



Powerstown Educate Together National School

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POWERSTOWN EDUCATE TOGETHER NATIONAL SCHOOL

Role of the Special Needs Assistant (S.N.A.)

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 30/2014, 02/05, 59/2006, 35/2016, 72/2011 AND 03/03, TO INFORM TEACHERS, S.N.A.'S AND PARENTS OF THE ROLE OF THE SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANT

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Rationale	2
Aims.....	2
The Role of the S.N.A.....	2
Classroom Duties.....	2
Yard Duties.....	3
Whole-School Duties	4

Meetings.....	4
Important Points to Note.....	5
Role of Other Staff Members.....	6
Principal.....	6
Continuum of Support Teachers.....	6
Class Teachers.....	7
Employment Issues.....	7
Recruitment.....	7
Appointment to a Position.....	8
End of Fixed Term Contract.....	9
Contract of Employment.....	9
Hours of Work.....	9
Part-Time Post (0.5).....	9
Part time post (0.75).....	9
Part time post (0.83).....	10
Full time post.....	10
Training.....	10
Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures.....	10
Success Criteria.....	12
Implementation and Review.....	12
Ratification and Communication.....	13

INTRODUCTION

This policy was devised in order to clarify the role of Special Needs Assistants (S.N.A.s) in Powerstown Educate Together National School and to promote the inclusion of S.N.A.s within classroom practices and routines.

The policy was developed following a consultative process with all interested parties, and is guided by the relevant legislation such as The Education Welfare Act 2000, the EPSEN Act 2004 and D.E.S Circulars 30/2014, 02/05, 59/2006, 35/2016, 72/2011 and 03/03.

RATIONALE

The policy was formulated so that:

- All staff have clear guidelines on procedures within the school
- Each S.N.A. can see themselves as contributing positively to the learning experiences of the children and to 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 S.N.A.s as valuable members of staff in a whole school context
- To ensure the effective deployment of S.N.A.s in enhancing the social skills and self-esteem of the special needs child
- To enable the S.N.A. 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 S.N.A.
- To clarify the tasks and duties to be undertaken by the S.N.A.

THE ROLE OF THE S.N.A.

There are currently 7 S.N.A.s employed in Powerstown Educate Together National School. The S.N.A.s in Powerstown Educate Together National School are not specifically assigned to an individual child but rather to the school as a whole.

Each S.N.A. is considered an important part of the school team. S.N.A.s carry out duties of a non-teaching nature relating to the additional care needs of pupils within the school. The S.N.A. works under the direction of the class teacher. While the teacher plans lessons and directs learning, the S.N.A. provides support to the teacher, and as such, supports the pupils and the teaching of the curriculum.

CLASSROOM DUTIES

- ✓ To assist the teacher in whatever way is necessary to promote the inclusion of all children into classroom life.
- ✓ To support pupils with additional care needs as required, e.g. feeding, administration of medication, toileting and general hygiene, mobility and orientation around the classroom, sensory regulation activities, withdrawal from the classroom when necessary and communication. In supporting pupils with care needs

such as those listed, S.N.A.s strive to promote the development of independence skills as outlined in a pupil's Individual Education Plan (I.E.P.).

- ✓ To foster the participation of pupils with additional needs in the social and academic processes of the class, e.g. assisting with preparation of workspaces and materials, helping students to maintain focus and attention, assisting with transitions between lessons, supervising and assisting pupils in activities set by the teacher, and encouraging pupils to engage in social and leisure activities.
- ✓ To support pupils with additional needs to develop skills of independence. The school does not encourage the 'Velcro model' whereby a S.N.A. is assigned to a particular child or class group for a prolonged period of time. It is the policy of the school to rotate S.N.A.s between classes as required.
- ✓ To support the work of outside professionals, such as Speech Therapists and Occupational Therapists, under the guidance of the class teacher, e.g. assisting a child to engage in recommended exercises or activities.
- ✓ To help to raise the standard of achievement among all pupils. This form of support for pupils is achieved through involvement at whole-class level in activities such as listening to reading, assisting with educational games, facilitating reinforcement activities, supervising independent and group work and preparing classroom materials. If a S.N.A. is working independently with a group of children, activities should be of a non-teaching nature (i.e. revision, familiarisation or reinforcement activities). S.N.A.s should be provided with adequate direction and support from a teacher before being asked to commence an activity with a child/group of children.
- ✓ To participate in planning meetings (e.g. I.E.P. meetings /staff meetings / staff development/co-operative teaching meetings) as required.
- ✓ To complete daily observation notes on each child they work with
- ✓ To show observation records to the class teacher at the end of each day and discuss
- ✓ To meet with class teacher(s) daily to discuss concerns, timetables and activities for the coming day. The S.N.A. must refer all matters on curriculum, classroom management, discipline, etc. to the classroom teacher.
- ✓ To give observations to the C.O.S. team each Friday and discuss targets
- ✓ To keep interaction with other adults during class teaching time/ independent or group activity to a minimum.

YARD DUTIES

S.N.A.s in Powerstown ETNS are not assigned to an individual child but rather to the school as a whole. However, during lunch break, each S.N.A. may have direct responsibility for a particular child/children. To support the

development of S.E.N. pupils social skills and the skill set of S.N.A.s, Special Needs Assistants are generally assigned to a group of pupils/classes that the SNA does not engage with in the classroom on a daily basis.

It is the responsibility of the S.N.A.:

- ✓ To assist with the supervision of children during break times and on yard, with particular attention to children with additional needs. S.N.A.s must be aware at all times of the position of children with additional needs 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.
- ✓ To assist in the inclusion of children with additional needs in games.
- ✓ To adhere to the school Code of Behaviour in the management of conflict or behaviour issues.
- ✓ Support the school's Playworks programme on yard.
- ✓ Maintain a positive and fair relationship with all pupils

WHOLE-SCHOOL DUTIES

The work of an S.N.A. often takes place outside of the classroom. In all working environments, it is the responsibility of the S.N.A.:

- ✓ To maintain confidentiality at all times. Information received on children, and observations made in classrooms, need to be handled sensitively. Confidential issues relating to children in the school should not be discussed in the corridors or within ear-shot of adults or children who do not work with the child.
- ✓ To assist teachers in the supervision of pupils with additional needs during assembly, recreational and dispersal periods, school visits, walks, swimming lessons and similar activities. This may include assistance with boarding and alighting from buses, dressing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene. (In accordance with school policies in these areas)
- ✓ To abide by the school's Health and Safety Procedures at all times
- ✓ To abide by the school's Child Protection Procedures at all times

MEETINGS

Regular and open communication between staff is encouraged in order to ensure the successful implementation of learning programmes, procedures and initiatives within the school. Regular meetings are organised in order to facilitate this communication.

- ✓ Staff Meetings are held once per month to discuss issues relating to the work of both teachers and S.N.A.s
- ✓ S.N.A.s meet with the special needs coordinator / principal once per month
- ✓ S.N.A.s meet with class teachers and C.O.S. teacher twice per month (or more often if necessary) to discuss issues relating to whole-class teaching, learning and management
- ✓ S.N.A.s meet with class teachers/C.O.S. teacher once per month (or more often if necessary) to discuss the learning progress of students with additional needs, to review learning targets and to review teaching strategies and resources
- ✓ S.N.A.s participate in I.E.P. meetings biannually (October and February) to review and update pupils' individual learning programmes. Attendees and I.E.P. meetings may include the class teacher, C.O.S. teachers, the pupil, parents and other relevant professionals.
- ✓ Parent-teacher meetings are held biannually (November and May). S.N.A.s may be asked to attend these meetings when appropriate.
- ✓ Additional informal meetings and communication may occur between teachers, S.N.A.s and parents on a daily/weekly basis.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO NOTE

- The pupils may address the S.N.A. by their first name in keeping with school policy
- If an S.N.A. is absent for a certified length of time, every effort will be made to try and find a substitute.
- 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).
- Children should not have easy opt-out clauses from normal school work. Class teachers recognise that they are ultimately responsible for the learning of all children in their class, including children with additional needs. The S.N.A.'s role is to assist the teacher in allowing the child to receive an inclusive and meaningful education.
- Children should not be allowed to see the S.N.A. as "a court of appeal" if, for instance the teacher does not give them the response they want.
- Children with additional needs should be included in all activities within the mainstream classroom where possible. 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 S.N.A. 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 each time. Emotional support, when it is needed, should be given verbally and with supportive gestures and facial expressions

ROLE OF OTHER STAFF MEMBERS

PRINCIPAL

The principal has responsibility for:

- Assigning role-specific and child-specific tasks to the S.N.A. in association with the class teacher
- Co-ordinating the integration of the S.N.A. and devising his or her role profile
- Monitoring the effectiveness of the S.N.A.s contribution to the needs of designated children, in consultation with the class teacher
- The provision of in-service training
- Setting 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

CONTINUUM OF SUPPORT TEACHERS

Teachers on the Continuum of Support Team have the responsibility for:

- Identifying appropriate tasks to be completed by S.N.A.s, with the approval of the class teacher
- Ensuring S.N.A. support is available for those who need it in a class situation and when children with additional needs are integrating into mainstream
- Assuming responsibility for the coordination of student support plans, in consultation with all relevant bodies, which includes S.N.A.s
- Outlining behaviours which should be emphasised in S.N.A. observation notes in order to monitor learning progress
- Ensuring that S.N.A. observation notes are filed in pupil folders at the end of each week/month

CLASS TEACHERS

The class teacher has the responsibility for:

- Providing suitable work for the S.N.A. to engage in
- Consulting with the S.N.A. in relation to short and long-term planning
 - Co-teaching planning meetings take place bi-monthly with the class teacher and C.O.S. teacher
 - I.E.P. meetings take place bi-annually (October and February)
 - Additional meetings can be scheduled between the S.N.A. and the class teacher/C.O.S. teacher as required
- Participating meaningfully in the development of support plans for pupils with additional needs and supporting the S.N.A. in the implementation of this plan within the class. A copy of this plan will be accessible to the class teacher and the S.N.A. on the pupil's file on Aladdin.
- A timetable may be drafted for the S.N.A. if required
- Providing a suitable work space for the S.N.A. in the mainstream setting to work with pupils with additional needs or complete paperwork
- Devising a list of classroom tasks to be undertaken by the S.N.A. on in-service days
- Monitoring and being aware of observation notes taken by the S.N.A. in relation to children with additional needs

EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

RECRUITMENT

The recruitment procedures for the appointment of ancillary staff (S.N.A.s) 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

- 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

APPOINTMENT TO A POSITION

On appointment, each S.N.A. 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
- ✓ Become familiar with circulars detailing sick leave, maternity leave, leave of absence etc.
- ✓ Become familiar with and follow school policies and procedures
- ✓ Participate in a 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 S.N.A. positions for the forthcoming year in May / June.
- ✓ All S.N.A.s on staff are informed verbally, by the principal, of NCSE allocation to the school for the forthcoming year.
- ✓ All S.N.A.s are informed verbally and via email of any advertisement of positions and interview dates by the principal.

CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT

All S.N.A.'s in Powerstown ETNS have a 12 month fixed contract.

Special Needs Assistants will be placed on a 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.

HOURS OF WORK

PART-TIME POST (0.5)

0.5 of a S.N.A. post is 16 hours per week. S.N.A.s employed for 0.5 of a post are also required to complete 36 Croke Park Hours. 1 Croke Park Hour is added weekly to make 17 hours per week. This is equivalent to 3.4 hours (3 hours 24minutes) per day. The hours of work for .5 of a S.N.A. is from 9am – 12.30pm, which includes a 10 minute tea break (10.00 – 10.10am / 10.20 – 10.30am).

PART TIME POST (0.75)

0.75 of a S.N.A. 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 a S.N.A. 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). S.N.A.'s are also required to complete 54 Croke Park Hours, decided at the end of the previous school year.

PART TIME POST (0.83)

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

BREAK TIMES

To ensure that S.E.N. pupils are adequately supported and supervised, S.N.A.'s have staggered break times. Break times are not flexible and S.N.A.s must take their break time at designated times.

TRAINING

Regular training is provided for S.N.A.s when available. This may take place within the school or when appropriate courses become available through the local Education Centre.

The principal and S.E.N. Co-ordinator will highlight a variety of courses during they year that may be of benefit to the S.N.A.. All S.N.A.'s are encouraged to participate in at least one CPD activity 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 S.N.A.s 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 the circular is to set out for the guidance of the boards of management and S.N.A.s, 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 S.N.A.s 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 S.N.A.s, 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:

- ❖ details of any issues are put to the S.N.A. concerned;
- ❖ the S.N.A. concerned is given the opportunity to respond fully to any such issues;
- ❖ the S.N.A. concerned is given the opportunity to avail of the right to be represented during the procedure;

- ❖ the S.N.A. 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 S.N.A. and any other relevant or appropriate evidence, factors, or circumstances.
- ❖ The employer expects and demands adequate standards of work, conduct, performance and attendance from S.N.A.s. Every S.N.A. 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.
- ❖ 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 S.N.A. up to and including immediate dismissal in the case of serious misconduct.
- ❖ Whilst it is anticipated that S.N.A.s 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 S.N.A. 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.

6. The provisions of the circular apply to all S.N.A.s other than S.N.A.s 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 S.N.A.s supported by the Board of Management and will be reviewed in June 2017.

RATIFICATION AND COMMUNICATION

The policy was most recently reviewed in August 2016 and changes were ratified by the Board of Management in September 2016.