



## Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) Policy and Guidelines

SNAs are appointed by the Cork Education and Training Board subsequent to the annual review of SNA allocation to Colaiste Mhuire by the NCSE. All SNAs, whether full-time or part-time, will be required to sign a contract which lays out the terms of their employment.

The Policy was devised following a consultative process with all interested parties, and is guided by the relevant legislation such as The Education Welfare Act 2000 and the EPSEN Act 2004 and DES Circulars 07/02, 08/03, 24/03, 13/04, 02/05.

### Rationale

The policy was formulated:

- To provide staff and parents with clear guidelines and expectations with regard to the SNA role and responsibilities within the school
- To ensure each SNA appreciates and understands the important role they have in contributing positively to the learning experiences of the children and the overall efficiency of the school
- To ensure best practice and continuity in the role of SNA in Colaiste Mhuire.

### Aims

- To facilitate the recognition of SNAs as valuable members of staff in a whole school context
- To ensure the effective deployment of SNA's in enhancing the social skills and self-esteem of children with Special Educational Needs
- To enable SNA's 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 SNA's
- To clarify the tasks and duties to be undertaken by SNA's
- To ensure accountability and effective record keeping.

## **Staff Roles**

### **The Principal and Deputy Principal have responsibility for**

- Assigning role specific and child specific tasks to the SNA in association with the SEN Coordinators
- 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.
- Managing areas of conflict which may arise.
- Devise a list of tasks to be undertaken by the SNA team when time is available e.g. Staff meetings, During Examinations etc.

### **Special Educational Coordinators**

- 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
- Assume responsibility for paperwork for pupils with access to SNA's in consultation with all relevant parties including the parents, SNA's, resource teacher's, special needs teacher's, subject teacher's.
- Collaborate with the Class teacher's, Subject teacher's and SNA with regard to planning and timetabling

### **Subject Teachers**

- Provide a suitable seating arrangement for the SNA and child in the mainstream setting
- Liaise with SNA during class to ensure student support is as effective as possible

### **SNAs**

- We have 9 SNA's currently employed in the school. The SNA team is a core part of the school team and carry out duties of a non-teaching nature.
- SNA's work under the direction of school management, SEN coordinators and subject teachers
- The subject teacher plans lessons and directs learning. SNA's provide critical support in assisting pupil's with SEN to access the curriculum.
- The SNA should be familiar with all relevant school policies, in particular the school Code of Behaviour and Child Protection guidelines.

## Guidelines for Special Needs Assistants

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| <b>Hours of Work</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The full time SNA is expected to work 32 hours per week and the part-time SNA is expected to work the number of hours outlined by Cork ETB. In addition to this SNA's are contracted to work 72 additional hours outside of the normal school year. These hours are at the discretion of school management and will be organised in consultation with the SNA team.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Confidentiality</b>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due discretion is expected in all matters of a confidential nature.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Times and Timetables</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SNAs will be given a timetable by school management at the start of the year. SNAs break times are outlined on their individual timetables.</li> <li>• School Management and SEN Coordinators will give direction to SNA's on how best individual students may be supported in line with their individual support plans.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Planning and Reporting</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SNA's will document and record any incidents where the care needs of the child are evident. Weekly observation sheets are submitted to the SEN Coordinators.</li> <li>• The SNA team will have access, as appropriate, to individual student support plans.</li> <li>• Time for meetings between school management, SEN coordinators &amp; SNA's will be organised weekly.</li> <li>• SNA's should refer all matters of concern on curriculum, classroom management, discipline or incidents etc. to the subject teacher, SEN Coordinators, Class teacher or Coordinator of Behaviour as appropriate</li> </ul>                            |
| <b>Level and type of classroom Assistance</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information received on children, and observations made in classrooms need to be handled sensitively and carefully</li> <li>• The focus will be on an "Enabling mode" and avoiding the "Velcro mode"</li> <li>• Avoid over-talking and providing a 'running commentary' of what to do next – this allows the child to concentrate and think independently</li> <li>• Explain how to do tasks but avoid giving the solution to a task or problem. Instead encourage the child to come up with the answer by questioning and prompting.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Physical contact</b>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Physical contact may be required to protect a pupil from harm to themselves or others</li> <li>• Help where necessary with changing for PE etc. while encouraging independence</li> <li>• Actions of affection from a child towards an SNA should be handled sensitively but also appropriately</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul> |

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| <b>Parental contact</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SNAs are encouraged to build a positive relationship based on trust with the parents of children with SEN</li> <li>• If required at the end of the school day, escort the child to the school car park and greet the parent</li> <li>• It is helpful to chat about how the day went or upcoming events but do not pass on information regarding child's educational progress</li> <li>• Parents with questions, requests or concerns regarding school policy or practice should be referred directly to the class teacher or the Principal. This applies to direct face- to face communication or indirect telephone communication. Parents should contact teachers or SEN Coordinators for information on the child's progress.</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• If there are any minor incidents put a note in the homework diary. Any major incidents should be reported to the appropriate teacher or member of school management.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Seating Arrangements</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An SNA should only sit with a child with SEN when and where deemed necessary by the student's support plan, SEN Coordinator or subject teacher</li> <li>• Allow some time during day where the student doesn't have SNA sitting with him/her</li> <li>• Avoid blocking view of another child</li> <li>• SNA should also have their own chair and table where possible.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Supervision</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervise pupils from a distance if possible</li> <li>• Supervision in the yard should promote social interaction and inclusion.</li> <li>• Be mindful of danger of a child absconding.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Timeout Sessions</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time out sessions should follow a specific timetable to be most effective but in some instances may need to be implemented on the spot to avoid a student becoming overwhelmed or agitated.</li> </ul> <p>In some instances the duration and nature of timeout activities may be specified by physicians such as Physiotherapists and/or Occupational Therapist and a specific programme can be followed.</p>  |
| <b>Medication</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School procedures for the administration of medicines should be understood and followed at all times</li> <li>• Written parental consent is required and should be checked</li> <li>• When applicable medication should be administered in line with instructions on the students Health Care Plan</li> <li>• Only prescribed medication should be given</li> <li>• Store all medicines appropriately in line with our Health and Safety Policy.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Relevant work</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation and tidying up of classrooms</li> <li>• Assisting school children to board and alight from school buses. Where necessary travel as escort during school hours on school buses may be required.</li> </ul>  |

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|                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special assistance as necessary for children with particular difficulties e.g. helping special needs pupils with typing, writing, computers or other use of equipment</li> <li>• Assisting children to stay on task, follow classroom procedures and interact appropriately</li> <li>• Assisting children in establishing and maintaining a consistent routine</li> <li>• Assisting children to build self-esteem and to develop independence</li> <li>• Assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene and being mindful of health and safety needs of the pupil (see Intimate Care Policy)</li> <li>• Assistance with accessing the curriculum as far as is possible for children with SEN</li> <li>• Assisting on out-of-school visits, walks, examinations and similar activities.</li> <li>• Where direct assistance is needed to change into activity specific clothing, parental consent must be received in writing.</li> <li>• Promoting the importance of personal hygiene and report any difficulties to the class teacher.</li> <li>• Assisting the teachers in the supervision of pupils during assembly, recreation and dispersal from the classroom for one reason or another.</li> <li>• Accompanying individuals or small groups who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom for one reason or another.</li> <li>• General assistance to the subject teachers, under the direction of the school management, with duties of a non-teaching nature. (Special needs assistants may not act as either substitute or temporary teachers).</li> <li>• Participation with school improvement planning, where appropriate, and cooperation with any such changes with policies and practices arising from the school improvement process.</li> <li>• Engagement with parents of special needs pupils in both formal and informal structures as required and directed by school management.</li> <li>• The encouragement of good attendance and punctuality</li> <li>• Acting as a positive role model for the children in their care</li> <li>• Other duties appropriate to the grade 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.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Staff Meetings</b> | <p>SNAs may be required to attend Staff Meetings when issues of relevance to their own particular work are up for discussion. School Management will have regular structured staff meetings with the SNA team. On days of In-Service, SNAs may be required to attend school to complete tasks laid out school management.</p>   |

### Developing the Role of the SNA

- It is the SEN Coordinator's and subject teacher's responsibility to ensure that the SNA is clear about where help is needed. Planning together is essential

- School Management and all teachers should affirm and outwardly value the role of the SNA
- Daily Diaries or Observation Sheets recording significant events may be necessary during the school year
- An atmosphere of mutual understanding and respect is encouraged and fostered
- Regular meetings with the principal/deputy principal, SEN coordinators and the SNA team 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. In addition, the SNA's will rotate every year so that they will get to work with a different student and the child does not develop overdependency on one SNA.
- SNAs allocated to children with physical disabilities will support them as needs require both within the classroom and outside it. This may include shadowing the child while on break or helping him/her to make his/her way in and out of the school.

### **Success Criteria**

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

- children with Special Educational Needs are included in whole school activities
- children are experiencing a safe and stimulating environment
- the children are becoming independent learners and acquiring life skills
- the child is reaching the targets set out in Student Support Plans.

### **Ratification and Review**

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_

Principal

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Next Review: \_\_\_\_\_