



Wilson's Hospital School
Special Needs Assistants (SNA) Policy and Guidelines
2020 - 2021

Special Needs Assistants are appointed by the Principal and/or Deputy Principal subject to the allocation of SNA hours by the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) and National Council for Special Education (NCSE). Depending on the cumulative number of hours allocated to the school they may be appointed on a full-time or part-time basis.

SNAs are recruited to assist in providing the necessary non-teaching services to pupils with assessed Special Educational Needs (SEN). SNAs play a vital role in the health and safety of pupils and in their social and emotional development.

The duties of the SNA have been outlined by the Principal on behalf of the School Management Board. Their work is assigned and supervised by the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) and Guidance Councillor, and they are part of the SEN team.

Inclusion:

Inclusion requires understanding of and providing for the different needs of students and taking steps to reduce barriers to learning. As an inclusive school, Wilson's Hospital School aims to identify barriers to learning that exist in the school environment and provide for the needs of learners in order to minimise the impact of such barriers.

Legislative Framework:

This policy is guided by the following legislation:

- The Education Act (1998),
- The Equal Status Act (2000),
- The Equality Act (2004),
- The Education Welfare Act (2000),
- The Data Protection Acts (2018),
- The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (2004),
- Circular No: 0030/2014: The role of the Special Needs Assistant,
- Circular No: 0030/2020: Special Needs Assistant Allocation,

Supporting Publications:

The following publications were consulted in writing this policy:

- Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines (DES, 2007)
- Special Educational Needs: A Continuum of Support – Guidelines for Teachers (2010)
- Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools (DES, 2017)

Rationale

The policy was formulated:

- To provide staff and parents with clear guidelines and expectations regarding 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 students and the overall efficiency of the school.
- To ensure best practice and continuity in how we work in Wilson’s Hospital School.

Aims

- To facilitate the recognition 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 students with Special Educational Needs,
- To enable the SNA to be an effective support to the subject teacher,
- To provide optimum learning experiences for all students through judicious use of the skills and talents of the SNA,
- To clarify the tasks and duties to be undertaken by the SNA,
- To ensure accountability and effective record keeping.

Staff Roles

The SENCO and Guidance Councillor has responsibility for:

- Identifying the core group of students that are in receipt of SNA support as outlined in the Continuum of Support (2010) ‘*Students with the greatest level of need should receive the greatest level of support*’.
- Assigning role specific and student specific tasks to the SNA in association with subject teachers,
- Co-ordinating the integration and devising the role profile of the SNA,
- Monitoring the effectiveness of the SNAs contribution to the needs of designated students,
- Promoting in-service training. The School Management Board may fund or part-fund this professional development,
- Managing areas of conflict which may arise, with the assistance of the Year head, Deputy Principal and/or Dean of Discipline.
- Assume responsibility for the upkeep of Student Support Files in consultation with all relevant parties including the SET team, SNA, subject teachers, parents, Year heads and Principal.

Subject Teachers

- Collaborate with the SNA with regard to planning and duties within the classroom,
- Incorporates the SNA as a valued member of staff within the classroom,
- Provide a suitable seating arrangement for the SNA and student/s in the mainstream setting,

- Discusses with the SNA the level of support or observation required for the core group of students requiring SNA support,
- Reinforces the work of an SNA to promote inclusive practices in working with the group as a whole.

SNAs

- At present, we have an allocation of 3.5 SNA posts.
- SNAs are an integral part of the SEN team and wider whole school staff.
- SNAs work under the direction of the SENCO, Guidance Counsellor, Principal or Deputy Principal.
- SNAs will oversee the administration of medication performed by students with Care plans as advised by School nurses, SENCO and/or Guidance Counsellor.
- Subject teachers plan lessons and directs learning. The SNA provides support in assisting the pupil to access the curriculum.
- SNAs provide general assistance to subject teachers. It is accepted that the SNA may not act as either substitute or temporary teachers. In no circumstance will they be left in sole charge of a class or group of students.
- SNAs will keep a written record of their work and duties as witnessed by the SENCO and Guidance Councillor to support work with Core students.
- SNAs should be familiar with all relevant school policy, in particular the Child Safeguarding Statement, Intimate Care Needs policy, One to One Student Interaction policy and School Rules Code of Behaviour.

Guidelines for Special Needs Assistants

Hours of Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The full time SNA is expected to work 32 hours per week and the part-time SNA is expected to work 16 hours per week. • In addition, 12 additional days per year outside of the normal school year must be worked for full time SNAs. These days are at the discretion of the Principal or School Management Board in consultation with the SENCO and SNA. This is on a pro rata basis for part-time SNAs.
Confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due discretion is expected in all matters of a confidential nature.
Times and Timetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNAs will be given a timetable by the SENCO at the start of the year. This timetable may change with the needs of the school and the needs of the Core students requiring SNA support. • SNA break time is generally between 9.58am to 10.13am and lunch is generally between 12.09pm to 12:49pm. • As part of the SNA contract, SNAs are required each morning to assess the environment surrounding their Core student/s in their base classrooms, this includes their seating plan. If it cannot be rectified immediately then a note can be made in the SNAs weekly report. • SNAs are expected to work primary with their Core students as identified on their timetables. In the event that a core student is absent, the SNA will continue to work with the class group under the guidance of the subject teacher, SENCO or Guidance Councillor.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the Core student/s are absent and an agreement has been made with the subject teacher, the SNA should partake in work for their Core student/s. This may be making sure the subject teacher has uploaded any instructions onto Teams, photocopying another student’s notes and placing it onto Teams, making a revision or study skills timetable for the student or similar organisational tasks. • In the event that an SNAs Core student is away and they have other Core students in a different class, the SNA may support their other Core student/s in agreement with the subject teacher, SENCO or Guidance Councillor. As this is only a temporary arrangement, this change in attending a different class is dependent upon the ‘adaptive behavioural’ level of the SEN student. • If it is essential for an SNA to speak with their Core student out of their scheduled 58-minute lessons. These removals should be during non-core subjects ie PE, SPHE, CSPE, IT, Life skills or Resource classes. Removal should be kept to a minimum and made in agreement of the Subject teacher. These instances should be documented in the SNAs weekly report if they are for longer than 10 minutes.
Planning and Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNAs should document progress and set targets for each term. This record should also detail any incidents where the care needs of the student are evident. • SNAs should be familiar with their Core students needs as profiled in the Student Support Files on Teams and in B7. • SNAs and subject teachers should meet once a month to outline expectations for student and SNA. • SNA must refer all matters on curriculum, classroom management, discipline or incidents of concerns etc. to the subject teacher, SENCO, Guidance counselor or Year head.
Level and type of classroom assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information received on students, 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 student to concentrate and think independently. • Explain how to do tasks but avoid giving the solution to a task or problem. Instead encourage the student to come up with the answer by questioning and prompting. • Subject teachers should consult with the SNA at the start of the term, the level of involvement that they wish for the SNA to support Core students.
Physical contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a student is not paying attention, the SNA should place their hand or pen in front of the student on their desk as a visual cue to pay attention. • If this does not work, the SNA may tap the student on their arm using a book, folder or pen, in front of the student. • Physical contact should be avoided at all times, if possible.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical contact may be required to protect a pupil from harm to themselves or others. • Help where necessary with tying aprons or packing away equipment, while encouraging independence.
Parental contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents with questions, requests or concerns regarding school policy or practice should be referred directly to the SENCO, Guidance Counsellor, School nurses or Principal. This applies to direct face to face communication or indirect telephone communication. Parents should contact Year heads for information on student progress. • If a parent wishes to gain an understanding about the work conducted by an SNA with their child they may contact the SENCO and/or Guidance Councillor. • It is sometimes helpful for SNAs to mention the parents' involvement when chatting to students about matters regarding organisation, study skills, emotional problems, homework etc. The SNA should direct students that if their parent/guardian wishes to contact the school they may do so by emailing the SENCO, Guidance Councillor, School nurses team or Principal. • 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. • Any minor incidents should be included in the SNAs weekly report to the SENCO and Guidance Councillor. • Any major incidents should be reported to the SENCO, Guidance councillor or Principal at the nearest possible opportunity.
Seating Arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A SNA should only sit with a student with SEN when and where deemed necessary by the subject teacher. • If an SNA wishes to move their Core student, they should prior seek the advice of the subject teacher. • To build independence, an SNA should increase the times when the Core student is left to work independently as appropriate. • SNAs should avoid blocking the view of another student and the whiteboard • SNA should also have their own chair and table not beside the student.
Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervise pupils from a distance if possible. • Supervision at break and lunch times should promote social interaction and inclusion. • After break and lunchtimes, SNAs should assist pupils to form a line 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 another teacher should be requested to supervise the class until the teacher returns. • Be mindful of students that are a flight risk. • Accompany students with medical needs on school outings as arranged with the SENCO, Guidance Councillor or Principal.
Take a break session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a student becomes visibly disengaged or displays heightened emotions of anxiety or stress, an SNA can remove this student to

	<p>decompress at their discretion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a break sessions should be kept to a minimum and used when other in-class methods are unsuccessful. • Subject teachers should be informed about the removal of the student, this can be a simple agreed non-verbal gesture. • If a student requires more than a 4-minute break then the student should be removed to the decompression space, SEN or Chaplain’s office. • A record should be made in the SNAs weekly report of these instances.
Medication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNAs may be expected to work with students with diabetes, hypopituitarism, ADHD, allergies, asthma or epilepsy. • Information about pupils with medical needs is collated by the School nurses’ team. • The SEN department documents the medical needs of some students in particular students with SEN. Care plans can be accessed through Teams and VShare for all members of staff. • Administration of medication can be done discreetly within the classroom, in the Guidance office or the SEN office. • Students themselves will administer the medicines as witnessed and documented by an SNA. • Only prescribed medication and approved by the School nurses’ team should be given. • Store all medicines appropriately in line with WHS Health and Safety Policy. • SNAs should engage with regular CPD on the administration of medication and procedures to be taken in medical emergencies.
Relevant work	<p>SNAs work under the guidance of the subject teacher and should not be left in sole charge of a class. They may however work on their own with students provided that the work in question has been allocated by the subject teacher or SENCO. Work may include any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation and tidying up of base classrooms or specialist rooms. • Special assistance as necessary for students with particular difficulties e.g. assisting with typing, writing, computers or other assistive technology. • Assisting students to stay on task, follow classroom procedures and interact appropriately. • Assisting students in establishing and maintaining a consistent routine. • Assisting students to build self-esteem and to develop independence. • Assistance with clothing, toileting and general hygiene and being mindful of the health and safety needs of the pupil. SNAs are familiar with our Intimate Care Needs policy and One to One Student Interaction policy. • Assistance with accessing the curriculum as far as is possible for students with SEN • Assisting on school trips, exercise, walks, examinations and similar activities. • Promoting the importance of personal hygiene and report any

	<p>difficulties to the Year head or SENCO.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisting the school in the supervision of pupils during assembly, recreation and dispersal from the classroom for one reason or another. • Accompanying individuals who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom for one reason or another. • Accompanying individuals that are reported sick and need to be brought up to the School nurses' team. • Acting as a positive role model for the students in their care. • Organisation of a social space for students with sensory needs. • Encouraging students to partake in group activities ie drama, PE and active learning tasks. • Assisting students with tasks that pose a health and safety threat ie pouring of liquids, taking a tray out of a hot oven, using machinery in the Technology room.
Staff Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNAs may be required to attend Staff Meetings when issues of relevance to their own particular work are up for discussion. • The SENCO and Guidance Councillor will have a structured staff meeting with the SNAs at least once per term. • SNAs will meet formally and informally meet to discuss the progress of shared Core students. • SNAs are encouraged to use SNA communications on Teams to communicate matters of non-urgency for the attention of the SEN team. • SNAs are encouraged to attend CARE team meetings if their timetable allows. SNAs should be familiar with the weekly CARE team minutes posted on Teams.

Developing the Role of the SNA

- It is the subject teacher and SNAs joint responsibility to ensure that the SNA is clear about where help is needed. Planning together and communication is essential.
- It is the subject teacher's responsibility to affirm the value of the role of the SNA with their class.
- Diaries recording significant events are essential, noted with the date incidents occurred.
- An atmosphere of mutual understanding and respect is fostered.
- Regular meetings with the SNA, SENCO, Guidance councillor and/or Principal are good opportunities to discuss issues and address concerns.
- So that students 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 students around the designated student's workspace. In that way several students in the classroom get the benefit of the SNA's support.
- SNAs allocated to students with physical disabilities will support them as needs require both within the classroom and outside it. This may include shadowing the student while at break or lunch or helping them to make their way to the school bus.
- On days when the teaching staff are attending in-service courses, SNAs will report for work as usual. These non-structured days are a prime opportunity for SNAs to assess the needs of the SEN department ie organisation of medical lockers in SEN office, audit medical equipment and

PPE, refresh classroom displays on wellbeing and anti-anxiety techniques, plan out routes for anti-anxiety walks, organise B4 and lunchtime games, replace laminated signs, photocopying, engage in online CPD etc.

Contract of Employment

SNAs are not specifically assigned to an individual student but rather to the school as a whole. School Support Plus students and students with medical needs are a priority for SNA support.

SNAs will be assigned a Core group of students in which they support and communication about this student will be directed to this SNA.

It is expected that SNAs will be called upon to help facilitate Special centres during the Christmas and Mock exams. This is in consultation with the Exam secretary, SENCO and Principal.

Seniority

The sequence in which Special Need Assistants are appointed to the school determines their seniority. Seniority is important in determining which SNA/s should be offered reduced hours or have their employment terminated when the allocation of the school is reduced.

The School Management Board determines the seniority based on the SNA's date of commencement of duty as an SNA in the school.

Success Criteria

This policy is aimed at making a difference to the teaching and learning of students with Special Educational Needs in our school. We will know that the policy is achieving its aims when

- students with Special Educational Needs are included in whole school activities,
- students are experiencing a safe and stimulating environment,
- the students are becoming independent learners and acquiring life skills,
- the student is reaching the targets set out in Student Support Plans.

Approved by the School Management Board on 17th November 2020