



SNA Policy

Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) Policy and Guidelines

1. Introduction

This policy sets out the framework for the deployment, management and review of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) in St. Mary's National School Castlefinn. It applies to pupils in mainstream classes and special class settings and is informed by Department of Education Circular 0049/2024 and current NCSE Guidelines. The policy supports the school's commitment to inclusion, equality of access, pupil wellbeing and the effective use of SNA support to meet identified additional care needs. This policy was originally drafted in February 2022.

2. Legislative and Policy Context

This policy is informed by:

- Department of Education Circular 0049/2024 – SNA allocation, deployment and review.
- NCSE Guidelines on SNA support and the whole-school review process.
- Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004.
- Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.
- Relevant school policies including SEN, Inclusion, Health & Safety and Data Protection.

3. Rationale

SNAs are provided to schools to support pupils who have significant additional care needs arising from disability or medical conditions.

In line with Circular 0049/2024, SNA support:

- Is allocated to the school, not to individual pupils.
- Is non-teaching in nature.
- Supports care needs, not educational or learning needs.
- Is deployed by school management using a whole-school, needs-based approach.

4. Aims of the Policy

The aims of this policy are to:

- Clarify the role and responsibilities of SNAs.
- Ensure SNA support is deployed fairly, flexibly and transparently.
- Promote pupil independence, dignity and inclusion.
- Support consistency of practice across mainstream and special class settings.
- Provide a clear framework for monitoring and review in line with NCSE processes.

5. Role of the Special Needs Assistant

In accordance with Circular 0049/2024, SNAs are appointed to assist with care needs, which may include:

- Personal care (toileting, dressing, feeding where required).
- Assistance with mobility or physical needs.
- Supervision to ensure pupil safety.
- Support during transitions and movement around the school.
- Assistance with medical or health-related needs as outlined in care plans.

SNAs do not:

- **Teach pupils or deliver curriculum content.**
- **Undertake planning, assessment or instruction.**
- **Replace the role of the teacher.**
- **Be left in sole charge of a class.**

A full time SNA is paid for 32 hours per week and a part-time SNA is expected to work the number of hours outlined by the NCSE. The SNA is required to work normal classroom hours and, where agreed by the Board of Management, a reasonable amount of time before and/or after the school day to assist with preparation and tidying of classrooms. These arrangements will be agreed in advance and reviewed as required. In addition, the SNA must be available for an additional 72 hours (Public Service Agreement, Croke Park) per year outside of the normal school year. These hours are at the discretion of the Board of Management in consultation with the Principal and SNAs.

6. Principles of SNA Deployment

In line with Circular 0049/2024 and NCSE guidance:

- SNA support is deployed based on identified care needs.
- Deployment is flexible and responsive to changing needs.
- Pupils with the greatest level of care need are prioritised.
- Support is provided in a manner that promotes independence.
- Allocation and deployment are subject to whole-school NCSE review.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

7.1 Board of Management

- Ratifies and reviews this policy.
- Ensures compliance with Department of Education and NCSE requirements.

7.2 Principal

- Has responsibility for the day-to-day management and deployment of SNAs.
- Ensures SNAs receive induction and guidance on school procedures.
- Liaises with the NCSE/SENO regarding allocation and review.
- Ensures child protection, confidentiality and GDPR compliance.

7.3 SEN Co-ordinator

- Supports planning and review of SNA deployment.
- Facilitates communication between teachers and SNAs.
- Assists with documentation for NCSE review processes.

7.4 Class Teachers

- Retain full responsibility for teaching, learning and assessment.
- Direct and guide SNAs in relation to pupils' care needs.
- Share relevant care plans, routines and information.

7.5 Special Needs Assistants

- Work under the direction of the Principal and class teacher.
- Carry out assigned care duties respectfully and professionally.
- Support inclusion while promoting pupil independence.
- Communicate concerns promptly and appropriately.

8. SNA Support in Special Class Settings

In our special class, SNAs:

- Support pupils with complex and significant care needs.
- Assist with routines, transitions and supervision.
- Work as part of a team under the direction of the class teacher.
- The teacher remains responsible for all educational planning and instruction.

**On days when teaching staff are attending in-service courses, SNAs will report for work as usual and will be assigned appropriate non-teaching duties related to classroom organisation and preparation, under the direction of school management.*

9. Review of SNA Support

SNA deployment is reviewed regularly at school level. Where appropriate, SNAs may be rotated, typically within an 18 month to 2-year timeframe, having regard to pupil needs, continuity of care, and staff expertise.

Formal reviews are conducted through the NCSE whole-school SNA review process. Allocation may change in response to evolving pupil needs. SNA posts are subject to national redeployment arrangements.

10. 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.

11. Training and Professional Development

St. Mary's National School, Castlefinn supports SNAs to engage in relevant training including:

- Child protection and safeguarding.
- Health, safety and manual handling.
- First aid and medical care (where required).
- Supporting pupils with additional care needs.

SNAs must follow all school health and safety procedures and report any concerns promptly to the Principal.

12. Communication with Parents/Guardians

Parents are informed of the purpose and nature of SNA support. SNAs are not allocated to individual pupils at parental request. Queries or concerns should be raised with the class teacher or Principal. SNAs are encouraged to build a positive relationship based on trust with the parents of children with SEN. That said, 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.

13. Confidentiality and Professional Conduct

SNAs are required to:

- Maintain confidentiality at all times
- Comply with GDPR and school data protection policies
- Act in a professional, respectful and inclusive manner

14. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management every two years or earlier if required in line with changes to Department of Education or NCSE guidance.

Signed: _____
Chairperson, BoM

Date: _____

Signed: _____
Principal

Date: _____

