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Scoil Mhuire Glenties

Roll 19912B

S.N.A. Policy

‘Special Needs Assistants are recruited specifically to assist in the care of pupils with disabilities in an educational context’ (Guidelines on Special Needs Assistants, INTO)

**Introduction**

Under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004, children with special educational needs are entitled to supports to enable them to participate in inclusive education. Such supports include Special Needs Assistants – SNAs.

**Aims/Objectives**

* To facilitate the inclusion 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 Special Needs Child.
* To enable the SNA to be an effective support to the class teacher
* To provide optimum learning experiences for all children through judicial use of the skills and talents of the SNA
* To clarify the tasks and duties to be undertaken by the SNA.

**Procedures and Content**

**Contract**

The contract of employment and the duties of an SNA are regulated by Department Circular. This includes an actual job description – Appendix 1.

SNAs are not specifically assigned to an individual child but rather to the school as a whole.  However, during lunch break each SNA must have direct responsibility for a particular child or children.

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.

**Hours of Work**

The full time SNA is expected to work 32 hours per week and the part-time SNA is expected to work 27 hours per week.

SNAs as part of their contract are expected to perform some duties before and after school duties (SNA Circular 15/05) i.e. the preparation and tidying up of classrooms, reception and dispersal of children.

An additional 72 hours (pro-rata for part-time SNAs) per year outside of the normal school year must be worked.  These days are at the discretion of the Board of Management in consultation with the individual SNAs.

**Recruitment Procedures**

The recruitment procedures for the appointment of ancillary staff (SNAs) to Scoil Mhuire are as follows:

* The post is advertised in the local newspaper/on Education Posts
* The nature of the post is stated and the applicant is asked to supply references / referees
* The closing date is listed as 2 weeks after the insert of the advertisement
* The selection Board gives at least one weeks notice of interview
* Agreed criteria is agreed prior to interview and applied to all candidates
* The Selection Board consists of the Chairperson of the Board of Management, Principal and an independent assessor with an appropriate gender balance. Should there be a conflict of interest the Chairperson and/or Principal shall appoint a person on their behalf.
* A marking scheme is used and retained as a record
* All appointments are subject to Board of Management approval and the provisions of the Employment Equality Act.

The successful candidate is required to furnish the Board with:

a)     A medical cert

b)    A Garda Clearance Cert

c)     A signed Confidentiality Clause.

**On Appointment**

On appointment to the school (an SNA is not appointed to a specific child) each SNA is required to:

* Sign a contract of employment and a Confidentiality Clause
* Supply school administration with P.P.S number, telephone number etc.
* Asked to become familiar with circulars detailing sick leave, maternity leave, leave of absence etc.
* Sign the D.E.S appointment form.

**Duties**

The duties of SNAs are contained in Circular Sp.Ed. 07/02

SNA duties are assigned at the discretion of the Principal, or another person acting on behalf of the principal (Special Educational Needs Organiser), and/or the Board of Management.

The **duties of the SNA** are listed in Appendix 1 of this Circular as follows:

1. Preparation and tidying up of classroom(s) in which the pupil(s) with special needs is/are being taught.

2. Assisting children to board and alight from school buses. Where necessary, SNAs may need to travel as an escort on school buses if this is required.

3. Special assistance as necessary for pupils with particular difficulties e.g. helping physically disabled pupils with typing or writing.

4. Assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene.

5. Assisting on out-of-school visits, walks, swimming and similar activities.

6. Assisting the teachers in the supervision of pupils with special needs during assembly, recreational and dispersal periods.

7. Accompanying individuals or small groups who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom.

8. General assistance to the class teachers, under the direction of the Principal, with duties of a non-teaching nature. (Special needs Assistants will not act either as substitute or temporary teachers. In no circumstances will they be left in sole charge of a class).

9. Where a Special Needs Assistant has been appointed a school in catering for a specific pupil, duties shall be modified to support the particular needs of the pupil concerned.

**Supervision duty**

See supervision policy.

**Rotation**

SNAs can be allocated to different children throughout the school on a rotational basis.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

**Principal**

**The Principal in conjunction with the Special Education Needs Co-ordinator**

* Responsibility for assigning role specific and child specific tasks to the SNA in association with the class teacher
* Direct responsibility for 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
* Responsibility for passing on information received regarding any training opportunities for the role
* Managing areas of conflict which may arise
* Ensure that the SNA is inducted appropriately not just to their specific SNA role but the whole school community.

**The Role of the Class Teacher**

The SNA always works under the direction of the class teacher. The teacher plans lessons and directs learning. The SNA provides support to the teacher, and through this to the pupils and to the teaching of the curriculum. She works under the direction of the teacher whether in the whole class situation, or on her own with a small group of pupils or an individual.

For the SNA to work most effectively, it is important to define her responsibilities clearly. She also needs to be aware of the standards of behaviour expected and what the pupils are expected to learn in a given class. She needs to know what the school’s and class teacher’s expectations are in terms of pupil’s progress. She should be made fully aware of pupil’s Special Educational Needs and what they entail, if she is to be able to deal with them confidently and help give the pupil access to the curriculum. She should be given relevant information on the needs and attainments of her assigned pupil and on the special educational provision being made for him/her. Because the SNA often spends more time with the pupil than the teacher does, she may well have important contributions to make to IEPs and Reviews.

# The Role of the SNA and Responsibilities

The role of the SNA is

* To foster the participation of pupils in the social and academic processes of the school
* To enable pupils to become more independent learners
* To help to raise standards of achievement for specific pupils.

Fostering the participation of pupils in the social and academic processes of the school

This form of support for pupils is seen in

* Supervising and assisting small groups of pupils in activities set by the teacher - Activities are set by teachers and the SNA works with the group under the management of the teacher. The SEN pupil is then able to work with the group without being stigmatised as ‘different’ because of frequent separation from their classmates for individual tuition.
* Developing pupils’ social skills.
* Supporting children in groups, who might otherwise have been separated from other children for individual attention, promotes the inclusion of those children in mainstream work.
* Spotting early signs of bullying.

Some children find it easier to confide in an SNA and she may be the first to be alerted to instances of bullying. All such information must be treated as serious and be notified to the class teacher straight away.

* Helping the inclusion of all children.

She can do much to help the inclusion of children into their school and support individual children who for one reason or another find it difficult to form friendships and good relationships with others. Organising games on the yard is a particularly successful way to do this.

* Keeping children on task.

Helping the child to maintain focus and bringing him/her back on task will enable them to become better learners. She can do this by explaining points quietly, and repeating teacher’s instructions. It is helpful to make notes for the pupil as the teacher is speaking.

B. Enabling Pupils to Become More Independent Learners

Children learn better if their efforts are appreciated and they feel valued. As they gain confidence, they will become more independent. SNAs can help pupils develop independence in their learning in several ways:

* Showing Interest - SNAs have an important part to play in raising the self-esteem of children by showing interest not only in their work but in what they do outside of school
* Assisting Individuals in Educational Tasks - The SNA can assist the pupil to increase his/her knowledge, skill and understanding, but this assistance must be balanced. Only intervene if absolutely necessary. Allow the pupil to make mistakes- never do the work for them. Be there to help, support and encourage - not to provide the right answer.

It is important not to allow or encourage the child to ‘cling’ as this can be stultifying and demeaning for the pupil. It can also mean the child gets insufficient input from the teacher.

The SNA needs to know when to stand back and enable the child to work with other pupils in a group.

* Working with Outside Agencies - The SNA can play an important part in supporting the work of outside agencies such as speech therapists and educational psychologists, under the guidance of the class teacher.
* Assisting Pupils with Physical Needs - Assisting pupils, when help is necessary, in a tactful manner, and not at other times, enables pupils with physical disabilities to become more independent learners and to move towards independence as adults. This applies to assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene. The pupil may need assistance to board and alight from school buses or on out of school visits, walks and similar activities. The SNA will also be required to assist the teacher in the supervision of pupils with special needs during assembly, recreational and dispersal periods.

3. Help to Raise Standards of Achievement of all Pupils

Even when working with individual pupils, the SNA is assisting with the others in the class as they are thereby free to progress at their own pace.

* Being involved at Whole Class Level - SNAs can alternate helping with particular pupils. An extra pair of hands, eyes and ears is very useful in art, games and PE. Supporting the teacher by listening to reading or reading to small groups is very helpful. She can also reinforce the teachers work on spelling, for example.
* Preparing Classroom Materials - Getting materials ready for the lesson, preparing worksheets, preparing books and setting up equipment all help free up teaching time to the benefit of all the class.

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.

SNAs may be closer to parents than teachers, as they may themselves be from the immediate community, and may, or might have been, themselves parents of pupils in the school. Some parents may therefore consider them more approachable than teachers.

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.

Parents with questions or issues about 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.

This policy was drawn up in 2017 and will be reviewed every two years or earlier if required.

Signed

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Chairperson Date