

Special Needs Assistant Policy (not applicable 2012-2014)

Introduction:

The need for a policy on the inclusion of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) into the whole school development of St. Michael's school evolved from the inclusion of our school in the SNA Value for Money review 2009 and following discussions with the DES Inspector Suzanne Conneely.

The Policy was devised using a consultative process with the teaching staff and is guided by the relevant legislation such as The Education Welfare Act 2000, the EPSEN Act 2004 and D.E.S Circulars 07/02, 08/03, 24/03, 13/04, 02/05.

Presently there is one SNA in our school.

Rationale:

The policy was formulated so that

- All staff have clear guidelines on procedures within the school
- Each SNA can see him/herself as contributing positively to the learning experiences of the children and the overall efficiency of the school
- A culture of fairness, transparency and equality is in operation throughout the school

Aims:

- To outline the role of the SNA in a whole school context
- To ensure the effective deployment of SNAS to meet the identified needs of students with special needs
- To enable the SNA to be an effective support to the children in his/her care
- 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.

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Guidelines

Staff Roles

Principal

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
- Responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of the SNAs' contribution to the needs of the students.
- Responsibility for managing areas of conflict, which may arise, with the assistance of the Deputy Principal.
- Responsibility for co-ordinating meetings with SNAs.

The Teachers

- Identify the appropriate tasks to be completed by the SNAs.
- Roster, manage and monitor the work of the SNAs in his/her class.
- Ensure SNA support is available for those who need it in a class situation and when integrating.
- Assume responsibility for Individual Education Plans (IEP's) in consultation with all relevant people including SNAs.
- Collaborate with the SNAs.
- Devise list of tasks to be undertaken by the SNAs on in-school planning days or when there are curriculum meetings.

The Special Needs Assistant

- The SNAs are considered an important part of the school team
- The SNA always works under the direction of the class teacher.
- Each SNA has a duty to maintain confidentiality.
- Each SNA has a duty of care to the student.
- 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.

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The role and responsibilities of the SNA in St. Michael's School are as follows:

- Assistance with clothing, feeding, intimate care, toileting, general hygiene, general care and observation.
- 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 work and keeping them on task. It may also include tasks such as escorting groups of children to work in areas outside the classroom, boarding and alighting from buses and cars, preparing gym equipment, assisting in P.E and Art classes etc. The SNA will help supervise children during break times. They are expected to bring any observations to the attention of either the class teacher or the Principal.
- The SNA can also play an important part by supporting the work of other agencies and professionals such as the Speech Therapist, Physiotherapist, Behaviour Therapist and Occupational Therapists under the guidance of the class teacher. The SNA will also be required to assist teachers in the supervision of pupils during assembly, recreational and dispersal periods, school visits, walks and similar activities.
- To fully participate in the life of St. Michael's School. The School's Introductory Statement and vision aspires to provide a safe, caring environment which enables and encourages children to develop educationally and grow emotionally. As individuals they should experience and learn tolerance, respect, appreciation and awareness of other human beings and the world around them.
- To help to raise standards of achievement of all pupils. This form of support for pupils is achieved through being involved in activities that can support the teacher such as systems of communication, reading stories, listening to reading, assisting with art, drama, sensory activities, games, P.E and preparing classroom materials.

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Recruitment Procedures

The recruitment procedures for the appointment of SNAS are carried out as per Circular SNA 03/03. On application, evidence of previous experience will be required in C.V., certs, work experience etc.,

On appointment, each SNA is required to:

- Produce evidence of garda vetting
- Supply evidence of medical fitness
- Sign a contract of employment
- 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 SNA must refer all matters on curriculum, classroom management, discipline etc. to the classroom teacher.
- Recording sheets may be required by the class teacher on individual children on a case by case basis.

Information received on children, and observations made in classrooms need to be handled sensitively, carefully and with the utmost confidentiality. Parents with questions or issues about school policy or practice should be referred directly to the class teacher or the Principal. This applies to direct face- to face communication, home/school communication notebook or indirect telephone communication.

Contract of Employment

The school will operate a “last in first out” policy. However, it must be noted that all positions are up for regular review in association with the Department of Education and Science, the National Council for Special Education and the Board of Management.

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Staff Meetings

- The Principal/Deputy Principal will have a regular meeting with the SNA.

Reporting Procedures

1. All SNAs are expected to report directly to the class teacher. In the event that the class teacher is absent then to the Principal or in her absence the Deputy Principal.
2. Incident forms must be filled following incidents/accidents/injury/observed bruises.
3. The **exception** to this reporting procedure is in the case of concerns re **Child Protection. In this instance report directly to the Designated Liaison Person who is the Principal and in her absence the Deputy Designated Liaison Person the Deputy Principal** These positions have been authorised by the Board of Management.

Hours of Work

The full time SNA is expected to work 32 hours per week. In addition 12 additional days per year outside of the normal school year must be worked. These days will be agreed by both the Principal and the SNA. Lunch and breaks are on a roster for all staff.

Training

Induction of new SNAs is provided by the class teacher and the principal. Many courses take place in Sligo Education Centre and SNAs are encouraged to undertake professional development. All staff members need to update their training and knowledge on a regular basis. SNAs must familiarise themselves with school policies and procedures. The policy folder is on shelf in office. The School Plan is in Principal's Office.

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Success Criteria

This Policy is focussed on making a difference to the teaching and learning of students with special needs in our school. We will know that the Policy is achieving its aims when

- Students are experiencing a safe and stimulating environment
- The students with special needs are becoming more independent learners and acquiring life skills
- The student with special needs is reaching the targets set out in Individual Education Plans.
- All staff experience team work and support.

Implementation and Review

The plan will be implemented by the teachers and SNAs supported by the Board of Management and will be reviewed in 2012 or if there are revisions by Circular.

Ratification and Communication

This Policy was circulated to all staff members and the Board of Management for approval.

Ratified by Board of Management on 28/05/09

Signed *San O'Mahony*
Chairperson, Board of Management
Fr Dan O'Mahoney