



Powerstown Educate Together National School

Role of the Special Needs Assistant

This policy has been formulated by Powerstown ETNS and is guided by relevant legislation such as The Education Welfare Act 2000, the EPSEN Act 2003 and D.E.S. Circulars 07/02, 08/03, 24/03, 13/04, 02/05 to inform teachers, SNA's and parents of the Role of the Special Needs Assistant

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Introduction:

The need for this policy is for the inclusion and clarification of the role of Special Needs Assistants (SNA'S) into Powerstown Educate Together National School. Presently, all classes has access to an SNA.

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 EPSEN Act 2004 and D.E.S Circulars 07/02, 08/03, 24/03, 13/04, 02/05, 59/2006. 37/2013

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

Principal

The principal has responsibility for:

- 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 SNA's contribution to the needs of designated children, in consultation with the class teacher
- Responsibility for the provision of in-service training
- Set tasks to be **completed** when the children are not in school
- Managing areas of disagreement, which may arise, with the assistance of the Deputy Principal/ a member of the ISM team

SEN Teachers

- Identify the appropriate tasks to be completed by the SNAs, with approval of the class teacher.
- 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, including the SNAs
- Set regular observation targets with SNA
- Ensure the filing of SEN observations from SNA each Friday/ last day of week.

Class Teachers

The class teacher will be responsible for:

- Providing suitable work for the SNA to engage in.
- Planning for the term or the year with the SNA. This planning meeting will take place at the end of September every year. These planning meeting will be organised outside of class time at a time mutually agreeable to both the SNA and the teacher.
- A copy of this plan will be put in the class teacher's planning folder, given to the SNA and given to the Principal.
- A timetable may be drafted for the SNA if required.

- Providing a suitable seating arrangement for SNA/Special Needs child in the mainstream setting
- Collaboration with the SNA
- Devising a list of classroom tasks to be undertaken by the SNA on in-service days
- To view daily, SEN children's observation grids

The Role of the SNA - Implementation Procedure

There are 6 SNAs presently employed in Powerstown Educate Together National School. The SNAs in Powerstown Educate Together National School are not specifically assigned to an individual child but rather to the school as a whole.

Each SNA is 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.
- 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 PETNS is as follows:

- To assist the teacher in whatever way is necessary to help the child/children integrate as fully as possible into school life.
- 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. It may also include tasks such as escorting groups of young children to work areas outside the classroom, boarding and alighting from buses, assisting in P.E and Art classes etc.
- The SNA (or another SNA if the assigned person is not available) will supervise their assigned children during break times and other children on yard. 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 inappropriate behaviour to the attention of either the class teacher or

the Principal. The SNA will also assist in the inclusion of their assigned children in games.

- Regarding supervision, the SNA's assist with supervision, but the chief responsibility lies with the supervising teacher and they must supervise all areas of the playground, or on a wet day, all rooms while on supervision.
- 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 as required.
- 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. (In accordance with school policies in these areas)
- 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.
- Children should not have easy opt-out clauses from normal school work. Teacher recognises that Special Needs child is ultimately the teacher's responsibility and the SNA is there to assist the teacher in allowing the child to receive as normal an education as possible.
- Children should not be allowed to see the SNA as "a court of appeal" if, for instance the teacher does not give them the response they want.
- Adults in the school should be very careful about speaking about children in the school within earshot of other children. All such discussions should not take place in classrooms unless these classrooms are empty of children.
- Every effort should be made to maintain our Special needs children in their classrooms for the full school day. In exceptional cases of gross misbehaviour or emotional trauma, where this seriously impacts on the learning of the other children, the child should be withdrawn by the SNA for a brief period. The decision to withdraw rests with the teacher.
- Appropriate contact with children: All adults and children in the school are entitled to their personal space, Personal space should not be invaded. There should be a

minimum of physical contact with children. Friendly gestures such as a handshake or patting a child on the shoulder are considered normal healthy contact provided that it is not the same child that this happens to. Emotional support, when it is needed should in the main, be given verbally and with supportive gestures and facial expressions.

- SNA to be present at formal meetings (e.g. IEP meeting /staff meeting / staff development) if required.
- SNA to complete daily observation grids on each SEN child they work with
- SNA required to show SEN observations to class teacher at the end of each day & discuss
- SNA's must meet with class teacher(s) daily to discuss concerns, timetables and activities for the coming day
- SNA required to give observations to SEN team each Friday and discuss targets.
- SNAs must abide by school's Health and Safety Procedures at all times.
- SNAs must abide by school's Child Protection Procedures at all times

Recruitment Procedures

The recruitment procedures for the appointment of ancillary staff (SNAs) to Powerstown Educate Together National School are as follows:

- The post is advertised on educationposts.com
- 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 week's notice of interview
- Agreed criteria is agreed prior to interview and applied to all candidates
- The Selection Board consists of the School Manager/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, patron approval and the provisions of the Employment Equality Act.

The successful candidate is required to furnish the Board with:

- a) Fitness to Work Cert (MedMark)
- b) Garda Clearance Cert
- c) Signed Fixed Term Contract (12 months)
- d) Signed Confidentiality Clause
- e) Statutory Declaration
- f) Form of Undertaking

On Appointment

On appointment, each SNA is required to:

- ✓ Sign a fixed term contract of employment (12 months) and a Confidentiality Clause
- ✓ Supply school administration with P.P.S. number, telephone number etc.
- ✓ Sign the D.E.S. appointment form
- ✓ Asked to become familiar with circulars detailing sick leave, maternity leave, leave of absence etc.
- ✓ Becoming familiar with and follow school policies and procedures
- ✓ Participate in mentoring programme.
- ✓ Successfully complete probationary period, which is concluded by meeting with Chairperson.

End of Fixed Term Contract

- ✓ The NCSE advise the school of allocated SNA positions for the forthcoming year in May / June.
- ✓ All SNA's on staff are informed verbally, by principal, of NCSE allocation to the school for the forthcoming year.
- ✓ All SNA's are verbally informed and informed via email of any advertisement of positions and interview dates by principal.

Classroom Procedures

- The pupils may address the SNA by their first name in keeping with school policy
- The SNA will have a work station somewhere in the classroom.
- The SNA must refer all matters on curriculum, classroom management, discipline etc to the classroom teacher.
- SNAs should remain aware that confidentiality is of the utmost importance at all times.
- Supervise and assist specific pupils / groups of pupils as requested by the class teacher.
- Assist pupils in focusing/organising themselves while commencing and preparing tasks.
- Ensure pupils remain on task for duration of lesson.
- Keep daily observations of targeted children (see school template).
- Keep informal class records under the guidance of the class teacher.
- Written reports may be required by the classroom teacher on individual children on a case by case basis,
- Support the class in general during independent/group work/activities.
- Interaction with other adults during class teaching time/ independent or group activity should be kept to a minimum.
- If an SNA is absent for a certified length of time, every effort will be made to try and find a substitute.

Information received on children, and observations made in classrooms, need to be handled sensitively, carefully and confidentially.

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 or indirect telephone communication. (It is not appropriate for parents to have a phone number of staff).

Yard Duty

The SNAs in Powerstown ETNS are not assigned to an individual child but rather to the school as a whole. However, during lunch break, each SNA (or another SNA if the assigned person is not available) must have direct responsibility for a particular child/children. It is the responsibility of the SNA to encourage the child they are in charge of to engage in play with other children, to monitor their behaviour and to watch out for them. However in watching out for the particular child, they must be mindful of all children and encourage integration of children with special needs

Contract of Employment

All SNA's in Powerstown ETNS have a 12 month fixed contract.

Special Needs Assistants will be placed on seniority list once they successfully complete their probationary period (see circular 59/2006).

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 are required to attend Staff Meetings as issues of relevance to their own particular work is up for discussion at the beginning of each meeting. The principal will have a structured staff meeting with the SNAs at least once per term. On days of In-service ancillary will be required to attend school to complete tasks laid out by class teachers/Principal.

Hours of Work

Part time post (0.75)

0.75 of a SNA post is 24 hours per week. **1 Croke Park Hour is added weekly to make 25 hours per week.** This is the equivalent to 5 hours a day (5 hours). The hours of work for .75 of an SNA is from 8:10am – 1:40pm, which includes 10 minute tea break (10.00 – 10.10am / 10.20 – 10.30am) and 20 minute lunch break (11.40 – 12noon/ 12.30 – 12.50pm). SNA's are also required

to complete 54 Croke Park Hours, decided at end of previous school year. **1 Croke Park Hour is added weekly to make 25 hours per week.**

Part time post (0.83)

0.83 of a SNA post is 26.56 hours per week. This is the equivalent to 5.3 hours a day (5 hours, 20 minutes). The hours of work for .83 of an SNA is from 8:20am – 2:10pm, which includes 10 minute tea break (10.00 – 10.10am / 10.20 – 10.30am) and 20 minute lunch break (11.40 – 12noon/ 12.30 – 12.50pm). SNA's are also required to complete 60 Croke Park Hours, decided at end of previous school year.

Full time post

A full post of an SNA is 32 hours per week. This is the equivalent to 6.4hours a day (6 hours 24 minutes). The hours of work for a full time SNA is from 8:10am – 3pm, which includes 10 minute tea break (10.00 – 10.10am / 10.20 – 10.30am) and 20 minute lunch break (11.40 – 12noon/ 12.30 – 12.50pm). SNA's are also required to complete 72 Croke Park Hours, decided at end of previous school year. ..

Training

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

The principal will highlight a variety of courses during they year that may be of benefit to the SNA and SEN pupils.

All SNA's are encouraged to participate in at least one CPD course during a given academic year.

Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures:

Powerstown Educate Together National School implement grievance and disciplinary procedures for Special Needs Assistants as outlined by circular 72/2011. All Special Needs assistants must adhere to the terms of circular 72/2011.

Introduction:

1. Procedures are necessary to ensure that discipline is maintained in schools and that disciplinary measures can be applied in a fair and consistent manner. Apart from considerations of equity and natural justice, the maintenance of a good industrial relations atmosphere requires that acceptable procedures be in place and be observed.
2. Such procedures serve a dual purpose in that they provide a framework, which enables management to maintain satisfactory standards, and SNAs to have access to procedures whereby alleged failures to comply with these standards may be fairly addressed.
3. The essential elements of any procedures for dealing with disciplinary issues are that they be rational and fair, that the basis for disciplinary action is clear, that the range of penalties that can be imposed is well defined and that an appeal mechanism is available.
4. Procedures should be reviewed and updated periodically so that they are consistent with changed circumstances, development in employment legislation and case law and good industrial relations practice generally.
5. The employer reserves the right to amend timescales by mutual written agreement between the parties.
6. The new procedures in relation to discipline will apply where a disciplinary procedure is invoked after the date of this circular regardless of when the issue which is the subject of the disciplinary procedures occurred. Where a disciplinary procedure has commenced prior to the date of the circular the disciplinary procedure already invoked shall continue to apply.

General Principals:

1. The main purpose of this circular is to set out for the guidance of the boards of management and SNAs, the general principles which shall apply in the operation of disciplinary procedures.
2. The right to representation is recognised. This does not include the informal stage. For the purposes of these procedures, the reference to 'employee representative' shall be understood to mean a colleague of the SNAs choice (who consents to be present) who is serving in the same school or an authorised trade union representative but not any other person or body unconnected with the school.

3. It is essential that staff be managed appropriately, fairly, and consistently in all aspects of their work. Many problems relating to work, conduct, performance, attendance and/or other such issues can be dealt with before reaching the point at which formal disciplinary action is contemplated by management.
4. Where disciplinary action is warranted, management must ensure that SNAs, against whom disciplinary measures are proposed, are dealt with in a fair and equitable manner.
5. The following principles apply:

- i. Natural Justice and Fair Procedures:**

6. details of any issues are put to the SNA concerned;
 7. the SNA concerned is given the opportunity to respond fully to any such issues;
 8. the SNA concerned is given the opportunity to avail of the right to be represented during the procedure;
 9. the SNA concerned has the right to a fair and impartial determination of the issues concerned, taking into account any representations made by, or on behalf of, the SNA and any other relevant or appropriate evidence, factors, or circumstances.
 10. The employer expects and demands adequate standards of work, conduct, performance and attendance from SNAs. Every SNA is personally accountable for his/her own work, conduct, performance and attendance. Early intervention at the appropriate level to address perceived inappropriate behaviour is desirable for all parties.
 11. Nothing in this procedure however, shall prevent the employer from holding a disciplinary meeting and imposing a disciplinary sanction(s) at a more advanced stage of this procedure appropriate to the nature of the alleged offence. Furthermore, the employer reserves the right to discipline any SNA up to and including immediate dismissal in the case of serious misconduct.
 12. Whilst it is anticipated that SNAs will co-operate fully with this disciplinary procedure, any failure to co-operate will not prevent the processing of an issue under this procedure to conclusion. An SNA who fails to co-operate in a disciplinary procedure will also be in breach of his or her terms of employment and will be subject to disciplinary action.
 - 13. The provisions of this circular apply to all SNAs other than SNAs serving in a probationary capacity.**

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 plan will be implemented by the teachers and SNAs supported by the Board of Management and will be reviewed in June 2016.

Ratification and Communication

The policy was ratified by the school's Board of Management