

**Special Needs Assistant Policy**

**2021+**

**Board of Management**

**Scoil Bhríde Nurney**

**2021+**



**Scoil Bhríde**

**Special Needs Assistant Policy**

The need for this policy is for the inclusion and clarification of the role of Special Needs Assistants (SNA'S) into Scoil Bhríde Nurney County Kildare.

The Policy was devised 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 D.E.S Circulars 07/02, 08/03, 24/03, 13/04, 02/05, 30/2014, 41/2015. All matters regarding the SNA scheme are driven by Department of Education policy and best practice guidelines from the NCSE, which the school is obliged to follow. For more information on the SNA scheme please visit the National Council for Special Education website and the Department of Education website.

**Rationale**

The policy was formulated so that

* All staff, including the SNAs have clear guidelines on procedures within the school
* Each SNA can see themselves as 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
* To address issues such as seniority and suppression of posts.

**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 Special Needs Child.
* To enable the SNA to be an effective support to the class teacher
* To provide optimum learning experiences for all children through judicial 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 assigning role specific and child specific tasks to the SNA in association with the class teacher
* Direct responsibility for 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
* Responsibility for the provision of in-service training
* Set tasks to be completed when the children are not in school
* Managing areas of conflict which may arise, with the assistance of the Deputy Principal/a member of the ISM team

**SEN Teachers**

* Identify the appropriate tasks to be completed by the SNAs, with the approval of the class teacher
* Ensure SNA support is available for those who need it in a class situation and when integrating into mainstream (in line with SENO and best practice and Department circular recommendations)
* Assume responsibility for IEPs in consultation with all relevant bodies, including the SNAs

**Class Teachers**

The class teacher will be responsible for:

* Providing suitable work for the SNA to engage in.
* Planning for the term or the year with the SNA in relation to the designated child and other duties. This planning meeting will take place by the end of September every year.
* A copy of this plan will be put in the class teacher's planning folder, given to the SNA and given to the Principal.
* A timetable may be drafted for the SNA if required.
* Providing a suitable seating arrangement for SNA/Special Needs child in the mainstream setting
* Collaboration with the SNA
* All communication with parent(s)/guardian(s)

**The Role of the SNA – Implementation Procedure**

In Scoil Bhríde Nurney an

* **In line with Department of Education guidelines an SNA is assigned as a resource to the whole school, not just to a specific child, to meet the primary care needs of children identified by the SENO.**
* The SEN co-ordinator/principal will ensure a clear and focused timetable for the efficient and effective use of the SNA resource is drawn up in line with Department of Education guidelines.
* SNA is considered an important part of the school team and may 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 to the teacher and through this to the pupils and to the teaching of the curriculum.

The role and responsibilities of the SNA in Scoil Bhríde Nurney is as follows:

* To assist the teacher in whatever way is necessary to help the child/children integrate as fully as possible into school life.
* To foster the participation of 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 these children in mainstream work
* It may also include tasks such as escorting groups of young children to work areas outside the classroom, boarding and alighting from buses, preparing gym equipment, assisting in P.E and Art classes etc.
* The SNA will supervise their assigned children during break times. They will be aware at all times of the position of their assigned children in the yard. They are expected to bring any early signs of bullying to the attention of either the class teacher or the Principal. Where appropriate the SNA will also assist in the inclusion of their assigned children.
* Regarding supervision, the SNA’s assist with supervision, but the chief responsibility lies with the supervising teacher and they must supervise all areas of the playground, or on a wet day, all rooms while on supervision.
* The SNA may administer aid in accordance with the school’s School Accident and Injury policy
* To enable pupils with SNA access to become more independent learners. The SNAs are encouraged to develop independence in these pupils through showing interest both in the classroom setting and at play. The school does not encourage the ‘Velcro model’ whereby a student is assigned to a particular SNA for a prolonged period of time. If applicable it is the policy of the school to rotate SNAs between selected Special Needs Pupils.
* The SNA can also play an important part by 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, toileting and general hygiene.
* To help to raise standards of achievement of all pupils. This form of support for pupils is achieved through being involved at whole class level in activities that can support the teacher such as listening to reading, assisting with art, games and P.E and preparing classroom materials, once all the other priority care needs of the school are met.
* Children should not be allowed to see the SNA as “a court of appeal” if, for instance the teacher does not give them the response they want.
* Every effort should be made to maintain our Special needs children in their classrooms for the full school day. In exceptional cases of gross misbehaviour or emotional trauma, where this seriously impacts on the learning of the other children, the child should be withdrawn by the SNA for a brief period. The decision to withdraw rests with the teacher.
* SNA to be present at formal meetings (e.g. IEP meeting /staff meeting / staff development) if required.

**Recruitment Procedures**

The recruitment procedures for the appointment of ancillary staff (SNAs) to Scoil Bhríde Nurney are as follows:

* The post is advertised on www.educationposts.ie
* The nature of the post is stated and the applicant is asked to supply references / referees
* The closing date is listed as 2 weeks after the insert of the advertisement
* The selection Board gives at least one weeks notice of interview
* Agreed criteria is 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 with:

1. *Fitness to Work Cert (MedMark)*
2. *Garda Clearance Cert*
3. *Signed Contract*
4. *Signed Confidentiality Clause*
5. *Statutory Declaration*
6. *Form of Undertaking*

**On Appointment**

On appointment, each SNA is required to:

* Sign a contract of employment and a Confidentiality Clause
* Supply school administration with P.P.S number, telephone number etc.
* Asked to become familiar with circulars detailing sick leave, maternity leave, leave of absence etc.
* Sign the D.E.S appointment form.

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| **Hours of Work** | **Full time post*** The full time SNA is expected to work 32 hours per week (and complete 72 Croke Park hours). This is the equivalent to 6.4 hours a day (6 hours 24 minutes). The hours of work for a full time SNA in Scoil Bhríde Nurney is from 9.05am to 3.15pm, which includes a 10 minute tea break (e.g. 10.40am to 10.50am) and lunch break (e.g. 12 to 12.30pm).

**Part time post (0.83)*** 0.83 of a SNA is expected to work 26.5 hours per week (and complete 60 Croke Park hours). This is the equivalent to 5.3 hours a day (5 hours 18 minutes). The hours of work for 0.83 of an SNA in Scoil Bhríde Nurney is from 9.05am to 2.15pm, which includes a 10 minute tea break (e.g. 10.40am to 10.50am) and lunch break (e.g. 12 to 12.30pm).
* Croke Park/Haddington Road hours are at the discretion of the Board of Management in consultation with the individual SNAs.
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| **Confidentiality** | * Due discretion is expected in all matters of a confidential nature.
* 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.
* SNAs may be closer to parents than teachers, as they may themselves be from the immediate community, and may, or might have been, themselves parents of pupils in the school. Some parents may therefore consider them more approachable than teachers.
* **It is very important therefore**, that the SNA recognises the rules of confidentiality which govern their 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.**
* Parents with information, questions or issues about school policy or practice should be referred directly to the class teacher or the SEN co-ordinator. This applies to direct face-to-face communication or indirect telephone communication. (It is not always appropriate for parents to have a phone number of a member of staff).
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| **Times and Timetables** | * SNAs will be given a timetable by the Principal at the start of the year where break times will be outlined.
* As part of the SNA contract, SNAs are required to spend fifteen minutes each morning and evening preparing, tidying and organising the classroom. SNAs also work 12 days outside the school calendar at the discretion of the Board of Management and Principal. This is on a pro rata basis for part-time SNAs.
* Class teacher will give the SNA a copy of class timetable also pointing out where the child will work with class or at own level during the day. Suitable times for time-outs will also be identified.
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| **Planning and Reporting** | * Any ongoing record keeping or care needs communication requested by parent(s)/guardian(s) as part of a pupil’s care needs, must have BOM approval by applying in writing to the BOM, outlining why it is necessary, with completed samples provided.
* All communication regarding a child’s care needs is to the class teacher. All responses may be from the class teacher or Principal.
* Time for the teacher to meet with the SNA re. planning should be organised once a term. Teacher should outline expectations for child and SNA.
* SNA must refer all communication and matters on curriculum, classroom management, discipline or incidents of concerns etc. to the classroom teacher
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| **Level and type of classroom assistance once all the school’s priority care needs are met.** | * Information received on children, and observations made in classrooms, need to be handled sensitively and carefully
* The focus will be on an “Enabling mode” and avoiding the “Velcro mode”
* Avoid over-talking and providing a ‘running commentary’ of what to do next – this allows the child to concentrate and think independently
* Explain how to do tasks but avoid giving the solution to a task or problem. Instead encourage the child come up with the answer by questioning and prompting.
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| **Physical contact** | * 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
* Physical contact may be required to protect a pupil from harm to themselves or others
* Help where necessary with changing for PE etc. while encouraging independence
* Actions of affection from a child towards an SNA should be handled sensitively but also appropriately
* 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.
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| **Parental contact** | * SNAs are encouraged to build a positive relationship based on trust with the parents of children with SEN
* If required as part of the care plan, at the end of the school day, escort the child to the school gate and hand the child over to the parent’s care.
* SNAs do not pass on information regarding the child’s progress. All communication on such matters is between the class teacher and the parent(s)/guardian(s).
* An SNA may ring a parent directly, with the approval of the class teacher, if they have emergency information regarding the child’s care or are seeking information of a technical, numerical nature.
* It is helpful to chat about how the day went or upcoming events but do not pass on information regarding child’s educational progress
* Parents with information, 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/Principal (i) for information on the child’s progress (ii) with any important information in relation to the child’s present or future care needs.
* It is not appropriate for parents to have a private phone number/email/social media access of a member of staff or to contact the SNA outside of school hours
* In May/June of each year a letter **[Appendix A]** will be sent from the school requesting parents of children with SNA access to furnish the school principal in writing with any important information in relation to the child’s present and future care needs for the coming school year.
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| **Seating Arrangements** | * A SNA should only sit with a child with SEN when and where deemed necessary by the class teacher
* Allow some time during day where child doesn’t have SNA sitting with him/her
* Avoid blocking view of another child
* SNA should also have their own chair and table not beside the child.
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| **Supervision** | * ***(for more detailed information on supervision please refer to the school’s “Supervision Policy”)***
* Supervise pupils from a distance if possible
* Supervision in the yard at break times 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.
* 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.
* During break times, each SNA (or another SNA if the assigned person is not available) will have direct responsibility for a particular child if resources allow. Class teachers do not assume a duty of care until 9.20am. Formal instruction of the primary curriculum and official school start time does not begin till 9.20am as school teaching staff do not begin formal instruction/work before that time, therefore anything before that time has no educational significance it is just for arrival and assembly (Just as much as going home time has no educational significance it is just for departing and dismissal). Please remember 9.10am to 9.20am is not part of the official school day. It is only a 10 minute ‘drop and go’ facility provided by the Board of Management for (a) parents/guardians who have but no choice to drop their children to school before school officially starts as they have to leave or (b) children who arrive on the school bus transport scheme before School officially starts. Please remember School only officially starts at 9.20am.
* In the event of disputed shared access to the schools SNA resource during this 10 minute ‘drop and go’ time of 9.10am to 9.20am, the schools SNA resource will be put into the school library/lobby/classroom for all to share until all teaching staff assume a duty of care at 9.20am. It is at this time that pupils are officially handed over to their class teacher.
* Be mindful of danger of a child absconding.
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| **Timeout Sessions** | * Time out sessions should follow a specific timetable 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.
* Teacher should be informed of what’s happening and of progress being made
* 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 timeouts are necessary daily and should last 10 minutes.
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| **Medication** | * The school’s Administration of Medicines Policy should be understood and followed at all times
* Administer medication discreetly in the classroom
* Only prescribed medication should be given
* Store all medicines appropriately in line with our Health and Safety Policy.
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| **Relevant work****(as per Department of Education guidelines; Priority will always be given to the school’s primary care needs first)** | * 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 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, specific parental consent must be received in writing.
* Promoting the importance of personal hygiene and report 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. In no circumstances may they be left in sole charge of a class or group of children).
* Participation with school improvement planning, where appropriate, and co-operation with any such changes with policies and practices arising from the school improvement process.
* Engagement with parents of special needs pupils in both formal and informal structures as required and directed by school management.
* The encouragement of good attendance and punctuality
* Acting as a positive role model for the children in their care
* 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.
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| **Staff Meetings** | 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 the SNAs at least once per term. On days of In-Service ancillary, SNAs may be required to attend school to complete tasks laid out by class teachers/Principal. It is the Policy of the school that all staff (mainstream and ancillary) takes lunch break together in the staff room when supervision and other duties allow. |

**Classroom Procedure**

* The pupils may address the SNA in a formal manner only
* The SNA will have a work station somewhere in the classroom.
* The SNA must refer all matters on curriculum, classroom management, discipline etc to the classroom teacher.
* SNAs should remain aware that confidentiality is of the utmost importance at all times.
* Supervise and assist specific pupils as requested by the class teacher.
* Assist pupils in focusing/organising themselves while commencing and preparing certain tasks.
* Keep informal class records under the guidance of the class teacher (e.g. a notebook to record daily care needs of the child(ren). Written reports may be required by the classroom teacher on individual children on a case by case basis
* Support the class in general during independent/group work/activities.
* Interaction with other adults during class teaching time/ independent or group activity should be kept to a minimum.
* If an SNA is absent for a certified length of time, every effort will be made to try and find a substitute.

Information received on children, and observations made in classrooms, need to be handled sensitively, carefully and confidentially.

Parents with questions or issues about 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. (It is not appropriate for parents to have a phone number of staff).

**Yard Duty *(for more detailed information on supervision please refer to the school’s “Supervision Policy”)***

The SNAs in Scoil Bhríde Nurney are not assigned to an individual child but rather to the school as a whole. However, from 9.10am and at break times, each SNA (or another SNA if the assigned person is not available) may have direct responsibility for a particular child, if resources allow. Priority will be given to those with the greatest primary care need. School management will endeavour to utilise, in as much as is reasonably possible, the SNA resources at its disposal where, after consultation, it sees the greater need. However, in the case of ‘shared SNA access’ i.e. where there is a demand (or disputed demand) to share an SNA resource between more than one child at break times or from 9.10am and management, after consultation, is unable to assign the SNA resource to one particular child, the SNA resource will remain inside at break times and from 9.10am, with the children, to allow for more effective supervision.

**Contract of Employment**

The SNAs in Scoil Bhríde Nurney 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 a particular child. It must be noted that all positions are up for regular review in association with the DES, the BOM, NEPS, and NCSE.

**Training**

Regular training is provided for SNAs when appropriate. This may coincide with in-service days for mainstream staff or is availed of when appropriate courses become available through the local Education Centre.

**Success Criteria**

This Policy is geared to making a difference to the teaching and learning of Special Needs Children in our school. We will know that the Policy is achieving its aims when

* Children with Special Needs are included in selected whole school activities without disruption to mainstream class procedures
* Children are experiencing a safe and stimulating environment
* The Special Needs children are becoming independent learners and acquiring life skills
* The Special Needs child is reaching the targets set out in Individual Education Plans

**[Appendix A]**

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

To: Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s) of children with SNA Access

As we draw to the end of what has been yet another busy academic school year the Board of Management is requesting parents of children with SNA access to furnish the school principal in writing with any new important information in relation to your child’s present and future care needs for the coming school year.

On the return to school if you wish to discuss your child’s care needs accessing the curriculum please feel free to make an appointment to speak to your child’s class teacher *(the class teacher may be ‘long serving’ or ‘new’ due to the recruitment policies of the Department of Education)* (or in the company of your child’s class teacher introduce yourself formally to our school’s SNAs) *(the SNAs may be ‘long serving’ or ‘new’ due to the recruitment policies of the Department of Education)* to discuss your child’s care needs accessing the curriculum, or you wish to speak to the principal regarding your child’s care plan, please feel free to make an appointment through the school office to arrange same. As Special Needs Co-ordinator, the Principal may sit in on all meetings. Due to staffing shortages, supervision obligations and space usage during school hours, meetings will generally happen over the phone for speed and convenience by prior arrangement. This will more than likely happen after 3pm Monday to Friday or during a lunch break or before school opens to the pupils.

This must be done on the return back at school and not before the Summer Closure as the school’s staffing arrangements may change over the Summer period due to personnel changes and the recruitment policies of the Department of Education, both of which the Board of Management has no control over.

Kind regards

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Chairperson

Board of Management

**Ratification of Special Needs Assistant Policy**

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

Chairperson of Board of Management Principal

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

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