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## CULLINA NS – SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANTS (SNAs) January 2019

This Policy has been produced with input from the SNAs, Board of Management and Teaching Staff and is guided by the relevant legislation such as The Education Welfare Act 2000 and the EPSN Act 2004 and DES Circulars 07/02, 08/03, 24/03, 13/04, 02/05

SNAs are appointed by the Board of Management subsequent to the allocation of SNA hours by the SENO. All SNAs, whether full-time or part-time, will be required to sign a contract which lays out the terms and conditions of their employment.

### 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 Cullina National School.

### Aims

- To facilitate the recognition of SNAs as valuable members of staff in a whole school context
- To enable the SNA to be an effective support to the class teacher
- To clarify the tasks and duties to be undertaken by the SNA
- To ensure accountability and effective record keeping.

### Staff Roles

#### The Principal has responsibility for

- Assigning role specific and child specific tasks to the SNA in association with the class teacher
- Clarifying and Monitoring the appropriate role of the SNA
- Monitoring the effectiveness of the SNAs contribution to the needs of designated children
- Promoting CPD for SNAs. The Board of Management will organise CPD for SNAs on days the school is closed for Teacher CPD
- Managing areas of conflict which may arise, with the assistance of the Deputy Principal.

### **Special Educational Teachers**

- Assume responsibility for IEPs in consultation with all relevant parties including the parents, SNA, class teacher and principal.

### **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 preparing a Personal Pupil Plan (PPP)
- Devise a list of classroom tasks to be undertaken by the SNA when time is available e.g. 10 minutes before/after school, Croke Park Hours etc.

### **SNAs**

- There are 9 SNAs presently employed in the school. They are considered an important part of the school team and carry out duties of a **non teaching** nature (care needs)
- The SNA always works under the direction of the class teacher or Principal
- 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 policy, 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>The full time SNA is expected to work 32 hours per week and the part-time SNA is expected to work pro-rata. In addition 12 additional days per year outside of the normal school year must be worked or 72 hours.</li> </ul>
<b>Confidentiality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Due discretion is expected in all matters of a confidential nature. All notes will be securely stored</li> </ul>
<b>Times and Timetables</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As part of the SNA contract, SNAs are required to spend ten minutes each morning and evening preparing, tidying and organising the classroom. SNAs also work 12 days /72 hours outside of the school calendar. This is on a pro rata basis for part-time SNAs.</li> <li>Class teacher will identify suitable times for the SNA to accompany a child on movement breaks</li> </ul>
<b>Planning and Reporting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SNA should document progress. They should also record any incidents where the care needs of the child are evident.</li> <li>A copy of this SNA's PPP plan (written with the class teacher) should be given to SET, Principal and Teacher.</li> <li>Time for the teacher to meet with the SNA re. planning should be organised once a month after school. Teacher should outline expectations for child and SNA.</li> <li>SNA must refer all matters on curriculum, classroom management, discipline or incidents of concerns etc. to the classroom teacher</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> </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 can only be used to protect a pupil from harm to themselves or others</li> <li>Help where necessary with changing for PE etc. while encouraging independence</li> <li>Actions of affection from a child towards an SNA should be handled sensitively but also <b>appropriately</b></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>At the end of the school day, escort the child to the school gate to</li> </ul>

	<p>their parent or to the bus escort</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is helpful to chat about upcoming events but do not pass on information regarding child's educational progress, behaviour etc</li> <li>• Parents with questions, requests or concerns regarding school policy or practice should be referred directly to the class teacher or the Principal. This applies to direct face- to face communication or indirect telephone communication. Parents should contact teachers for information on the child's progress.</li> <li>• It is not appropriate for parents to have a 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. 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</li> <li>• Avoid blocking view of another child</li> <li>• SNA should also have their own chair and table (where space permits) which is not beside the child.</li> </ul>
<b>Supervision</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervision in the yard should promote social interaction and inclusion. After lunch SNA should assist pupils to form a line in the yard and await the teacher.</li> <li>• The SNA should never 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 danger of a child absconding.</li> </ul>
<b>Movement Breaks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Movement Breaks should follow a specific timetable to be most effective. The content should be worked out with the help from the Occupational Therapist in conjunction with the teacher and a specific programme should be followed.</li> <li>• Teacher should be informed of what's happening and of progress being made</li> <li>• Working one to 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. Due to short span of concentration movement breaks are necessary daily and should last 10 minutes.</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 and record in the medicine book</li> <li>• Only prescribed medication should be given</li> <li>• Store all medicines appropriately</li> </ul>
<b>Relevant work</b>	<p>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 previously taught by the class teacher. Other duties assigned by the class teacher may include any of the following:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation and tidying up of classrooms</li> <li>• Assisting school children to board and alight from school buses.</li> <li>• Special assistance as necessary for children with particular difficulties e.g. helping special needs pupils with typing, writing, computers or other use of equipment</li> <li>• Assisting children to stay on task, follow classroom procedures and interact appropriately</li> <li>• Assisting children in establishing and maintaining a consistent routine</li> <li>• Assisting children to build self-esteem and to develop independence</li> <li>• Assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene and being mindful of health and safety needs of the pupil.</li> <li>• Assisting on out-of-school visits, walks and similar activities.</li> <li>• Accompanying and supervising their assigned pupil on swimming outings</li> <li>• Promoting the importance of personal hygiene and report any difficulties to the class teacher.</li> <li>• Assisting the teachers in the supervision of pupils during assembly, and dispersal from the classroom for one reason or another.</li> <li>• Accompanying individuals or small groups who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom for one reason or another.</li> <li>• 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. In no circumstances may they be left in sole charge of a class or group of children).</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 grade as 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 grade when special needs pupils are absent or when particular urgent work demands arise.</li> </ul>
<b>Staff Meetings</b>	<p>SNAs may be required to attend Staff Meetings when issues of relevance to their own particular work are up for discussion. The Principal will have a structured staff meeting with SNAs before the commencement of the school year and as necessary after that. On days of In-Service, SNAs will be required to attend school to complete tasks laid out by class teachers/Principal or attend CPD training</p>

## **Developing the Role of the SNA**

- It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that the SNA is clear about where help is needed. Planning together is essential
  - Daily recording notes are essential
  - So that children do not build an unhealthy dependency on the SNA it is desirable that the SNA, rather than work exclusively with one child, should work with the whole group of children around the designated child's table. In that way several children in the classroom get the benefit of the SNA's support.
  - SNAs duties may include shadowing the child while in the playground and helping him to make his way in and out of the school.
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- On days when the teaching staff are attending In-service courses, SNAs will report for work as usual. They will be assigned duties to help the classroom organisation of the absent teachers i.e. preparation of classroom displays, organisation of the classroom libraries, preparation of teaching equipment, photocopying, attending CPD etc

## **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 and NCSE.

## **Seniority**

The sequence in which special need assistants are appointed to the school determines their seniority. Seniority is important in determining which special need assistant(s) 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 special need assistants' date of commencement of duty as an SNA in a school.

## **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 Individual Education Plans.

### **Ratification and Review**

**This plan was formally ratified by the Board of management on January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

**It will be reviewed every 2 years.**

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

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

**Paul Neary Chairperson**