



Special Needs Assistant Policy

Introduction:

The need for a policy on the inclusion of Special Needs Assistants (SNA'S) into the whole school development of Scoil Mocheallog National School initially arose from the appointment of 4 Special Needs Assistants for children with Special Needs in the school

The Policy was devised following a consultative process with all interested parties, and is guided by the relevant legislation such as The Education Welfare Act 2000 and the EPSN Act 2004, disability act 2005, the Education Act and the Equal Status Act.

Rationale:

The policy was formulated so that

- All staff, including the SNAs have clear guidelines on procedures within the school
- Each SNA can see themselves as contributing positively to the learning experiences of the children and the overall efficiency of the school
- A culture of fairness and equality is seen to be in operation throughout the school
- To address issues such as seniority and suppression of posts

Aims:

- To facilitate the inclusion 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 Special Needs Child.
- To enable the SNA to be an effective support to the class teacher
- To provide optimum learning experiences for all children through judicious use of the skills and talents of the SNA
- To clarify the tasks and duties to be undertaken by the SNA.

Staff Roles

The Principal has

- Responsibility for assigning role specific and child specific tasks to the SNA in association with the class teacher
- Direct responsibility for co-ordinating the integration and devising the role profile of the SNA
- Monitoring the effectiveness of the SNAs contribution to the needs of designated children
- Responsibility for the provision of in-service training
- Managing areas of conflict which may arise, with the assistance of the Deputy Principal

Resource Teachers

- Identify the appropriate tasks to be completed by the SNAs
- Ensure SNA support is available for those who need it in a class situation and when integrating into mainstream
- Assume responsibility for I.E.P's in consultation with all relevant bodies

The Mainstream Teachers will have an input through

- Providing a suitable seating arrangement for SNA/Special Needs child in the mainstream setting
- Collaboration with the SNA (if deemed necessary)
- Devising a list of classroom tasks to be undertaken by the SNA on in-service days

The Role of the SNA – Implementation Procedure

There are 4 SNAs presently employed in Scoil Mocheallóg National School. They are considered an important part of the school team and carry out duties of a non-teaching nature.

The SNA always works under the direction of the class teacher or resource teachers.

The teacher plans lessons and directs learning. The SNA provides support to the teacher and through this to the pupils and to the teaching of the curriculum.

The role and responsibilities of the SNA in Scoil Mocheallóg N.S is as follows:

To foster the participation of assigned pupils in the social and academic processes of the school.

This is done through supervising and assisting small groups of pupils in activities set by the teacher and promoting the inclusion of these children in mainstream work and keeping them on task. It may also include tasks such as escorting groups of young children to work areas outside the classroom, boarding and alighting from buses, preparing gym equipment, assisting in P.E and Art classes etc. The SNA will supervise their assigned children during break times. They must be aware at all times of the position of their assigned child in the yard. They are expected to bring any early signs of bullying to the attention of either the class teacher or the Principal. The SNA will also assist in the inclusion of their assigned children through supervision of organized games.

To enable assigned pupils to become more independent learners.

The SNAs are encouraged to develop independence in their assigned pupils through showing interest both in the classroom setting and at play. The school does not encourage the 'Velcro model' whereby a student is assigned to a particular SNA for a prolonged period of time. It is the policy of the school to rotate SNAs between selected Special Needs Pupils. The SNA can also play an important part by supporting the work by outside agencies such as Speech Therapists and Occupational Therapists under the guidance of the class teacher. The SNA will also be required to assist teachers in the supervision of pupils with special needs during assembly, recreational and dispersal periods, school visits, walks and similar activities. This applies to assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene.

To help to raise standards of achievement of all pupils.

This form of support for pupils is achieved through being involved at whole class level in activities that can support the teacher such as listening to reading, assisting with art, games and P.E and preparing classroom materials.

Recruitment Procedures

The recruitment procedures for the appointment of ancillary staff (SNAs) to Scoil Mocheallóg National School are as follows:

- The post is advertised in the local newspaper
- The nature of the post is stated and the applicant is asked to supply references / referees
- The closing date is listed as 2 weeks after the insert of the advertisement
- The selection Board gives at least one weeks notice of interview
- Agreed criteria is agreed prior to interview and applied to all candidates
- The Selection Board consists of the Chairperson of the Board of Management, Principal and an independent assessor with an appropriate gender balance
- A marking scheme is used and retained as a record
- All appointments are subject to Board of Management approval and the provisions of the Employment Equality Act.

The successful candidate is required to furnish the Board with:

- a) A medical cert
- b) A Garda Clearance Cert
- c) A signed Confidentiality Clause

On Appointment

On appointment, each SNA is required to:

- Sign a contract of employment and a Confidentiality Clause
- Supply school administration with P.P.S number, telephone number etc.
- Asked to become familiar with circulars detailing sick leave, maternity leave, leave of absence etc.
- Sign the D.E.S appointment form

Classroom Procedure

- The pupils address the SNA in a respectful manner.
- The SNA will have a work station adjacent to the child in their care
- The SNA must refer all matters on curriculum, classroom management, discipline etc. to the classroom teacher
- Written reports may be required by the classroom teacher on individual children on a case by case basis

Information received on children, and observations made in classrooms, need to be handled sensitively and carefully. Parents with questions or issues about school policy or practice should be referred directly to the class teacher or the SEN co-ordinator or the Principal. This applies to direct face- to face communication or indirect telephone communication. (It is not appropriate for parents to have a phone number of a member of staff).

Contract of Employment

The SNAs in Scoil Mocheallóg School are not specifically assigned to an individual child but rather to the school as a whole. However, during lunch break each SNA must have direct responsibility for a particular child. A change in the contract of employment for SNAs encompassing the above was signed by each individual SNA in October 2005. The school operates a "last in first out" Policy. However, it must be noted that all positions are up for regular review in association with the D.E.S, the B.O.M, N.E.P.S, and N.C.S.E.

Staff Meetings

The SNAs may be required to attend Staff Meetings when issues of relevance to their own particular work is up for discussion. The Principal will have a structured staff meeting with the SNAs at least once per term. On days of In-Service ancillary staff may be required to attend school to complete tasks laid out by class teachers/Principal. It is the Policy of the school that all staff (mainstream and ancillary) take lunch break together in the staff room when supervision and other duties allow.

Hours of Work

The full time SNA is expected to work 32 hours per week and the part-time SNA is expected to work their allocation of hours per week. In addition 12 additional days per year outside of the normal school year must be worked. These days are at the discretion of the Board of Management in consultation with the individual SNAs.

Training

Regular training is provided for SNAs when appropriate. This may coincide with in-service days for mainstream staff or is availed of when appropriate courses become available through the local Education Centre.

Success Criteria

This Policy is geared to making a difference to the teaching and learning of Special Needs Children in our school. We will know that the Policy is achieving its aims when

- Children with Special Needs are included in selected whole school activities without disruption to mainstream class procedures
- Children are experiencing a safe and stimulating environment
- The Special Needs children are becoming independent learners and acquiring life skills
- The Special Needs child is reaching the targets set out in Individual Education Plans

Implementation and Review

The teachers and SNAs, supported by the Board of Management, will implement the plan. It will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Ratification and Communication

This Policy will be circulated to the Board of Management for approval.

Rev. Canon William Fitzmaurice
Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 06-05-2014