

Draft Policy on S.N.A's Duties in D.P.E.T.N.S

Introduction

The Purpose of this Special Education Policy is to provide a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of Special Education Assistants working within D.P.E.T.N.S.

As provided for in Department Circulars (07/02) and (24/03), A Special Needs Assistant should be considered appropriate where a pupil has **significant medical need, a significant impairment of physical or sensory function or where their behaviour is a danger to themselves or to other pupils**. In many cases the SNA will be providing care to help with toileting and feeding. It would be expected that very often this level of care should diminish as the child matures. DPETNS will review its SNA allocations in advance of making additional applications for SNAs to see whether the special need identified can be met by redeployment of existing SNA support in the school. In this context, although SNA allocations are sanctioned on the basis of individual applications, the over-riding principle is that resources will be deployed in a manner that best meets the needs of pupils with special needs in the school.

Once a child with special educational needs has been enrolled in the school, Parent/Guardian communication with the school viz a viz special educational needs provision should be confined to the class teacher, in the first instances, the Principal/Deputy Principal and not directly with the SNA. **SNA duties are of a non-teaching nature.**

The deployment/redeployment of SNAs is a decision for the Principal/Deputy Principal. It is school policy that a teamwork approach will be employed to provide the best possible support to children requiring SNA support. Consultation with and the participation of Parents/Guardians in the education of children with special educational needs is essential, as deemed appropriate by the Principal, Deputy Principal and Class Teacher in consultation with the Special Needs Assistant.

The role of SNA is a supporting role to improve the whole educational experience of children with Special Needs and that of other children in the class/school. SNAs are also a major support to teachers in carrying out their work in a more effective way. Therefore, there are three aspects to the role of SNA:

1. Supporting the child
2. Supporting the teacher/whole class/other children
3. Supporting the school and its ethos

Important: If and when, for whatever reason the SNA is absent the school will endeavour to secure appropriate substitute cover.

Notes:

- ❖ Prior to appointment to the position of SNA, the Board of Management will obtain a certificate of medical fitness that the person is fit to undertake the duties of the post. The BOM will nominate the medical practitioner (Circular SNA 03/03). See Attachment H.
- ❖ Prior to appointment to the position of SNA, the Board of Management will check the person's references and ensure that the person has not been investigated in relation to substantial complaints made concerning his/her treatment of children. The Board of Management will make efforts with the local Gardai to provide clearance for employees employed as Special Needs Assistants. This process may take some time. Applicants will only be employed on a provisional basis pending the outcome of the clearing process. Special Needs Assistants appointed on a provisional basis pending Garda clearance will be made aware that in the event that they do have convictions making them unsuitable to work with children that this will be a substantial ground for dismissal without notice (Circular SNA 03/03). See Attachment I.
- ❖ Special Needs Assistants will familiarize themselves with the school's policies relevant to their employment. They will at all times contribute to the full implementation of these policies and to **all** other relevant school policies.

Supporting Documentation:

Attachment A: Qualifications

Attachment B: Conditions of Service

Attachment C: Seniority

Attachment D: Sick Leave Arrangements

Attachment A

1. Qualifications

A. Character

Each appointee must be of good character

B. Age

Candidates must be over 17 and under 65 years on 1st September of the year in which they take up appointment.

C. Health

Each candidate must be free from any defect or disease which would render them unsuitable to hold the post and be in a state of health such as would indicate a reasonable possibility of their being able to give regular and efficient service.

D. Education

Candidates must satisfy Department of Education qualification requirements.

Attachment B

2 Conditions of Service

2.1 If the post is full-time

2.2 On appointment, each Special Needs Assistant will be on probation for 6 months. At the end of the probationary period, the appointment may be confirmed, probation extended for a further period or services terminated as the Board of Management may determine. If the appointment is not confirmed, an increment may not be awarded and Special Education Section I should be informed of this one month in advance.

2.3 Special Needs Assistants will be required to work classroom hours on all days on which the school is in operation, this may include in-service and planning days. They will be available during Staff Meetings for the appropriate time and, in addition attend before and after school in order to help with preparation and tidying up of classrooms, reception and dispersal of children etc. The hours of duty will be determined by the Board of Management.

Important: Full-Time Special Needs Assistants are also required to work 12 additional days (5 hours and 40 minutes per day) in addition to the standard 183 school days. The scheduling of these days will be a decision for the Board of Management, following consultation with the Principal Teacher/Special Needs Co-Coordinator.

2.4 SNA Break Time as follows: 10 minutes mid-morning break
25 minute lunch break

SNA's and Class Teachers need to take alternative lunch breaks when yard duty coincides.

2.5 On days on which the special needs child is not in attendance the SNA may be assigned to other classes or other children with educational needs or s/he may be asked to undertake other appropriate duties.

2.6 The appointment will be terminable in accordance with the terms of the Minimum Notice and Terms of Employment Acts.

2.7 The retirement age is 65 but Special Needs Assistants may continue in employment until the end of the school year in which they become 65 years of age.

2.8 The school premises will normally be the place of employment.

2.9 Important: Due discretion is expected in matters of a confidential nature.

3. If the post is part-time.

3.1 On appointment, each Special Needs Assistant will be on probation for 6 months. At the end of the probationary period, the appointment may be confirmed, probation extended for a further period or services terminated as the Board of Management may determine.

3.2 Special Needs Assistants will be required to work the hours assigned during normal classroom time. In addition, part-time SNA's may be required to attend before or after school in order to help with preparation and tidying up of classrooms, reception and dispersal of children etc. The hours of duty will be determined by the Board of Management.

3.3 SNA Break Times as follows: 10 minute mid-morning break
25 minute lunch break

3.4 On days on which the special needs child is not in attendance the part-time SNA may be assigned to other classes or other children with educational needs or s/he may be asked to undertake other appropriate duties.

Such absences should be notified to the Principal/Deputy Principal by the class teacher as soon as the information is available so that the necessary action can be taken

3.5 The appointment will be terminable in accordance with the terms of the Minimum Notice and Terms of Employment Acts.

3.6 The retirement age is 65 but Special Needs Assistants may continue in employment until the end of the school year in which they become 65.

3.7 The school premises will normally be the place of employment.

3.8 Important: Due discretion is expected in matters of a confidential nature.

Attachment C

Seniority

Seniority exists among all SNAs, full or part time. It is determined by:

- (a) Length of service

And then

- (b) By grade of post (there are two grades, a) full time
And, b) part-time).

Hours will be assigned to part-time assistants on the basis of their seniority, the most senior being assigned the highest number of hours.

If a position becomes surplus to requirements, the person with the least service will cease to be employed. Should the position be fulltime, the least senior fulltime person will return to part-time in line with their seniority, and the person with the least service will cease to be employed.

This will be discussed and agreed with SNAs at interview stage and with parents of Special Needs Children as they enter the school.

The present position in seniority is – Dated: _____

Attachment D

Sick Leave Arrangements

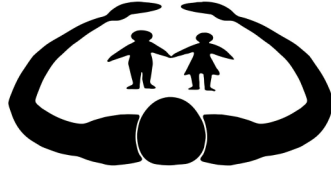
N.B: Where possible an SNA should inform Principal when ill and indicate the likely duration of absence. On return from sick leave the SNA should report back to the Principal.

1. No sick pay will be allowed during the first three months' service. Subsequently, full pay may be allowed during sick absence up to the following limits:
 - (a) After three months' continuous service, sick pay at full rate for up to six weeks in any period of twelve months' service:
 - (b) After six months' continuous service, sick pay at full rate for up to nine weeks in any period of twelve months service:
 - (c) After twelve months' continuous service, sick pay at full rate for up to thirteen weeks in any period of twelve months' service.
2. Medical certificates must be furnished to the Board of Management in all cases of continuous absence by the third day of absence at the latest. As a general rule, sick leave will not be allowed for a longer period than one week on any one certificate. Where sick absence extends from Friday to Monday inclusive, a medical certificate must be furnished.
3. Special Needs Assistants on probation are reminded that when they are being considered for confirmation of appointment, full account will be taken of their health and of the extent and pattern of their sick absence. If any of these aspects is unsatisfactory, the Special Needs Assistant concerned cannot be accepted as suitable.
4. The grant of sick leave will be subject to the following conditions in particular:
 - (a) That the absence is properly certified:
 - (b) That there is no evidence of permanent disability for service.
5. Once sick pay has ceased owing to the expiration of the maximum limit, it cannot be resumed during the same absence.
6. Unpaid sick leave does not count as service qualifying for further paid sick leave.
7. **Uncertified Sick Leave:** Sick Leave for single or two-day absences, not exceeding seven days in total in any period of twelve months, may be granted without medical certificate. However, should the number of days' absence without medical certificate in any period of twelve months, reckoning backwards from the date of the latest absence, exceed seven in aggregate, any subsequent absence must be certified until the balance is restored.

8. Payment during sick leave will be **full salary provided that the following procedure is adhered to:**

If a SNA is absent on sick leave for more than three consecutive days they must immediately complete a form from Disability Benefit (available from their GP). This should be forwarded to Special Education Section 1, Department of Education and Science, Athlone, Co. Westmeath, who then forward it to the Dept. of Social, Community and Family Affairs. **The claim must be submitted by Special Education Section 1 to reach the DSCFA within seven days of the start of the illness hence there is an urgency to submit the claim form to ensure continued payment of their full salary.**

Donabate-Portrane



Educate Together

SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANT

HANDBOOK

OCTOBER 2010

Do's and Don't's for the Special Needs Assistant

Special Needs Assistant May:

1. Be part of the student support team
2. Work under indirect teacher/LRT supervision with individuals or groups of students, as described in the IEP (s)
3. Have specific instructional and management responsibility for students, as outlined in the IEP(s) including behaviour management
4. Be involved in team meetings regarding a specific student, where necessary.
5. Support the inclusion of student with special needs in regular classes.
6. Be assigned record keeping tasks relevant to student IEP(s)
7. Aid the teacher in supervising students during assemblies and group field trips.
8. Accompany students as needed for school related activities.
9. Communicate with parent(s) on instruction from principal, class teacher or S.E.S.T.

Special Needs Assistant May Not:

1. Operate without teacher direction.
2. Substitute for teachers or have responsibility for a class.
3. Decide which concepts/content/skills are to be taught.
4. Be given responsibility for designing student programs.
5. Be given sole responsibility for the inclusion of student(s).
6. Be responsible for student diagnosis, evaluation or reporting.
7. Take responsibility for arranging and supervising field trips.
8. Take student out of the class or school without permission or knowledge of the supervising teacher.
9. Communicate on their own accord with parent(s) about behavioural/educational issues.

Specific Responsibilities

The following are some specifics of the roles and responsibilities of teachers and S.N.A.'s and some roles and responsibilities that they share.

Designing programs, planning and organising learning experiences of students with special needs.

TEACHER	SHARED	SNA
<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Designs instructional programs-Develops IEP's<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Identifies responsibilities of individual members of student specific support teams in terms of participating in the development, implementation and monitoring of the programs as described by the IEP.-Plans learning activities-Determines appropriate modifications and adaptations in line with the IEP.-Provides instructional learning resources.-Monitors and advocates for the appropriate resources necessary for S.N.A. to carry out his/her duties.- Reviews and reinforces learning activities for concept and skill development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Discuss learners' strengths and weaknesses and consider best possible areas of program focus.-Attend program planning meeting, based on school policies, to assist with developing IEP's and transition plans for children with special needs.-Discuss objectives and goals.-Discuss and clarify the ways in which the SNA's can assist the teacher with instructional programs, classroom management and expectation setting for students.-Work together to adapt/modify curriculum and resource material.-Collaborate in setting priorities for learning resource development-Review learning resources together to clarify and share experiences and expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Shares relevant information about the performance and behaviour of individual learners to support IEP, transition and program design.-Gathers relevant information through working with student or students to provide feedback into the planning process.-Adapts strategies to accommodate individual learner needs/styles, under direction of teachers.-Assists with development of instructional learning resources.Reviews and reinforces learning activities using lesson plans and learning strategies developed by the teacher/tam to help students master concepts and skills.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Develops school based learning goals for individuals and groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Plan activities to meet goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Assists students with learning activities and/or independent study projects developed by teacher/team.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Designs learning and skill development goals for worksites and other community based setting. -Establishes work plan priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Plan activities to meet goals. -Share resources and concerns -Review plan daily and weekly. -Set consultative meeting times. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Monitors and reports to teacher/team on the implementation of the program. -Supports learning and skill development activities in worksite and community based settings. -Follows I.E.P.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides the S.N.A. with the required information regarding the classroom management structure, discipline plan and expectations for students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Discuss and clarify classroom management structure, discipline plan and expectations for students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Keeps teacher up to date on the implementation of the program. -Carries out work within developed structures and plans, being consistent with expectations for students.(IEP)

Implementing programs for students with special needs: Delivery of Service

TEACHER	SHARED	SNA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Instructs, supervises and facilitates student learning. -Develops individualised, appropriate, behavioural program. -Models techniques for S.N.A.'s to use in providing instructional and behavioural assistance. -Defines the use of specific techniques, strategies and appropriate language, as required in individual situation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Discuss successful practice -Discuss specific philosophy, techniques, strategies and appropriate language. -Discuss specific techniques, strategies and appropriate language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Facilitates student learning individually and in small groups. -Implements the technique and strategies as demonstrated. -Documents, monitors and reports to teacher/team on implementation of the program. -Implements specific techniques, strategies and appropriate language.

Assessing, evaluating, reporting and recording student progress

TEACHER	SHARED	SNA
-Ensures assessment and learner profiles are current.	-Discuss information	-Carries out functional informal assessment activities to assist the teacher in developing Learner profiles.
-Convenes/attends meetings of student specific support team.	-Discuss information with the entire team.	-Attends meetings of student specific support team during the school.
-Evaluates progress according to goals of IEP.	-Exchange information	-Observes and documents learner strengths, achievements and needs through daily learning activities.
-Reports to parents <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Informal, ongoing. 2. Formal written reports 	-Discuss relevant confidential information	-Assists in the collection of data for the purpose of evaluating student progress.
-Maintains required school records	-Clarify data requirements	-Provides information to teacher for home/school formal/informal communications.
		-Assists in maintaining learner records required by school.

Developing supportive environments: For learners, their families, school and district/staffs.

TEACHER	SHARED	SNA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Documents and shares workplace concerns -Remains familiar with school policies and procedures. -Reviews and monitors that policies are being implemented. -Shares information. -Shares current student related information on behaviour, social, emotional and physical health on a need to know basis. -Requests that appropriate health or other training is provided to support staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Discuss concerns to facilitate early problem solving through informal and regularly scheduled meetings during the workday -Follow guidelines established by the school to protect the safety and well being of children and staff. -Maintain confidentiality. -Support physiologists, occupational and physiotherapists, speech language therapists, vision and hearing impaired specialists and nurses in the delivery of required services. -Follow established protocol and collective agreements regarding administration of medicine and/or medical procedures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Documents and shares workplace concerns. -Remains familiar with school policies and procedures. -Reviews and monitors that policies are being implemented -Shares information. -Carries out personal and health care routines as directed. -Carries out specific procedures only if appropriate training has been provided. -Follows all established reporting procedures.