teaching and SNA staff in Scoil Mhuire gan Smál.
- It applies to all pupils assigned special needs assistance.
- It applies to all parents of children in receipt of special needs assistance.

4. Aims

- To facilitate the recognition of 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 in their care.
- 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.

5. Staff Roles

5.1 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 relevant 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

5.2 Special Educational Teachers:

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

5.3 Class Teachers:

- 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 e.g. staff meetings, 10 minutes before/after school, etc.

5.4 SNAs:

- There are 2 SNAs presently employed in our school. They are considered an important part of the school team and carry out duties of a non teaching nature
- The SNA always works under the direction of the class teacher or Principal
- The teacher plans lessons and directs learning. The SNA provides support in assisting the pupils to access the curriculum and encourages them to become more independent learners
- The SNA will provide support or assistance to pupils with personal care needs as required
- The SNA should be familiar with all relevant school policy, in particular the school Code of Behaviour, Child Protection guidelines, and Intimate Care Policy
- The SNA will help to raise standards of achievement for some pupils

6. Guidelines for Special Needs Assistants

Hours of Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The full time SNA is paid for 32 hours per week and the part-time SNA is expected to work the number of hours outlined by the NCSE. The SNA is required to work normal classroom hours. In addition the SNA must be available for an additional 72 hours (Public Service Agreement, Croke Park) per year outside of the normal school year, or pro-rata for part-time worker. These hours 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. Information received on children and observations made in classrooms, need to be handled sensitively and carefully
Times and Timetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A timetable will be drawn up in consultation with the SNA, class teacher(s), special education teachers, principal and parents. Class teacher will give the SNA a copy of the class timetable also pointing out where the pupil(s) will work with class or at own level during the day. Suitable times for time-outs will also be identified.
Planning and Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SNA keeps a weekly record of the assigned pupil(s) activities. A copy of this will be given to the principal. An A5 notebook will be kept by the SNA to record any care needs, incidents, relevant information etc. A copy of the SNA's plan will be given to the principal and kept in the office. A copy of the SET's support documentation is kept on the server for the principal and class teacher. A copy will be given to the SNA. Time for the teacher/SET to meet with the SNA re. planning should be organised as necessary. Teacher should outline expectations for child and SNA. 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"> 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 pupil(s) to concentrate and think independently. Explain how to do tasks but avoid giving the solution to a task or problem. Instead encourage the pupil(s) 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 pupil's attention is required, have a method of doing so that is agreeable to the pupil(s) and the SNA. • Physical contact may be required to protect a pupil from harm to themselves or others. • Help where necessary with physical care needs, changing for P.E. etc while encouraging and supporting independence as much as possible. • 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, where appropriate, based on trust, with the parents of children with SEN. • If required at the end of the school day, escort the pupil(s) 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. • Parents with questions, requests or concerns regarding school policy or practice should be referred directly to the class teacher or Principal. This applies to direct face-to-face communication or indirect telephone communication. Parents should contact teachers for information on the child's educational 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. • If there are any minor incidents put a note in the homework diary following consultation with the class teacher. Any major incidents should be reported to the principal. • SNA will keep a logbook in a secure location to record incidents of note.
Seating Arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A SNA should only sit with a child with SEN when and where deemed necessary by the class teacher. • Allow some time during the day where child doesn't have SNA sitting with him/her/them. • Avoid blocking view of another child. • SNA should also have their own chair and table not beside the child.
Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervise pupils from a distance if possible. • Supervision in the yard and lunch room should promote social interaction and inclusion. After lunch SNA should assist pupils to

	<p>form a line on the yard and await the teacher.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the class teacher has to leave the room at any stage, the classroom door should remain open and the neighbouring teacher should be requested to assist supervise the class with the SNA until the teacher returns. • Be mindful of risk of a child absconding.
Time-out Sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movement and/or classroom breaks should follow a specific timetable to be most effective. The content should be worked out with the recommendations of 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 regular breaks are necessary daily and should last approximately 10 minutes.
Medication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's Administration of Medicine Policy should be understood and followed at all times. • Only prescribed medication should be given by the appropriately identified person. • Store all medicines appropriately in line with our Health and Safety and Administration of Medicines Policy.
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 of SNAs may include any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation and tidying up of classrooms • Assisting the school children to board and alight from school buses. Where necessary travel as an escort during school hours on school buses may be required. • 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

	<p>and being mindful of health and safety needs of the pupil.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance with accessing the curriculum as far as is possible for children with SEN. • Assisting on out-of-school visits, walks, and similar activities. • Accompanying and supervising their assigned pupil(s) on swimming outings (refer to Swimming Policy) • Where direct assistance is needed to change into swimming gear, specific parental consent must be received in writing (refer to Swimming Policy). • Promoting the importance of personal hygiene and report any difficulties to the class teacher. • Assisting the teachers in the supervision of pupils during assembly, recreation and dispersal from the classroom for one reason or another. • 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. • Participation with school improvement planning, where appropriate, and co-operation with any such changes with policies and practices arising from the school improvement process. • Engagement with parents of special needs pupils in both formal and informal structures as required and directed by class teacher and/or school management. • The encouragement of good attendance and punctuality. • Acting as a positive role model for the children in their care. • Other duties 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 when special needs pupils are absent or when particular urgent work demands arise • Work carried out during 'Croke Park' hours should be related to SEN provision in the school where applicable • Continuous professional development (CPD). Attend relevant courses if required, as agreed with the principal • Help to coordinate activities/events as required (e.g. cake sales, charity events, book fair, school events etc.) • Preparation for sacraments (artwork, displays etc.) • Equipment inventories as required • Work on and support whole school initiatives e.g. Green Schools, Healthy Eating, KiVa etc. • Any other work as the need arises
Staff Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNAs may be required to attend staff meetings when issues of relevance to their own particular work are up for discussion. The

	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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7. 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.
- Daily diaries or diaries recording significant events are essential.
- An atmosphere of mutual understanding and respect is fostered.
- Regular meetings with the principal/deputy principal and the 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 impairments 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/her to make his/her way in and out of the school.

8. Contract of Employment

SNAs are not specifically assigned to an individual child but rather to the school as a whole. 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.

Positions that are reviewed are done so in association with the DES, NEPS, SENO, NCSE and the Board of Management.

9. Seniority

The sequence in which special needs 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/if the allocation of the school is reduced.

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

10. 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 endeavouring to become independent learners and acquiring life skills
- The child is reaching the targets set out in support documentation

