

Policy on Special Needs Assistants

Introduction

This 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 D.E.S Circulars 07/02, 08/03, 24/03, 13/04, 02/05, 30/14, 22/17,42/17, 26/18

Rationale

The policy was formulated so that:

- All staff, including SNAs have clear guidelines on procedures within the school.
- The SNA can see themselves as contributing positively to the learning experiences of the children and the overall efficiency of the school.
- A culture of fairness and equality operates throughout the school.
- To address issues such as seniority and suppression of posts.

Aims

- 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 child with special needs.
- To enable the SNA to be an effective support to the class teacher
- To provide optimum learning experiences for all children through drawing on the skills and talents of the SNA
- To clarify the tasks and duties to be undertaken by the SNA.

Staff Roles

Principal

The Principal

- 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 the provision of in-service training
- Managing areas of conflict which may arise, with the assistance of the Deputy Principal and Class Teachers
- Identify the appropriate tasks to be completed by the SNAs
- Ensure SNA support is available for those who need it in class
- Collaboration with the SNA

Teaching Staff: The teachers will

- Identify the appropriate tasks to be completed by SNA.
- Ensure SNA support is available for those who need it in a class situation.
- Assume responsibility for *Student Support Files* in consultation with SET teachers and relevant bodies.
- Collaborate with SNA
- Provide a suitable seating arrangement for SNA/Special Needs child in the mainstream setting.
- Devise a list of classroom tasks to be undertaken by the SNA on in-service days.
- Organise tasks to be filled by SNA to fulfil Croke Park hours

The Role of the SNA

There is one full- time SNA posts presently in St.Brigid's N.S. Special needs Assistants are considered to be an important part of the school team. The SNA always works under the direction of the class teacher or Special Education Teachers(SET). The teacher plans lessons and directs learning. The SNA provides support to the teacher.

The role and responsibilities of the SNA is as follows:

- To foster the participation of assigned pupils in the social and academic processes of the school. This is done through supervising and assisting small groups of pupils in activities set by the teacher and promoting the inclusion of these children in mainstream work and keeping them on task.
- It may also include tasks such as escorting groups of young children to work areas outside the classroom, boarding and alighting from buses, preparing P.E. equipment, assisting in P.E and Art classes etc.
- The SNA will supervise assigned children during break times. She must be aware at all times of the position of their assigned child in the yard. She is expected to bring any early signs of bullying to the attention of either the class teacher or the Principal.
- To assist in the inclusion of assigned children through supervision of organised games.
- To enable assigned pupils to become more independent learners. The SNA is encouraged to develop independence in pupils with special needs through showing interest both in the classroom setting and at play. The school does not encourage the 'Velcro model' whereby the SNA is solely supporting the child with needs all day long.
- To support the work by outside agencies such as Speech Therapists and Occupational Therapists under the guidance of the class teacher.
- To assist teachers in the supervision of pupils with special needs during assembly, recreational and dispersal periods, school visits, walks and similar activities. This applies to assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene.
- To help to raise standards of achievement of all pupils. This form of support for pupils is achieved through being involved at whole class level in activities that can support the teacher such as listening to reading, assisting with art, games and P.E and preparing classroom materials.

Recruitment Procedures

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

- The post is advertised in the local newspaper and on an educational website.
- The nature of the post is stated and the applicant is asked to apply using the standard SNA application form only by post or electronically drumcongapplications@gmail.com
- The closing date is listed as 2 weeks after the insert of the advertisement
- The selection Board gives at least one week's notice of interview
- Criteria are 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.
- 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 med mark fitness cert b) A Garda Clearance Cert c) A signed Confidentiality Clause.
- The appointed SNA must agree to respect the ethos of the school.
- If the school receives an application from an SNA who is due to be made redundant and who has submitted a certified copy of Panel Form 1 (PF1), then the school is obliged to offer the post to that SNA. In the event of two or more SNAs submitting PF1, these only will be called for interview.

Appointment

On appointment, 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
- Become familiar with circulars detailing sick leave, maternity leave, leave of absence etc.
- Sign the D.E.S appointment form
- Familiarise themselves with school policies

Contracts of Employment

Special needs assistants are not assigned to a particular pupil but to the school. However a particular child may be assigned at break times when/if deemed necessary.

A statement of order of seniority Of Special Needs Assistants employed in the school is updated each year and displayed on the staff noticeboard.

Classroom Procedure

- The pupils usually address the SNA in a formal manner only. Children are permitted to address SNAs by their first name depending on their needs.
- The SNA must refer all matters on curriculum, classroom management, discipline etc. to the classroom teacher
- Written reports may be required by the classroom teacher on individual children on a case by case basis. Information received on children, and observations made in classrooms, need to be handled sensitively and carefully. Parents with questions or issues about school policy or practice should be referred directly to the class teacher, the Learning Support teacher or the Principal. This applies to direct face to face communication or indirect telephone communication.

Staff Meetings

The Special Needs Assistants will be required to attend Staff Meetings when issues of relevance to their own particular work or whole school issues are up for discussion.

Hours of Work

The full time SNA is expected to work the normal working school day. In addition the SNAs are required to be available for 72 Croke Park hours as directed by the principal/deputy principal.

Brief Absences

The welfare and the educational needs of the pupils shall take precedence over all other considerations and absences should be kept to a minimum. (*Circular 0032/2010*)

Training

Regular training is provided for SNAs when appropriate. This may coincide with in-service days for mainstream staff or is availed of when appropriate courses become available through the local Education Centre.

Success Criteria

. We will know that the Policy is achieving its aims when

- Children with Special Needs are included in selected whole school activities without disruption to mainstream class procedures
- Children are experiencing a safe and stimulating environment.
- The Special Needs children are becoming independent learners and acquiring life skills
- The Special Needs child is reaching the targets set out in Support Plans
- Parents are happy with the care and educational progress of their child.

Implementation

The plan is implemented by the principal, teachers and Special Needs Assistant and supported by the Board of Management.

Ratification and Review

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on _____

It is implemented forthwith

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Chairperson, Board of Management

Review: September/October 2020