

# SN Iorball Sionnaigh Urbleshanny NS Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) Policy and Guidelines



SNAs are appointed by the Board of Management after the allocation of SNA posts/hours for our school by the NCSE. Depending on the cumulative number of hours allocated to the school they may be appointed on a full-time or part-time basis.

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 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, 0071/2011, 0030/2014

## **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 how we work in Urbleshanny NS.

### **Aims**

- To facilitate the recognition 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 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/SET Coordinator 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
- Timetabling of SNAs
- Promoting in-service training.
- School Support Plus Plan meetings in consultation with all relevant parties including the parents, SNA, class teacher, SET and principal.
- Organising records for pupils with SNA access (for example, frequency charts)
- Creating folders in the shared drive for SNAs to record their notes and observations.
- Managing areas of conflict that may arise.

#### **Special Education Teachers**

- The SET may liaise with the SNA to advise them of strategies/resources that may be helpful for the pupil.

#### **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

- Assign tasks that will benefit the SEN pupil that may be undertaken by the SNA when time is available (Haddington Road hours), for example: displaying the pupil's work, organising resources, photocopying work for the pupil (this work should not be carried out during the pupil's SNA access time)

### **SNAs**

- There are 5 SNAs presently employed in the school. They are considered an essential 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
- The teacher plans lessons and directs learning. The SNA provides support in assisting the pupil 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**

<b>Hours of Work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A full time SNA is paid for 32 hours per week and a part-time SNA is expected to work the number of hours outlined by the NCSE. The SNA is required to work normal classroom hours and in addition to attend before and after school in order to help with the preparation and tidying of classrooms.</li> <li>● In addition the SNA must be available for an additional 72 hours (Public Service Agreement, Haddington Road Agreement) per year outside of the normal school year. The execution of these hours is at the discretion of the Board of Management in consultation with the Principal and SNAs.</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 the Principal and SET Co-ordinator at the start of the year. SNA break time is 10:45am to 11:05am and lunch is 12:25pm to 12:45pm. One SNA on rotation will cover the breaks in Lus na Gréine.</li> <li>● As part of the SNA contract, SNAs are required to supervise the playground each morning from 8:46am and spend ten minutes each evening tidying and organising the classroom.</li> <li>● The class teacher will give the SNA a copy of the class timetable also pointing out where the child will work with class or at their own level during the day. Suitable times for time-outs/sensory breaks will also be identified.</li> </ul>

<b>Planning and Reporting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The SNA should document progress and modify targets made on a given time period i.e. 2 months. This plan should also record any incidents where the care needs of the child are evident.</li> <li>● A copy of this SNA's plan is shared with SET, the principal and the teacher.</li> <li>● Time for the teachers involved with a pupil to meet with the SNA re. planning should be organised biannually. Teachers will outline expectations for the child and SNA and draw up a School Support Plan (Care Plan and Behavioural Plan (if necessary)).</li> <li>● A copy of the Care Plan is shared with the teacher, SETs, principal and SNA.</li> <li>● SNAs must refer all matters on curriculum, classroom management, discipline or incidents of concerns etc. to the classroom teacher and/or SEN co-ordinator/principal.</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 toileting/changing for PE etc. while encouraging independence c/f Intimate Care Policy</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>
<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 gate 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</li> </ul>

	<p>in the first instance or the principal. This applies to direct face-to-face communication or indirect telephone communication. Parents should contact teachers for information on their child's progress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It is not appropriate for parents to have the 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 or Seesaw if used. Any major incidents should be reported to the teacher.</li> </ul>
<b>Seating Arrangements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A SNA should only sit with a child with SEN when and where deemed necessary by the class teacher</li> <li>● Allow some time during day where child doesn't have SNA sitting with him or her</li> <li>● Avoid blocking view of another child</li> <li>● SNA should have their own chair and table not beside the child.</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. After lunch SNA should assist pupils to form a line on the yard outside the classroom door and await the teacher. On wet days, SNAs should return to their base classroom.</li> <li>● The SNA should not 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.</li> <li>● Be mindful of the danger of a child absconding.</li> </ul>
<b>Regulation/Sensory Breaks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Regulation/Sensory breaks should happen as and when needed 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.</li> <li>● Teachers should be informed of what's happening and of progress being made.</li> <li>● Working one-on-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.</li> </ul>
<b>Medication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The school's Administration of Medicines Policy should be understood and followed at all times</li> <li>● Administer medication discreetly in the classroom</li> <li>● Only prescribed medication should be given</li> <li>● Store all medicines appropriately in line with our Health and Safety Policy.</li> </ul>

**Relevant work**

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:

- Preparation and tidying up of classrooms
- Assisting 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 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
- Assisting on out-of-school visits, walks, examinations and similar activities.
- Accompanying and supervising their assigned pupil on swimming outings
- Where direct assistance is needed to change into swimming gear, this should have formed part of the pupil's Care Plan and agreed with parents.
- 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 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. (Special needs assistants may not act as either substitute or temporary teachers.

	<p>In no circumstances may they be left in sole charge of a class or group of children).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Participation with school improvement planning, where appropriate, and co-operation 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 class 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 class when special needs pupils are absent or when particular urgent work demands arise.</li> <li>● Work carried out during ‘Haddington Road’ hours should be related to SEN provision in the school.</li> <li>● Escorting children to and from Lus na Gréine</li> </ul>
<b>Staff Meetings</b>	<p>SNAs may be required to attend Staff Meetings when issues of relevance to their own work are up for discussion. The principal or deputy principal or SEN coordinator will have a structured staff meeting with the SNAs at least once per term. On days of In-Service, SNAs are required to attend school to complete tasks laid out by class teachers/principal.</p>

### **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 must have direct responsibility for particular 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.

### **Seniority**

The sequence in which SNAs are appointed to the school determines their seniority. Seniority is important in determining which SNAs 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 an SNA's date of commencement as an SNA in the school. Notice of this is posted in the staffroom annually.

**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 the School Support Plan

**Ratification and Review**

This plan was updated and formally ratified by the Board of management on Dec 4th 2024.

It will be reviewed every three years or earlier on foot of DE circulars..

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson, BoM

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

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Príomhoide

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