



Special Needs Assistant Policy

Scoil Mhichil Special Needs Assistant 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)

The Special Needs Assistant works under the direction of the teacher. They provide support for the pupil, the teacher, the curriculum and the school.

1. Support for the Pupil

SNAs are employed with specific responsibilities for pupils with special educational/ care needs. The whole principle of inclusion adopted by this school means that a child who has a physical or learning disability or care need(s) should be helped and encouraged to work in the company of other children.

2. Support for the Teacher

This involves the SNA in being of general assistance to the class teacher, under the direction of the Principal in carrying out duties of a non-teaching nature. Support for the teacher may involve him/her carrying out a number of tasks such as escorting groups of young children to work areas outside the classroom, preparation and tidying up of class, accompanying the child to the hall for P.E. and other activities and to assist the pupil to access all areas of the curriculum etc (See Role and Responsibilities).

3. Support for the Curriculum

This involves supporting teaching, to help pupils access all areas of the curriculum, including P.E. and IT.

4. Support for the School

SNAs are part of a team which is involved in translating policy into practice in order to further the aims of the school.



The Role of the Class Teacher

The SNA always works under the direction of the class teacher and Principal. 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. He/she works under the direction of the teacher / and or Principal whether in the whole class situation, with a small group of pupils or an individual.

For the SNA to work most effectively, it is important to define his/ her responsibilities clearly. He/ she also needs to be aware of the standards of behaviour expected and what the pupils are expected to learn in a given class. He/ she needs to know what the school's and class teacher's expectations are in terms of the individual pupil's progress. He/s he should be made fully aware of pupil's Special Educational Needs and what they entail. The SNA should have access to professional reports, subject to parental permission. He/ she should be given relevant information on the needs and attainments of his/ her assigned pupil(s) and on the special educational provision being made for them. SNAs may well have important suggestions to make to IEPs and Reviews and will be consulted as appropriate.

The Role of the SNA and Responsibilities

The role of the SNA is:

- To enable pupils to become more independent learners
- To promote the inclusion of children with Special Educational Needs into the fabric of school life at Scoil Mhichil
- To address the special care needs of the assigned pupil(s) in line with their care needs plan/ IEP
- To foster the participation of pupils in the social and academic processes of the school
- To help to raise standards of achievement for specific pupils.
- To work under the direction of teaching staff



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 independence and inclusion of those children in the mainstream class.
- Spotting early signs of bullying.
- Adhere to agreed school protocols during wet play time.

SNAs are expected to inform Class Teacher or Principal of any suspected instances of bullying.

- Helping the inclusion of all children.
- Promote the independence of all children.

He/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 as part of Active 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. He/ she can do this by repeating teacher’s instructions quietly to the SEN child. The SNA can assist the pupil’s organisational skills e.g. keeping correct books and material to hand; colour-coding items to help them to be found quickly etc.



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 restrictive 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, occupational 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 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 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.

- **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.

It is very important therefore, that the SNA recognises the rules of confidentiality which govern his/ 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/principal.

Parents with questions or issues about school policy or practice should be referred directly to the class teacher or Principal. This applies to direct face-to-face communication, emails or indirect telephone communication.

In Scoil Mhichil, the SNAs are deployed to work in classrooms under the direction of the Principal. The SNA is granted upon application of the principal by the S.E.N.O.(Special Educational Needs Organiser). The deployment of the SNA to specific duties or pupils in the school is under the direction of the Principal. Regular meetings take place between the SNAs and principal.

An SNA may be employed to work with a particular pupil, but it is our policy, in the best interests of the pupil, to rotate support staff regularly. The needs of the SNA have to be balanced with the needs of the pupil and the needs and resources of the school bearing in mind that the pupil should not develop dependence on the SNA. SNAs roles can be enhanced by working with different classes and year groups.

Where SNAs have special skills, these can be put to good use throughout the school.

Relevant training opportunities are provided, as is considered appropriate, and it is expected that all SNAs will take advantage of these opportunities.

Signatures:

Principal: *Mr. Richard Baxter*

Vice Chairperson, BOM: *Mrs. Eithne Duffy*

Ratified by BOM: 2nd March 2016