



Roll No: 11894I

Special Needs Assistant Policy

The Policy is guided by the relevant legislation such as The Education Welfare Act 2000 and EPSEN Act 2004 and Department of Education Circulars Assessment of Need Process under the Disability Act, and other relevant Circulars.

Rationale

This policy was formulated so that

- All staff, including Special Needs Assistants (SNA's) have clear guidelines on procedures within the school
- Each SNA can see themselves contributing positively to the learning experiences of the children and the overall efficiency of the school
 - A culture of fairness and equality is seen to be in operation throughout the school
- The appointment of Special Needs Assistants is by the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire, following sanction by the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO).

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 children with Special Needs and in the autism class
 - 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

Staff Roles

Principal:

The Principal has responsibility for

- Appointment of Special Needs Assistants in conjunction with the Selection Board/Board of Management
- Assigning role specific (mainstream, autism class) and child specific tasks to the SNA in association with the class teacher
- Joint responsibility for coordinating the integration of and devising the role profile of the SNA
- Joint responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of the SNA's contribution to the needs of designated children.
 - Informing Special Needs Assistants of any available in-service training
- Managing substitution of the SNA in the event of an SNA being absent from school

- Informing the Board of Management of any staff requests for Career Break/Carer's Leave, Job Sharing and unpaid leave
- Liaison with Medmark / Occupational Health as per Circular 0033/2010 - referrals as necessary
- Managing areas of conflict which may arise

Class, Set and Autism Class Teachers

Teachers will have an input through:

- Providing appropriate management of the classroom environment for the Special Needs Assistant and child within the classroom setting
- Collaboration with the Special Needs Assistant
- Devising a list of classroom tasks to be undertaken by the Special Needs Assistant during non-pupil contact hours, after the child(ren) go home.

The Role of the Special Needs Assistant – Implementation Procedure

Scoil Mhuire currently employs SNA's both in mainstream and in the Autism class. They are considered an important part of the school team and carry out duties as directed by the principal and class teacher. The SNA always works under the direction of the class teacher or SEN teacher. The teacher plans lessons and directs learning. The Special Needs Assistant provides support to the teacher and to the pupils.

The role and responsibilities of the SNA in Scoil Mhuire are as follows:

- To foster the participation of the 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 children with special needs in mainstream work and keeping them on tasks.
- The SNA will also support the child(ren) with Special Needs by escorting the child/children to work in areas outside the classroom, looking after their care needs, bringing children for inclusion activities in mainstream classes, etc.
- The SNA will supervise their assigned children in the yard during break times. They must be aware at all times of the position of their assigned child/children in the yard. SNA's will also assist in the inclusion of their assigned children through supervision of organised play.
- The SNA is to be aware of the school's Intimate Care Policy and follow it in assisting children with Special Needs.
- The SNA will help to enable assigned pupils to become more independent learners.
- Support for the pupils is achieved through the involvement of the SNA in individual support for the child, support in paired work/group work and in classroom activities, and in keeping records as directed by the class teacher to record the individual pupil's progress.
- It is the policy of the school to rotate SNA's between Special Needs Pupils in mainstream and Autism class settings.
- The SNA can also play an important role in supporting the work of outside agencies such as Speech Therapists and Occupational Therapists, under the guidance of the class teacher.
- The SNA will also be required 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 and toileting and general hygiene.
- The SNA will, when deemed appropriate, give input at meetings with the classroom/special class teacher and the parents/guardians of the child/children with Special Educational Needs in conjunction with the principal. The SNA may also be invited to meetings with outside agencies such as NEPS, Enable Ireland, Occupational Therapists etc.

Recruitment Procedures

The recruitment procedures for the appointment of Ancillary Staff (SNA's) to Scoil Mhuire is as follows:

- The post is advertised
- The nature of the post is stated, and the applicant is asked to supply references/referee
- 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 but may agree a shorter time with individual applicants called to interview where it is deemed necessary.
- Agreed 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 of Management with

1. A Medical Certificate
2. A Garda Clearance Certificate (Garda Vetting)
3. A Statutory Declaration

On Appointment

On appointment, each SNA is required to:

- Sign a contract of employment
- Supply school administration with PPSN number, contact numbers and address
- Become familiar with circulars issued by the Department of Education regarding sick leave, maternity leave, leave of absence etc.
- Become familiar with policies of the school, including Child Safeguarding, Intimate Care Policy and other policies as developed from time to time.
- Sign the Department of Education appointment form

Classroom Procedure

- Pupils must address the SNA in a respectful manner.
- The SNA must refer all matters on Curriculum, parent/guardian requests for progress reports, classroom management, discipline etc to the class 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 or in the Yard should be handled confidentially, sensitively and carefully. Parents/guardians with questions or issues about school policy or practice should be referred directly to the class teacher in the first instance.

Contract of Employment

The SNA's in Scoil Mhuire are not specifically assigned to an individual child but rather to the school as a whole. The school operates a 'last in first out' policy in the event of a SNA post being suppressed. However, it must be noted that all positions are up for regular review by the Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO) and must follow guidelines imposed by the Department of Education, the Board of Management, National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) and

Meetings

SNA's are required to attend the first hour of staff meetings. On days of staff In-Service, ancillary staff may be required to attend school to complete tasks laid out under the direction of the Principal.

Hours of Work

The working hours of an SNA should be outlined in their agreed contract of employment and amended as necessary in accordance with circulars issued by the Minister for Education. Additional working hours for SNA's outside of the normal school hours should be agreed in consultation with the Principal and Board of Management.

Training

SNA's are informed regularly of appropriate training, when appropriate courses become available through the local Education Centre, Special Education Support Services (SESS), PDST and through any outside agencies e.g. HSE offering support.

Success Criteria

This Policy is geared to enhancing the teaching and learning of children with Special Education Needs and those in the Autism Class. We will know that the Policy is achieving its aims when:

- Children with Special Education Needs are involved in meaningful inclusion
- Children with Special Education Needs are included in selected whole school activities.
- Children are experiencing a safe and stimulating environment.
- Children with Special Needs are acquiring life skills and being encouraged to become more independent in their self-help skills, life skills and learning.

Implementation and Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in January 2024. It will be reviewed every 4 years and/or as changes arise that suggest the need for review.



Josephine Henry, Chairperson

Date: 3/2/2024