Special Needs Assistant Policy

This policy has been completed 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, most recently 0071/2011 and 0030/2014.

**Rationale**

The policy was formulated:

* To provide all staff and parents with clear guidelines and expectations regarding the roles and responsibilities of the SNA within the school.
* To ensure that SNAs see themselves as important and valued members of the school community, contributing positively to the learning experiences of the children with additional needs and the overall efficiency of the school.
* To recognise the SNAs as being a huge resource of tremendous value to the school.
* Through flexibility and teamwork, to optimise the contribution of the SNA team to the school.

**Aims**

* To empower the SNAs to promote the inclusive culture of our school.
* To ensure the effective deployment of SNAs in the school so they can best support the children with additional needs.
* To provide opportunities for the SNAs to enhance the social skills and self esteem of the pupils with additional needs.
* To enable the SNAs to support the work of the class teachers.
* To clarify the tasks and duties to be undertaken by the SNAs.
* To foster the continuance of professional development amongst the SNAs

**Staff Roles**

The Principal / Deputy Principal has:

* Responsibility for assigning role specific and child specific tasks to the SNA in association with the class teacher.
* Responsibility for Monitoring the effectiveness of the SNA’s contribution to the needs of the designated children and modifying where necessary.
* Responsibility for the provision of professional development training as the need arises.
* To meet with SNAs periodically to check in with the progress of Children with additional needs and to ensure that everything is running smoothly.

**Teachers**

The mainstream teachers will have an input through:

* Collaborating with the SNAs so that their tasks and responsibilities are clearly defined.
* Collaborating with the SNAs so that meaningful inclusion is facilitated for children with additional needs.
* Assigning classroom tasks to be undertaken by the SNA in order to promote the smooth running of the classroom.
* Devising a Timetable and a Personal Pupil Plan in collaboration with the SNA and for each of their assigned pupils.

Special Education Teachers will have an input through:

* Linking in with and assigning tasks to the SNAs so that they can help their assigned children to achieve the targets of their IEPs
* Sourcing and providing appropriate resources for the SNAs to work with their assigned children.
* Collaborating with class teachers and SNAs when devising the care plan for children with SNA access.

**The role of the SNA**

The role of the SNA is as follows:

* Assistance with feeding: where a child with special needs requires adult assistance and where the extent of assistance required would severely disrupt normal teaching time.
* Administration of medicine: .where a child requires adult assistance to administer medicine and where the extent of assistance required would overly disrupt normal

teaching time.This will only apply following appropriate training, written parental consent and the drawing up of an individual care plan for each pupil.

* Assistance with toileting and general hygiene: (including catheterisation) where a child with special needs cannot independently self-toilet, and until such time as they are able to do so
* Assistance with mobility and orientation: on an ongoing basis including assisting a child or children to access the school, the classroom, with accessing school transport (where provided, school Bus Escorts should, in the first instance, assist a child to access school transport), or helping a child to avoid hazards in or surrounding the school.
* Assisting teachers to provide supervision in the class, playground and school grounds: at recreation, assembly, and dispersal times including assistance with arriving and departing from school for pupils with special needs.
* Non-nursing care needs, associated with specific medical conditions: such as frequent epileptic seizures or for pupils who have fragile health.
* Care needs, requiring frequent interventions including withdrawal of a pupil from a classroom when essential: This may be for safety or personal care reasons, or where a child may be required to leave the class for medical reasons or due to distress on a frequent basis.
* Assistance with moving and lifting of children, operation of hoists and equipment.
* Assistance with severe communication difficulties including enabling curriculum access for pupils with physical disabilities or sensory needs and those with significant, and identified social and emotional difficulties. Under the direction of the teacher, this might include assistance with assistive technology equipment, typing or handwriting, supporting transition, assisting with supervision at recreation, dispersal times etc.
* Preparation and tidying of workspaces and classrooms or assisting a child who is not physically able to perform such tasks to prepare and tidy a workspace, to present materials, to display work, or to transition from one lesson activity to another. To assist with cleaning of materials.
* Assistance with the development of Personal Pupil Plans for children with special educational needs, with a particular focus on developing a care plan to meet the care needs of the pupil concerned and the review of such plans.
* Assist teachers in maintaining a journal or care monitoring system for pupils including details of attendance and care needs. Assist in preparation of school files and materials relating to care and assistance required in class by students with special needs.
* Assistance to attend or participate in out of school activities: swimming, walks, cycles or visits, where such assistance cannot be provided by teaching staff.
* Planning for activities & classes where there may be additional care requirements associated with particular activities.
* Liaising with Class Teachers, SETs & Principal, attending meetings with Parents, SENO, NEPS Psychologists, or school staff meetings with the agreement & guidance of class Teacher/Principal.Preventing the child from harming self
* Preventing the child from harming him/herself, other children or staff.
* Preventing the child from destroying property.
* Careful supervision of the child to prevent the child from climbing / squeezing into tight spaces etc...
* Supervising the child who is a flight risk
* Accompanying the child to and from Learning Support.
* Removing the child from whole school activities, if the child becomes distressed / overwhelmed
* Removing the child from the classroom when meltdowns occur
* Assisting the class teacher to raise the alarm if dangerous situations occur (children cannot be left alone)
* Assisting the class teacher to comfort other children who are injured / frightened by explosive behaviour
* To promote the inclusion of children with additional needs in mainstream work and keep them on task. The SNA may assist the teachers to ensure the delivery of both class teaching and additional teaching to children with additional needs.
* To escort groups of children from one part of the school to another or to escort them to the reception area if they are being picked up by parents outside of normal dismissal times.
* To supervise their assigned children during break-times, at morning arrival/assembly and at home time dispersal.They must always be aware of their assigned child/children when they are in the yard or in the classroom on wet days.
* The SNA is responsible for supervising children under his/her care who travel by bus as they make their way from the bus to the school in the morning and vice versa at home time.
* To enable their assigned child/children to become more independent.
* To assist their assigned children socially in the playground. To assist with the social and emotional wellbeing of their assigned children.To listen to the concerns and anxieties of their assigned children where appropriate and to help them destress.
* To assist other teachers other than those classes to which she is assigned. These duties are at the discretion of the Principal.
* In the case where the SNA has a number of children under his/her care, time in the relevant classrooms must be shared in proportion to the needs of the child.
* To support the work of outside agencies such as speech therapists and psychologists under the guidance of the class teacher.
* SNAs should be deployed by schools in a manner which best meets the care support requirements of the children enrolled in the school for whom SNA support has been allocated. It is a matter for schools to allocate the support as required, and on the basis of individual need, which allows schools flexibility in how the SNA support is utilised. (Circular 30/2014)
* An SNA is an important whole school resource. SNAs participate fully in the life of the school and may therefore also assist other children in the school, who from time to time need assistance, or who have intermittent care needs, but who may not have been assessed as requiring SNA support on a permanent basis. (Circular 30/2014)
* SNA duties are assigned at the discretion of the Principal, or another person acting on behalf of the Principal, and/or the Board of Management of a school or VEC in accordance with Circular 0071/2011. The work of SNAs should, at the principal or teachers direction, be focussed on supporting the particular care needs of the student with special educational needs and should be monitored on an ongoing basis and modified accordingly. (Circular 30/2014)
* To be familiar with relevant policies:
* Covid Response Plan
* Child Safeguarding Statement
* SNA policy
* Administration of medicine
* Code of Behaviour
* Supervision Plan
* Anti-bullying policy
* Acceptable Use Policy
* To maintain a folder containing
* timetable,
* log of actions/ daily record
* Croke Park record.
* The SNAs will devise a Personal Pupil Plan in collaboration with the Class teacher and the SET. Each plan should include time-bound targets for the development of independence skills. These will be attainable targets and can be entered into the PPP template in the window provided. Once targets have been achieved new targets will be devised by the SNA in collaboration with the class teacher and the SET. This work will be done during Croke Park time when necessary but at least once per term.
* Sensory/movement breaks for designated pupils at the discretion of the class teacher.
* To fulfil Croke Park hour obligations as set out in DES Circular through
* attending staff meetings as required
* attending planning meetings with Class teacher and SET
* creating learning resources for their assigned children
* presentation of work by their assigned children
* attending relevant courses courses at the discretion of the Principal
* attending out of school activities and religious ceremonies outside school hours
* other duties/activities at the discretion of the Principal
* The SNA should recognise the rules of confidentiality which govern his/her role as a member of the school staff.

**Times and Timetables**

Full time SNAs work the same school day as teachers. SNAs who work an infant day (0.83 of a post) work for one hour less than the school day. SNAs who work half a day (0.5 of a post) work 15 hours per week. As part of the SNA contract all SNAs are required to spend an extra 10/15 minutes each morning and evening preparing, organising and tidying the classroom and helping with the reception and dispersal of pupils. The Covid 19 Response Plan requires greater responsibility for cleaning and sanitising. Should the child under the SNA’s care be absent, the Principal will re-assign the SNA to support another child with special needs.

All SNAs have a contractual requirement of an additional 72 hours (pro-rata for part-time SNAs, 60 hours for 0.83 of a post and 32 hours for 0.5 of a post ) which can be used by schools as an additional bank of hours to be utilised and delivered outside of normal school opening hours and/or the normal school year.

**Supervision**

The SNAs will assist the teachers supervising the yard during break/lunch times and in the morning and at home time. This includes supervising certain classes on wet days within the school building.

Their duty of care is to the special needs child/children at all times. However, they can provide valuable assistance to the teacher on supervision duty.

If the class teacher leaves the room at any stage, the classroom door should remain open and the SNA will assist with the supervision of the class under the authority of the neighbouring teacher who will be requested to have his/her door open and to pop in and out as often as necessary until the class until the teacher returns.

**Covid 19 Response Plan**

As Part of our Covid 19 Response Plan the following changes have been made to SNA practice in our school:

* In the event of school closure SNAs are requested to engage with their pupil/s remotely.
* To assist the class teachers with increased levels of hand washing, sanitising and cleaning.
* To assist their assigned children with correct use of their face coverings.

**Meetings**

The SNAs may be required to attend part of staff meetings when issues of relevance to their own particular work is up for discussion. The Principal will have regular discussions with the SNAs in order to determine progress of child/children under his/her care or to discuss any other relevant issues. SNAs will have regular meetings (at least once a term) with the class teacher and the SET to review and set targets and strategies on the care plan for all children with SNA access. SNAs will usually be required to attend IEP meetings and reviews.

**Implementation and Review**

The plan will be implemented by the teachers and SNAs and supported by the BOM and will be reviewed in March 2024.

**Ratification**

This policy was reviewed by the ISMT, teachers, SET team, SNAs and parents in February 2022 and will be presented to the Board of Management at the next meeting

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Chairperson of Board of Management) (Principal)

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

Date of next review: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_\_