



Bandonbridge National School **Special Needs Assistant Policy**

Date ratified by the BoM: 04/11/2015

Date of review: 21/02/2018

Date of review: 24/09/2020

Date of review:

Introduction

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, 0030/2014. In Bandonbridge N.S. we wish to provide the necessary supports to allow pupils with special educational needs to participate in inclusive education. Such supports include access to Special Needs Assistants (SNAs).

Rationale

The policy was formulated:

- ❖ To provide staff and parents with clear guidelines and expectations with regard to 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 children and the overall efficiency of the school.
- ❖ To ensure that each pupil is happy, safe, secure and is enabled to access the curriculum effectively.
- ❖ To ensure best practice and continuity in how we work in Bandonbridge N.S.

Relationship to the characteristic spirit of the Bandonbridge N.S.

In Bandonbridge N.S. we welcome all children and their parents and endeavour to provide a holistic and welcoming environment where all children feel supported and safe. Providing educational, emotional, social, and spiritual supports is key to the well-being of the children, staff, and parents in the school. Special Needs Assistants provide an invaluable service to pupils with special educational needs in the school in achieving the success they deserve and supporting them to be the best that they can be.

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 pupils with special educational needs.
- 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.
- To ensure accountability and effective record keeping.

‘Special Needs Assistants are recruited specifically to assist in the care of pupils with disabilities in an educational context’ (Guidelines on Special Needs Assistants, INTO).

The Special Needs Assistant works under the direction of the Principal teacher to provide support for pupils with specific educational needs which impede their ability to fully access the curriculum.

SNAs are not only part of the staff of the school but are part of a team which is involved in translating policy into practice in order to further the aims of the school.

Staff Roles

Principal

- Ensuring that the statutory employment requirements have been met, on behalf of the Board of Management: appointment forms, contracts, Garda vetting, statutory declarations, forms of undertaking etc.
- Assigning role specific and child specific tasks to the SNA in association with the class teacher.
- Co-ordinating the integration and devising the role profile of the SNA.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the SNAs' contribution to the needs of designated pupils.
- Promoting in-service training. The Board of Management may fund or part-fund this professional development.
- Managing areas of conflict which may arise, with the assistance of the Deputy Principal.

Special Education Teacher

- Assume responsibility for coordinating the Pupil School Support File planning A Continuum of Support in consultation with all relevant parties including the pupil (where appropriate), parents, class teachers, SNA, principal and NEPS Psychologist (if applicable), other outside professionals as per the school's SEN Policy.
- Briefing SNAs on social stories, OT exercises etc. which the SNA should reinforce throughout the day with pupils with SEN.
- The Deputy Principal is the Support Teaching Coordinator and liaises with class teachers, support teachers and SNAs regarding timetabling, support plans etc.

Class Teacher

- Ensure SNA support is available for those who need it in a class situation and identify the appropriate tasks to be completed by the SNA (SNA duties document)
- Provide a suitable seating arrangement for the SNA and the relevant pupils in the mainstream setting.
- Collaborate with the SNA with regard to planning and timetabling, Covid-19 procedures, extra-curricular activities etc.
- Devise a list of appropriate classroom tasks to be undertaken by the SNA when time is available e.g. photocopying, help with sanitation, staff meetings etc.
- Liaise with SNA when reviews are necessary to formulate a Personal Pupil Plan.

Special Needs Assistant

- There are 4 full-time SNAs currently employed in Bandonbridge National School. They are considered an important part of the school team and carry out duties of a non-teaching nature both in the classroom and the playground.
- SNAs should arrive at 8:30 a.m. to prepare for the day and should remain in the school for at least 10 minutes after school finishes to escort relevant pupils to buses and the front yard for collection by parents and to tidy the classroom at the end of the day.
- The SNA always works under the direction of the class teacher or Principal. For the SNA to work most effectively, it is important that they have input in formulating their duties and then follow the defined responsibilities as outlined in the SNA duties document for the particular pupils to which they have been assigned.

- The teacher plans lessons and directs learning. The SNA provides support in assisting the relevant pupils to access the curriculum in line with the primary care needs.
- The SNA will be provided with the SNA policy.
- The SNA should be familiar with all other relevant school policy, in particular the Code of Behaviour and Child Protection guidelines.
- The SNA will be familiar with the pupil's plan on the Continuum of Support.
- The SNA may be consulted prior to and/or involved with meetings with outside professionals e.g. Occupational Therapists.

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 the part-time SNA is expected to work the number of hours a week as outlined by the NCSE. The SNA is required to work normal classroom hours and in addition to attend before and after school in order to help with the preparation and tidying of classrooms. The time before and after school to be agreed by the Board of Management (10/15 minutes approx. before and after school) • In addition, the SNA must be available for an additional 72 hours per year outside of the normal school year with a pro rata scale for part time SNAs. These hours are at the discretion of the Board of Management in consultation with the principal and the SNAs. Generally, these additional hours will be used for field trips outside of school hours, school functions/events, staff meetings, relevant CPD etc.
Confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due discretion is expected in all matters of a confidential nature. An SNA should never discuss a child's special need with the child – they may not be aware of it or parents may have chosen not to inform them of their assessed need. • All information regarding the pupils in the school is on a need-to-know basis: do not share information with members of staff not directly involved with individual pupils. • Pupil files may not be removed from the school building. • If an SNA become privy to a Child Protection disclosure from any pupil in the school, he/she must bring this information to the DLP/Principal immediately and may be asked to make and sign a written account of the disclosure. • SNAs should only speak to a pupil's parent if directed to by the class teacher but should never discuss the pupil's educational or behavioural progress with parents. This is the class teacher or Support Teacher's responsibility.
Times And Timetables.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNAs will be given a timetable by the Principal/Deputy Principal at the start of the year. Full-time SNAs have a 10-minute break in the morning and 20 minutes break in the afternoon. • As part of the SNA contract, full-time SNAs are required to spend 10 minutes each morning and each evening preparing, tidying, sanitising, and organising the classroom with the class teacher. SNAs also work 72

	<p>hours outside the school calendar at the discretion of the Board of Management and the Principal. This is on a pro rata basis for part-time SNAs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNAs will also receive PE and O.T. timetables so that they are aware when the hall is free. • Class teachers will give the SNAs a copy of the class timetable and a list of specific duties, pointing out where the child will work with class or at own level during the day. Suitable times for movement breaks may also be identified if needed.
<p>Planning And Reporting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information provided by the SNA will be incorporated into the pupil's Support Plan/IEP. • The SNA may have access to the pupil's IEP. • Time for the teacher with the SNA regarding planning should be organised regularly. Teachers should outline expectations for child and the SNA. • SNAs must refer all matters on curriculum, classroom management, discipline, or incidents of concern etc. to the classroom teacher.
<p>Level and type of classroom assistance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information received on children, and observations made in classrooms, needs to be handled sensitively and carefully. • The focus will be on an 'Enabling Mode' and avoiding the 'Velcro Mode'. 'Enabling Mode' means assisting the child to become as independent as possible by at times moving away from the child. 'Velcro Mode' means always being near the child requiring support. Insofar as possible stand close to the child, rather than sitting close to the child, when giving support. • Avoid over-talking and providing a 'running commentary' of what to do next - this allows the child to concentrate and think independently. • Explain how to do tasks but avoid giving the solution to a task or problem. Instead, encourage the child to come up with the answer by questioning and prompting. • Facilitate movement/quiet breaks regularly to avoid overwhelming the pupils; know the triggers. The class teacher must be informed where the pupil is going. • Repeat instructions to ensure the child understands what is required. It may be necessary to record instructions on a mini whiteboard. • In doing this, academic, mental, social, and physical independence is promoted and fostered. The child is given the opportunity to interact with peers in a context other than with SNAs. • Assisting pupils with SEN to access assistive technology: charging batteries, care of laptops/iPads, saving and printing work completed, if necessary. • Helping the class teacher or SET prepare materials/equipment for lessons for the benefit of the pupil with SEN.
<p>Physical Contact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to have as little physical contact as possible, if the child's attention is required, place a hand lightly on the child's shoulder. • Physical contact may be required to protect a pupil from harm to themselves or others. • Help pupils with physical disabilities, where necessary, with changing

	<p>for swimming etc. while encouraging independence – with written parental consent only.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions of affections from a child towards an SNA should be handled sensitively but also appropriately. • To carry out some activities, an SNA may need to guide the child's body. This should be done by gently touching the shoulder, back, arms, hands, or lower leg only.
Intimate Care – Child-specific only: letter of permission required from parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNAs may be required to assist children with toileting and hygiene. • Intimate care needs will be dealt with on a case to case basis in conjunction with parents, principal and other professionals as required. • A physical care meeting may be held prior to the IEP meeting to address care issues. • The school's Child Protection Policy will be followed in all such instances. • 2 SNAs may be needed to facilitate intimate care needs.
Parental Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNAs are encouraged to build a positive relationship based on trust with the parents of children with SEN. • If required at the end of the school day, SNAs will escort the child to the school gate/bus and/or greet parents. • It is helpful to chat about how the day went or upcoming events but never pass on information regarding a child's educational progress. • Parents with questions, requests, or concerns regarding 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. Parents should contact teachers for information on the child's progress. • It is not appropriate for parents to use a private phone number of a member of staff or to contact SNAs outside of school.
Seating Arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An SNA should only stand/sit with a child with SEN when and where deemed necessary by the class teacher. An SNA should try to maintain social distance where possible. • PPE may be worn by the SNA. Hand washing and/or sanitation must be carried out as outlined in the school Covid-19 Response Plan and Risk Assessment. Workstations and pupil's desk/resources should be cleaned regularly/after use. • Allow some time during the day where the child does not have an SNA with him/her. • SNAs should avoid blocking the view of another child. • SNAs should also have their own chair in the classroom, socially distant from the pupils being supported.
Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision of pupils should take place from a distance if possible (2m) • Supervision in the yard should promote social interaction and inclusion. Before school and after breaktime SNAs should assist pupil to join a line/pod in the yard outside the classroom door and await the teacher. SNAs should ensure pupils have washed their hands/used

	<p>sanitiser as outlined in the Covid-19 Response Plan and Risk Assessment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 the neighbouring teacher should be requested to supervise the class until the teacher returns. • Be mindful of danger of a child absconding, or of any other identified specific risk. • SNA should refer children to the teacher on duty for first aid and /or other issues. • An SNA will supervise pupils with SEN moving from one learning environment to another, on field trips etc.
Timeout Sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeout sessions may take a variety of forms: movement, relaxation, sitting at a timeout table, time to chat with an adult. They may be within the classroom, outdoors, in a Support Room etc. The class teacher must be informed where the pupils and SNA are going. • Time breaks are on a case by case basis. However, certain care needs require frequent interventions including withdrawal of a pupil from a classroom when essential: This may be for safety or personal care reasons, or where a child may be required to leave the class for medical reasons or due to distress on a frequent basis. • Movement breaks should follow a specific timetable to be most effective. The content may be worked out with the help from Physiotherapists and/or Occupational Therapists in conjunction with the teacher and a specific programme should be followed. • Breaks may also be quiet times where pupils relax with sensory equipment if a movement break would be overstimulating or upsetting; SNAs and class teachers need to be able to distinguish which type of break a pupils with SEN needs most on any given day • The teacher should be informed of what is happening and of progress being made. • Working one to one is best when helping a child to learn a new skill/game, however working in pairs or with a small group may develop social skills, inclusion, and teamwork. Due to short span of concentration movement breaks are necessary daily and may last up to 10 minutes.
Medication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's Administration of Medicines Policy should be understood and followed at all times. • In circumstances where prescribed medication has to be administered in school, the protocol will be agreed on a case by case basis and written instructions given to staff involved. • Store all medicines appropriately in line with our Health and Safety Policy. • When recommended, check hearing aids daily. The SNA should be aware where spare hearing aid batteries are stored, if necessary. • Supervising or checking blood sugar levels of children with diabetes, using an epi-pen, applying/changing dressings or other roles directly applied to an SNA will necessitate additional training and permissions from parents/guardians.

Relevant Work	<p>SNAs work under the guidance of the classroom teacher and need to be clear about where help is needed. SNAs should not be left in sole charge of a pupil or a class. They may however work on their own with children provided that the work in question has been allocated by the class teacher. SNAs must act as a positive role model for the children in their care at all times by assisting children to build self-esteem and to develop independence. SNAs must be sensitive to the feelings of the SEN pupil when addressing the pupil and using an appropriate tone of voice. Matters of discipline are for the class teacher, SET and/or the Principal. An SNA must never discipline children.</p> <p>See also Appendix 1</p>
Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNAs are invited to attend Staff Meetings, particularly where when issues of relevance to their own particular work are up for discussion. • Structured meeting will be held between SNA and relevant members of staff to discuss pupils' on-going progress, items for inclusion in IEP or PPP (with a particular focus on developing a care plan to meet the care needs of the pupil concerned and the review of such plans), work practices etc.

Developing the Role of the SNA

- It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that the SNA is clear about where help is needed. Planning together is essential.
- It is also the teacher's responsibility to affirm and outwardly value the role of the SNA.
- An atmosphere of mutual understanding and respect is fostered.
- Regular meetings with the Principal/Deputy Principal and the SNAs are good opportunities to discuss issues and address concerns.
- So that children 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 different pupils with SEN during the course of pupils' schooling.
- SNAs allocated to children with physical disabilities will support them as needs require both within the classroom and outside it. This may include shadowing the child while in the playground or helping them to make their way in and out of the school.

The SNA remit does not include:

- Teaching the child
- Correcting any pupil's work. This is the duty of the teacher only.
- Reprimanding any pupil. All issues regarding behaviour should be referred directly to the class teacher.
- Spending long periods of time preparing/cleaning any classroom after school. This is the duty of the School Cleaning Staff.
- Supervising the whole class while the teacher is absent.
- Supervising a group of pupils without the presence of the assigned child.
- Talking to any assigned pupil's parents regarding their child's progress or welfare. This is the duty of the class teacher.

Contract of Employment

An SNA is employed by the Board of Management and directed by the Principal in conjunction with the Board. SNAs are not specifically assigned to an individual child but rather to the school as a whole. However, during lunch break, each SNA will have responsibility for particular children. 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 DES, the BoM, NEPS, and NCSE.

Seniority

The sequence in which SNAs are appointed to the school determines their seniority. Seniority is important in determining which SNA should be offered additional or reduced hours or have their employment terminated when the allocation of the school is reduced. This listing will be used in determining 'last in', first out' for the purpose of redundancy.

A list showing seniority of permanent SNAs is displayed on the staff notice board in the staff room at the beginning of each academic year,

Child Protection Policy

Each SNA will be given a copy of the Child Protection Policy. It is imperative that this policy is read and followed meticulously. All staff are required to sign the Staff Confirmation Sheet to confirm that they have read all the required documentation in relation to Child Protection before the BoM meeting in Term 1.

Success Criteria

This policy is aimed at making a difference to the teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs in our school. We will know that the policy is achieving its aims when:

- SNAs have positive working relationships with the pupils in their care as well as the staff in the school.
- Pupils with specific educational needs are experiencing a safe and stimulating environment.
- The children are included in whole school activities.
- The children are becoming independent learners and acquiring life skills.
- The child is reaching the targets set out in their Support Plans

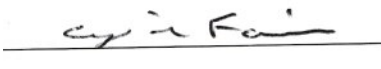
Ratification and Communication

This Policy was originally formally ratified by the Board of Management on 4th November 2015. This review was completed in September 2020 and ratified by the BoM.

This policy has been made available to all school personnel. A copy of this policy will be made available to the DES and the Patron if necessary. This policy is available to parents on the school website and in the office.

Implementation and Review

The plan will be implemented by the SNAs as an integral part of the SEN Team that also includes the Class Teacher, the Special Education Teacher, and the Principal immediately. The policy will be reviewed as the needs of the pupils change, current practice in the school is deemed insufficient or when legislation dictates.

Signed: 

Chairperson, Board of Management

Appendix 1 The following care needs are outlined in Circular 30/2014 The Special Needs Assistant (SNA) scheme to support teachers in meeting the care needs of some children with special educational needs, arising from a disability.

Primary Care Needs

- **Assistance with feeding:** where a child with special needs requires adult assistance and where the extent of assistance required would overly disrupt normal teaching time.
- **Medicine/medical conditions:** where a child requires adult assistance to administer medicine and where the extent of assistance required would overly disrupt normal teaching time.
- **Toileting and general hygiene:** promoting the importance of personal hygiene and report any difficulties to the class teacher.
- **Mobility and orientation:** on an ongoing basis including assisting a child or children to access the school, the classroom, with accessing school transport, or helping a child to avoid hazards in or surrounding the school.
- **Interventions including withdrawal of a pupil:** accompanying individuals or small groups who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom for one reason or another.
- **Supervision of SEN pupils:** at recreation, assembly, and dispersal times including assistance with arriving and departing from school for pupils with special needs. Assisting on out-of-school visits, walks, examinations, and similar activities. Accompanying and supervising their assigned pupil on swimming outings/lessons (Where direct assistance is needed to change into swimming gear, specific parental consent must be received in writing).
- **Moving or lifting of children:** operation of hoists and equipment.
- **Assisting with severe communication difficulties:** using simple, clear, concise instructions when speaking. Enabling curriculum access for pupils with physical disabilities or sensory needs and those with significant and identified social and emotional difficulties.

The following tasks are the type of **secondary care** associated tasks which SNAs will often perform, but only once they have been allocated on the basis of the primary care support tasks listed above. The indicative list of secondary associated tasks listed below is not definitive and is reflective of the tasks detailed in Circulars 08/02 and 71/2011.

1. Preparation and tidying of workspaces or assisting a child who is not physically able to perform such tasks to prepare and tidy a workspace, to present materials, to display work, or to transition from one lesson activity to another.
2. Assisting children to stay on task, follow classroom procedures and interact appropriately.
3. Repeating instructions to ensure the SEN children understand.
4. Assisting children in establishing and maintaining a constant routine.
5. Assistance with accessing the curriculum as far as is possible for children with SEN.
6. General assistance to class teachers, under the direction of the Principal, with duties of a non-teaching nature. (SNAs may not act as either substitute or temporary teachers).

7. Participation with school improvement planning, where appropriate, and co-operation with any such changes of policies and practices arising from the school improvement process.
8. Other duties appropriate to the class as may be determined by the needs of the pupils and the school from time to time. SNAs may be re-assigned to other SEN pupils when the assigned SEN pupil is absent.
9. On days of in-service, SNAs are required to attend school to complete tasks laid out by class teachers/SEN team/Principal.
10. At the start of a school year, SNAs will prepare workstations/resources for SEN pupils.