



Wilson's Hospital School

Special Needs Assistant (SNA) Policy and Guidelines

2021 - 2022

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 (SMB). Their work is assigned and supervised by the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) and Guidance Councillor on behalf of the Principal, 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),
- Circulars; **CL0012/2005**: Contract of Employment for Special Needs Assistants employed in Second Level Schools, **CL0071/2011**: Public Service (Croke Park) Agreement - Special Needs Assistants, Contract of Employment of SNA, **CL0030/2014**: The role of the Special

Needs Assistant, **CL0030/2020**: Special Needs Assistant Allocation, 0026/2021: Recruitment of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) - Supplementary Assignment Arrangements for the 2021/2022 school year

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 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 4.5 SNA posts.
- SNAs are an integral part of the SEN team and wider whole school staff.
- SNAs work under the direction of the SENCO and Guidance Counsellor on behalf of the Principal/Deputy Principal and the SMB.
- 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 a part-time SNA is expected to work 16 hours per week.• SNAs will be required to work normal classroom hours including class break periods and in addition to attend before and after school in order to help with the preparation and tidying up of classrooms, reception and dispersal of children etc. Normal work break entitlements will apply in accordance with the provisions of the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997. The times at which these breaks are taken will be at the discretion of the Principal.• SNAs will also be required to work the month of June on examinations or other work appropriate to the grade including training. Please see appendix 1, 2 and 3.• 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 on behalf of the SMB in consultation with the SENCO and SNA. This is on a pro rata basis for part-time SNAs. These days will not exceed five consecutive days and will
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	immediately follow or precede school terms or occur within a couple of days thereof.
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. • As part of the SNA contract, SNAs are required to attend before and after school in order to help with the preparation and tidying up of classrooms, reception and dispersal of children. If required, this includes supervising SEN students off the school bus and helping them with their lockers at the end of the school day to be in time to get the bus home. • SNAs are expected to work primarily 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 and SENCO. • 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 or SENCO. 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 i.e., 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 each half-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. • SNAs must refer all matters on curriculum, classroom management, discipline or incidents of concerns etc. to the subject teacher, SENCO, Guidance counselor or Year Head. • Child Protection matters should be reported to the DLP/

<p>Level and type of classroom assistance</p>	<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.
<p>Physical contact</p>	<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. • 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.
<p>Parental contact</p>	<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.
<p>Seating Arrangements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A SNA should sit with a student with SEN only when and if 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.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 decompress at their discretion. • ‘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 a decompression space, SEN office 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.

<p>Relevant work</p>	<p>SNAs will 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. Please see appendix 1 and 2. This work may include any of the following and these lists are not exhaustive:</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 difficulties to the Year head or SENCO. • 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 nurse. • 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 i.e., drama, PE and active learning tasks. • Assisting students with tasks that pose a health and safety threat i.e., pouring of liquids, taking a tray out of a hot oven, using machinery in the Technology room.
<p>Staff Meetings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNAs <i>may</i> be required to attend Staff Meetings when issues of relevance to their own particular work are up for discussion. • The SENCO will have a structured staff meeting with the SNAs at least once per term. • SNAs will meet formally and informally 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.

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 SNAs support.
- SNAs working with 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/from the school bus.
- On school days when no students are present e.g. the teaching staff are attending in-service courses or having subject department meetings, SNAs report for work as usual. These days are a prime opportunity for SNAs to meet formally and to assess the needs of the SEN department.
- SNAs will also be required to work the month of June on examinations or other work appropriate to the grade including training. Please see appendix 1, 2 and 3.

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 to the school is reduced.

The School Management Board determines the seniority based on the SNAs 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 Board of Management on 14th September 2021

APPENDIX 1 – DUTIES OF SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANTS

https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/sna12_05.pdf

Special Needs Assistants are recruited specifically to assist schools in providing the necessary non-teaching services to pupils with assessed educational needs. Their duties are assigned by the Principal acting on behalf of the School Management Board. Their work is supervised either by the Principal or another teacher as determined by the Principal.

Those duties involve tasks of a non-teaching nature such as:

From circular 12/05
1. Preparation and tidying up of classrooms
2. Assisting school children to board and alight from school buses. Where necessary travel as escort during school hours on school buses may be required.
3. Special assistance as necessary for children with particular difficulties e.g., helping special needs pupils with typing or writing or computers or other use of equipment.
4. Assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene and being mindful of health and safety needs of the pupil.
5. Assisting on out-of-school visits, walks, examinations and similar activities.
6. Assisting the teachers in the supervision of pupils during assembly, recreation and dispersal from the classroom for one reason or another.
7. Accompanying individuals or small groups who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom for one reason or another.
8. 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).
9. Participation with school development planning, where appropriate, and cooperation with any such changes with policies and practices arising from the school development process.
10. Engagement with parents of special needs pupils in both formal and informal structures as required and directed by school management.
11. 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 reassigned to other work appropriate to the grade when special needs pupils are absent or when particular urgent work demands arise.

APPENDIX 2 – Public Service (Croke Park) Agreement - Special Needs Assistants
https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0071_2011.pdf

Non-exhaustive list of duties:

From circular 0071/2011
<p>SEN pupil-centred activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide input with regard to care needs for the preparation of Individual Education Plans (IEP's)• Assist with care planning• Provide assistance and information in relation to care needs for preparation of physiological and school reports and files• Assist transition process in relation to care needs for pupils from one school or education centre to another• Assist SEN students to display their work• Assist in analysis of attendance for SEN students• Assist teachers and/or principal in maintaining a journal and uniform care monitoring system for SEN students• Assist principal or other teacher designated by principal in preparing briefing profiles on SEN students• Under the direction of the principal or designated teacher, assist in compiling information for staff for the return to class in the new academic year e.g., special section in staff handbook, particularly in relation to care and assistance required for pupils in class.
<p>Learning resource administration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparation, organising, tidying of class room, resource room, learning support room, ASD classrooms and such other rooms used by SEN students, and appropriate equipment and resources used, including those related to ICT• Prepare materials and equipment in classrooms used by SEN students including cleaning any specialist equipment used by SEN students, e.g., computer keyboards, special desks• Provide assistance for SEN children in relation to assembling their class materials, displays, programmes, books and preparing their materials for class.
<p>Class and school planning and development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participation with school development planning and policy development, where appropriate, including reference to particular assistance required by children with SEN to participate fully in school• Planning for the following day's classes; in particular where there may be additional care or assistance requirements for certain classes or projects• Liaising with the class teacher• Liaising with other teachers such as resource teachers and/or principal• Meetings with parents as appropriate with the agreement and guidance of the principal and/or class teacher• Preparation for and attendance at whole team meetings and staff meetings• Participation in and assistance with school operational structures which are in place to facilitate the full integration and participation of SEN students in school.

Examinations (Both State and House Examinations). This is of relevance to special schools:

- Assist in the setting up of special examination centres and appropriate accommodation centres for examinations.
- Assist in ensuring that special centres are properly organised, and that SEN students with assigned SNA are present and have the appropriate equipment.
- Where rooms are adapted for use as special centres, assist in restoring those rooms for normal school use after the examinations have finished.

Training and development:

- Training (nationally or school mandated)
- Inform colleague SNAs of best practice based on professional and experiential knowledge in relation to the educational and care needs of SEN pupils with the agreement and guidance of the principal, and/or class teacher
- Up-skill in use of ICT for SEN students as learning tools.

Other:

- Other work which is appropriate to the grade as may be determined by the needs of the pupils and the school.

APPENDIX 3 – Training opportunities for 2021 – 2022

Middletown centre for autism:

- <https://www.middletownautism.com/>
- <https://life-skills.middletownautism.com/>
- <https://best-practice.middletownautism.com/>
- <https://sensory-processing.middletownautism.com/>
- <https://teenage-resource.middletownautism.com/>
- <https://pathways-resilience.middletownautism.com/>
- Post Primary online programme:
<https://vle.middletownautism.com/course/view.php?id=9>

As I Am:

- <https://asiam.ie/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/c/AsIAmIreland/videos>
- Autism & Socialising (Children):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gs_BKA97yQY&t=264s
- How can we create inclusive communities?:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFZOi_zz3xE
- Middletown Centre for Autism: Sensory Make & Take Session:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2YwfgTHomkE>
- Autism & life after school – Education: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qt1sJnHZjDw>
- Back to School Support for Primary & Secondary School Students:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amGAFyuSW58>
- Dr Amy Laurent and Dr JÂcqûelyn Fede Webinar:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvKc1jUZ4o0>
- Bridge Back to School webinar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-2I1-zOxNNY>
- 'What to expect in college in September 2020' with Dr. Alison Doyle:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GxerwnzgPqA>
- Sensory Activities for Stimming: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0SsVB_3J62o
- Conducting a Sensory Audit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0SsfChQ7Ic>
- Socialising & Building Social Skills: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AAXgrz2WaRI>
- AsIAm YouthHub - "The Autism Experience" Exhibition:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrISF7DpR_g
- Laragh: Using public transport with Autism:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZ5VEASKoq0>

SESS:

- <https://www.sess.ie/categories/autism-autistic-spectrum-disorders>

Online courses:

- <https://reachchildrenlearning.thinkific.com/courses/supporting-your-child-through-online-learning>
- <https://reachchildrenlearning.thinkific.com/courses/top-ten-tips-for-preventing-behaviours-that-challenge>
- <https://www.livingworks.net/start>
- <https://jigsaw.ie/schoolshub/>
- <https://jigsaw.ie/information-and-elearning/?search=elearning>
- <https://www.laoisedcentre.ie/cpd-courses/primary-courses/2164-teachers-starting-in-the-asd-class-helpful-hints-19-6-2024.html#top>
- <https://www.laoisedcentre.ie/cpd-courses/primary-courses/2142-reducing-anxiety-in-children-aged-4-14-years-fearless-webinar-21-10-2024.html>
- <https://westcorkeducationcentre.ie/primary-courses/1554-wcecw336-autism-community-of-practice.html>
- <https://www.edcentretralee.ie/cpd-courses-tralee-kerry/online-primary/1561-21tra254-working-with-children-with-dyspraxia-dcd-strategies-and-advice-for-an-inclusive-classroom-a-webinar-for-teachers-and-snas.html>
- <https://www.ecwexford.ie/cpd-courses/primary-courses/2128-neps-wexford-coaching-skills-course.html>
- <https://www.ecwexford.ie/cpd-courses/primary-courses/2139-the-regulated-classroom-via-zoom.html>

Sharing good practice and online course between colleagues is encouraged.

- <https://www.ucd.ie/education/study/specialneedsassistants/>