

Scoil San Treasa, Mount Merrion, Co. Dublin.

Board of Management

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SNA DEPLOYMENT POLICY

Rationale:

This policy was formulated

- to provide all interested parties with clear guidelines and expectations with regard to the SNA role and responsibilities within the school.
- to assist in ensuring best practice with regard to the role of SNA, with specific reference to guidelines and directions from relevant authorities and agencies i.e. NCSE (National Council for Special Education) and DES (Department of Education and Skills).

Aims:

- to afford clarity around the role of the SNA
- to ensure the effective deployment of SNAs

Overview of Role of SNA:

- *"The Special Needs Assistant (SNA) scheme is designed to provide schools with additional adult support staff who can assist children with special educational needs who also have additional and significant care needs. Such support is provided in order to facilitate the attendance of those pupils at school and also to minimise disruption to class or teaching time for the pupils concerned, or for their peers, and with a view to developing their independent living skills."* (p.3, DES Circular 0030/2014). SNA support is provided specifically to assist schools *"to cater for the care needs of pupils with disabilities in an educational context, where the nature of these care needs have been outlined in professional reports as being so significant that a pupil will require adult assistance in order to be able to attend school and to participate in education."* (p.4, DES Circular 0030/2014) *"For a child to require or qualify for access to SNA support, a child must have an assessed disability. The care needs outlined must be of such significance that they are beyond that which would normally be expected to be provided to a child by the child's class teacher, support teacher, or other school teachers, or beyond the level of assistance which could be offered to the student by his/ or her fellow pupils in school. The care needs must also be those beyond which could normally be provided for by alternative supportive approaches or modifications of the classroom environment, teaching approaches and/or assistive technology or specialist equipment."* (p.5, DES Circular 0030/2014)
- *"The type of significant care needs that pupils may have can be varied, depending on the nature or level of the disability or sensory impairment that a child may have".* Circular 0030/2014. *Please refer to Appendix A of this document for further detail.*
- The Information Pamphlet for Parents/Guardians of Children/Young Persons with Special Educational Needs (SEN) – entitled 'Special Needs Assistant (SNA) Scheme' and available from the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is a useful source of information re the role of the SNA.

Deployment of SNAs within the school/Access to SNA support:

"SNAs are not allocated to individual pupils but to schools, as a school based resource, in the same manner that teachers are allocated to schools. The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) allocates a quantum of SNA support for each school annually, taking into account the care needs of all of the qualifying children enrolled in the school, and on the basis of the assessed need of all of the children concerned, rather than solely by reference to a pupil's disability categorisation. The provision of a quantum of support to schools gives schools the autonomy and flexibility to manage their allocation of SNA support in order to utilise this support to the best possible effect. It allows schools to target support to those pupils who have the greatest degree of need at any given time, recognising that the level of need that a child may have may be variable over time. The school is in a position to use their educational experience and expertise to manage the level of support which has been allocated to them to provide for the care needs of identified children as and when those needs arise and to provide access

- Role of Schools to Manage SNA Support: *“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 the individual need, which allows schools flexibility in how the SNA support is utilised.”* (p.15, DES Circular 0030/2014)
- In practice, the number of children for whom the NCSE has sanctioned SNA access in Scoil San Treasa vastly surpasses the number of SNAs allocated to the school. For example, in the school year 2014-15, the number of pupils listed for SNA access is approximately double the number of SNA posts sanctioned to the school. Taking into account a variety of factors including the needs of the pupils, the structure and nature of the school day, health and safety matters, timetabling challenges, the lay-out of the building and relevant employment legislation, and the overall allocation of SNAs to the school, SNAs will be deployed to address the identified needs of pupils in as fair a manner as is possible.
- The SNA always works under the direction of the class teacher or Principal. The resource/special education teacher may also give direction, in consultation with the class teacher.
- The SNA should be familiar with all relevant school policy, in particular the school Code of Behaviour, the Anti-Bullying Policy, and the Child Protection Policy.
- Due discretion is expected in all matters of a confidential nature.
- Bearing in mind that SNAs are not specifically assigned to an individual child but rather to the school as a whole, for practical and organisational reasons it will often be the case that SNAs will be more usually associated with specific children in the course of any term or year. However, rotations will be built into SNA assignment to pupils at least on an intermittent basis with a view to ensuring that all SNAs will ultimately have a degree of familiarity with the SNA needs of the various pupils in the school. This will be of benefit to individual children and to the school as a whole in the event of SNA absence, changes to the pattern of the day such as those associated with school tours and events or other circumstances that necessitate changes to overall timetabling and approaches.
- Should a child with whom the SNA is scheduled to work be absent, it is important that the parent advises the school in advance where possible, but in any event not later than 9am on the day of absence. This is to facilitate the rescheduling of that SNA’s duties and is in the interest of all. The relevant SNA should advise the principal or the deputy principal so that arrangements can be put in place in a timely way to allow other child/ren to benefit from the available time.
- Plans/arrangements re school tours and other such events should be made known to the Principal/Deputy Principal as early as possible to facilitate planning around SNA timetabling where warranted.
- *“The SNA scheme is designed to provide schools with additional adult support staff who can assist children with special educational needs who also have additional and significant care needs.*
 - *Their role is not to act as a constant personal assistant to individual children who need to be able to develop independent living skills and to associate independently with their classmates. Neither is the role of an SNA to act as an alternative teacher for children with special educational needs, who are required to be taught by the class teacher with additional support from resource/learning support teachers in schools.*
 - *Pupils will access the support of an SNA based upon their level of need, which can range from a requirement for brief periods during the day to most of the school day in some instances.*
 - *There are a relatively small number of children, who for medical or sensory reasons associated with their condition, require full time care support throughout the school day. For such children, access to full day support will be provided for and this will be reflected in the school quantum of SNA allocation. (Please note: such access will be afforded within the constraints of the overall SNA allocation to Scoil San Treasa).*
 - *The majority of children who have care needs, however, require attention and assistance at certain times of the school day and require intermittent intervention at particular points.*
 - *It is neither efficient nor beneficial for children to have a full time SNA assigned to them throughout the school day in circumstances where they do not require this level of support. A valuable resource may be wasted for much of the school day and pupils who need to develop independent living skills and intermingle independently with their class mates may be prevented from doing so.*
 - *Students who have care needs requirements are therefore granted access to SNA support, whereby a quantum of SNA support is allocated to a school, which is reflective of the*

assessed individual needs of a group of identified children. Those SNAs will then be in a position to cater for the care needs of those designated pupils, as the need arises, and as they require assistance, with the level of support being provided reflecting actual need at any given time.

- It is important to ensure that the presence of SNA support does not create over dependency, act as a barrier or intermediary between the student and class teacher or contribute to the social isolation of students by creating a barrier between the students and his/her peers.
- A key aspiration for pupils with special educational needs is that they will, on completion of their school-based education, be able to graduate as young independent adults in so far as this is possible. There is therefore a need to balance the support provided in schools with each pupil's right to acquire personal independence skills. As such, in order to give those pupils every opportunity possible to develop independent living skills, the assistive SNA support which is given to them should always be at the minimum level require to meet the care needs of the pupils." (pp.14-15, DES Circular 0030/2014)
- "An SNA is an important whole school resource". While "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." (p.15, DES Circular 0030/2014), the needs of children who are officially designated SNA access will take precedence.
- The SNA may be involved in appropriate record keeping in line with needs of pupils and in consultation with class teacher/s and principal teacher.
- In our planning around SNA deployment, it is important to be mindful of current and forthcoming circulars and regulations at national level. For example, "Schools applying for SNA support from the 2015/16 school year will be required to submit a Personal Pupil Plan for each pupil outlining the pupil's special care needs and showing how the SNA will be deployed to assist the pupil. The plan should demonstrate how the school intends to actively reduce, and where appropriate, eliminate dependency on SNA support within a reasonable timeframe. The plan should include time-bound targets for the development of independence skills. Only a very small number of pupils with severe special educational needs and very significant care needs will continue to require access to Special Needs Assistant support throughout their education. Good practice is that the SNA should contribute to the care plan and support the student to voice their views on the Personal Pupil Plan. The SNA will also assist in monitoring the implementation and impact of the plan including documenting, via observation schedules, the progress being made in relation to the child's care needs on a day-to-day basis". (p.17, DES Circular 0030/2014)

Appendix A

Circular 0030/2014 states that, "the type of significant care needs that pupils may have can be varied, depending on the nature of level of the disability or sensory impairment that a child may have." It goes on to say that, "given that the variety of medical conditions that children may suffer from, it is not possible to list all of the care needs that may arise..." in the circular. However, it gives some examples of the primary care needs which would be considered significant and which might require SNA support. These are summarised below. (Please refer to the Circular 0030/2014 for more detail) :

- Assistance with feeding
- Administration of medication
- Assistance with toileting and general hygiene: (including catheterisation)
- Assistance with mobility and orientation
- Assisting teachers to provide supervision in the class, playground and school grounds
- Care needs associated with specific medical conditions
- Care needs requiring frequent interventions including withdrawal of a pupil from a classroom when essential
- Assistance with moving and lifting of children, operation of hoists and equipment
- Assistance with severe communication difficulties

The tasks noted above are the primary care support tasks for which access to SNA support will normally be provided. The following tasks are the type of secondary care associated tasks which SNAs will often perform, but only once they have been allocated on the basis of the primary care support tasks listed above. Circular 0030/2014 points out that this list of secondary associated tasks is not definitive and is reflective of the tasks detailed in Circulars 08/82 and 71/2011.

- 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 Pupils 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 and/or Principal 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.
- Planning for activities and classes where there may be additional care requirements associated with particular activities, liaising with class teachers and other teachers such as the resource teacher and school principal, attending meetings with parents, SENO, NEPS, Psychologists, or school staff meetings with the agreement and guidance of class teacher/principal.
- Assistance with enabling a pupil to access therapy or psycho-educational programmes such as anger management or social skills classes, under the direction of qualified personnel, including class teachers or support teachers.
- Assistance to attend or participate in out of school activities: walks, or visits, where such assistance cannot be provided by teaching staff.

“Though the SNA can provide useful assistance to the teacher in ensuring that the pupil is able to access education, the role of the SNA is not to provide additional tuition, as this is the role of qualified learning support/resource teachers who may assist the teacher to provide additional teaching to pupils with special educational needs.” (p.8, *DES Circular 0030/2014*)

“Good practice is that SNAs will be aware of the various configurations of support such as close proximity and distance, as appropriate, with dependency upon a particular SNA being avoided.” (p.15, *DES Circular 0030/2014*)

Utilisation of hours of work outside the normal school opening hours/school year will be in line with the spirit of Circular 0071/2011

Ratified by the Board of Management – 9th March 2015