



North Dublin Muslim National School

Ratoath Road

Dublin 7

**Special Needs Assistant Policy**

May 2018

## **Introductory Statement**

This policy was formulated by the staff of North Dublin Muslim National School in 2017/2018 in conjunction with the In-School Management Team and the school's Co-Managers.

## **Rationale**

The policy was formulated:

- To provide staff and parents with clear guidelines and expectations with regard to the Special Needs Assistant (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 best practice and continuity in how we work at the North Dublin Muslim National School.

## **Relationship to the characteristic spirit of the school**

The school adopts a holistic approach to the education and development of each child and to the enhancement of teaching and learning processes. An effective Special Needs Assistant policy will identify and clarify the roles of the SNA in supporting individual needs of pupils and to enable them to be successful and effectively contributing to the development of the school.

## **Aims of policy**

Through the implementation of this policy, the school aims to:

- facilitate the recognition of SNAs as valuable members of staff in a whole-school context.
- ensure the effective deployment of SNAs in enhancing the social skills and self-esteem of the children with Special Educational Needs.
- enable the SNA to be an effective support to the class teacher.
- provide optimum learning experiences for all children through judicious use of the skills and strengths of the SNA.
- clarify the tasks and duties to be undertaken by the SNA.
- ensure accountability and effective record keeping.

## **Staff Roles:**

### *The Principal*

- 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.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of the SNAs contribution to the needs of designated children.
- Promoting continuing professional development of SNAs
- Managing areas of conflict which may arise, with the assistance of the Deputy Principal.

### *Special Educational Teachers*

- Assume responsibility for Pupil Profiles in consultation with all relevant parties including the parents, SNA, class teacher and principal.

### *Class Teachers*

- Ensure SNA support is available for those who need it in a class situation and identify the appropriate tasks to be completed by the SNAs.

- Provide a suitable seating arrangement for the SNA and child in the mainstream setting.
- Collaborate with the SNA with regard to planning and timetabling.
- Devise a list of pupils to work with or tasks to be undertaken by the SNA when time is available.

#### *Special Needs Assistants*

- SNAs 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 principal.
- The teacher plans lessons and directs learning. The SNA provides support in assisting the pupil to access these lessons.
- The SNA should be familiar with all relevant school policies, which are available on the shared drive.

### **Guidelines for Special Needs Assistants**

#### *Hours of Work*

- Full-time SNAs are expected to work 32 hours per week and part-time SNAs will work pro-rata hours. Full time SNAs will work from 08:30 to 14:54 and SNAs working an infant day (0.83) will work from 08:30 to 13:48.
- Twelve additional days per year outside of the normal school year must be worked. These days/extra hours are at the discretion of the Co-Managers in consultation with the Principal.

#### *Confidentiality*

- SNAs will carry out their duties in a caring, professional and confidential manner.
- Due discretion is expected in all matters of a confidential nature.
- Information on SEN pupils shall only be disclosed on a need to know basis to the relevant people.
- While supporting the pupil's development in ways that will foster security and confidence, SNAs must be aware that they have a professional responsibility to share information with school management in order to safeguard children.

#### *Parental Contact*

- All staff members are encouraged to develop positive relationships based on trust with parents.
- Parents with questions or concerns should be referred directly to the child's class teacher; SNAs should not engage in such conversations with parents.
- Parents should be encouraged to contact class teachers for information on the child's progress.
- If required at the end of the school day, SNAs should escort the children they are working with to the school gate to their parents.
- Class teachers primarily communicate with parents through homework diaries or daily logs; SNAs should discuss with class teachers any issues which they believe should be raised with parents. If an SNA feels an issue relating to a child which has been raised with a teacher has not been addressed, it can be raised with the Principal.

#### *Times and Timetables*

- SNAs will be given a timetable by the Principal at the start of the year.

- SNAs break times are staggered to ensure efficient SNA support is available in the school at all times.
- SNAs are required to engage in classroom preparation and other relevant tasks each morning.
- SNAs also work 12 days outside the school calendar at the discretion of the Co-Managers and Principal. This is on a pro rata basis for part-time SNAs.
- Class teachers will give the SNA a copy of the class timetable and point out when the child will work with their class or independently during the day. Suitable times for time-outs will also be identified where appropriate.

#### *Planning and Preparation for Working In-Class*

- It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that the SNA is clear about when help is needed' class teachers and SNAs should work collaboratively when planning and evaluating a child's progress.
- Teachers and SNAs should liaise in advance of lessons to ensure that each know their roles and responsibilities within the lesson and the content which they will be covering.

#### *Level and Type of Assistance*

- SNAs are deployed within mainstream classes in the school and within the school's ASD class.
- Information received on children, and observations made in classrooms, need to be handled sensitively and confidentially.
- An SNA should aim to enable the child they are working with to complete their tasks; they should avoid a 'running commentary' of what to do next and encourage the child to concentrate and think independently.
- SNAs should explain how to do tasks and should encourage the child to come up with the answer through questioning and prompting.
- SNAs should ensure that there is minimum disruption to other pupils and teachers.

#### *Physical Contact & Intimate Care*

- Some pupils may require assistance with toileting or changing if they have soiled themselves. While assistance in changing clothing may be required in some situations, independence should be encouraged.
- SNAs should be guided by the school's Intimate Care Policy.
- SNAs should ensure that any required physical contact is witnessed by another member of staff.

#### *Seating Arrangements*

- An SNA should only sit with a child when and where deemed necessary by the class teacher and SNA.
- SNAs and teachers should allow some time during the day where children don't have an SNA sitting with them to encourage independence.
- Consideration should be given to SNA seating to ensure all children have a clear view and are able to complete their work.
- Where appropriate, SNAs should have access to a table where they can work independently with children.

### *Supervision*

- Supervision in the yard and in class at lunchtimes should promote social interaction and inclusion.
- 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.
- SNAs should be mindful of the risk of a child absconding and ensure risk reducing measures in place are implemented.

### *Timeout Sessions*

- Pupils may require timeout sessions at various stages of the day; these may be pre-planned or on an as-needs basis.
- Pre-planned time out sessions should follow a specific timetable where possible in order to be most effective.
- The content of timeout sessions should be planned in conjunction with the teacher and a specific programme should be followed based on Physiotherapist and/or Occupational Therapist recommendations where possible

### *Medication*

- The school's Administration of Medicines Policy should be followed at all times.

### *Relevant Work:*

SNAs work under the guidance of the classroom teacher. Circular 71/2011 outlines the following as a non-exhaustive list of duties an SNA may complete:

#### *1) SEN pupil-centred activity:*

- Provide input with regard to care needs for the preparation of Individual Education Plans
- Assist with care planning
- Provide assistance and information in relation to care needs for preparation of physiological and school reports and files
- Assist transition process in relation to care needs for pupils from one school or education centre to another
- Assist SEN pupils to display their work
- Assist in analysis of attendance for SEN pupils
- Assist teachers and/or principal in maintaining a journal and uniform care monitoring system for SEN pupils
- Assist Principal or other teacher designated by Principal in preparing briefing profiles on SEN pupils
- Under the direction of the Principal or designated teacher, assist in compiling information for staff for the return to class in the new academic year e.g. special section in staff handbook, particularly in relation to care and assistance required in class for SEN pupils

#### *2) Learning resource administration*

- Preparation, organising, tidying of class room, resource room, learning support room, ASD classrooms and such other rooms used by SEN pupils, and appropriate equipment and resources used, including those related to ICT
- Prepare materials and equipment in classrooms used by SEN pupils including cleaning any specialist equipment used by SEN pupils, e.g. computer keyboards, special desks

- Provide assistance for SEN pupils in relation to assembling their class materials, displays, programmes, books and preparing their materials for class.

3) *Class and school planning and development*

- Participation with school development planning and policy development, where appropriate, including reference to particular assistance required by SEN pupils to participate fully in school
- Planning for the following day's classes; in particular where there may be additional care or assistance requirements for certain classes or projects
- Liaising with the class teacher
- Liaising with other teachers such as resource teachers and/or Principal
- Meetings with parents as appropriate with the agreement and guidance of the Principal and/or class teacher
- Preparation for and attendance at whole team meetings and staff meetings
- Participation in and assistance with school operational structures which are in place to facilitate the full integration and participation of SEN pupils in school

4) *Training and development*

- Participating in training (nationally or school mandated)
- Inform colleague SNAs of best practice based on professional and experiential knowledge in relation to the educational and care needs of SEN pupils, with the agreement and guidance of the Principal, and/or class teacher
- Up-skill in use of ICT as learning tools for SEN pupils;

5) *Other:*

- Other work which is appropriate to the grade as may be determined by the needs of the SEN pupils and the school.

Should Circular 71/2011 be superseded by a new circular in the future, this non-exhaustive list of duties may be altered in accordance with any changes outlined in the circular.

*Staff Meetings & SNA Meetings*

- As part of an SNA's additional hours, SNAs will attend staff meetings.
- SNAs will also attend SNA meetings with the Principal and/or Deputy Principal where issues which relate directly to SNAs or are specific to SNAs can be discussed.
- Items can be added to the agendas of staff or SNA meetings by emailing them to the principal at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting.
- A rota will be drawn up at the beginning of the year for the taking of minutes. Minutes will be typed and sent to the Principal, who will then forward them to all SNAs.

*Team Spirit*

- SNAs should endeavour to create an environment which is conducive to achieving the aims of the North Dublin Muslim National School. An atmosphere of mutual understanding and respect is fostered.
- SNAs should recognise that the aims of SNAs are best achieved in a caring, mutually supportive and respectful manner.
- Where grievances with colleagues arise, they should be dealt with as outlined in Circular 72/2011.

- All staff have a responsibility to affirm and outwardly value the role of the SNA.

*Developing the Role of the SNA*

- It is suggested that the SNA, rather than work exclusively with one child, should work with the whole group of children around the designated child’s table to avoid the child with Special Educational Needs developing a dependence on the SNA.
- 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 yard or helping them to make their way in and out of the school.
- On days when the teaching staff are attending in-service courses, SNAs will report for work as usual. They will be assigned duties by the principal.

*Contract of Employment & Seniority*

- All SNAs are employed on a standard SNA contract. The commencement date of Special Needs Assistants at the school determines their seniority. In the event of two SNAs being appointed or commencing duty on the same day, seniority is determined by the points achieved at interview. A list of SNA seniority will be kept in the office and will be communicated clearly to SNAs.
- Seniority is important in determining which Special Needs Assistant(s) should be offered reduced hours or have their employment terminated if the SNA allocation of the school is reduced. The seniority listing will be used in determining ‘last in, first out’ for the purpose of redundancy.

**Success Criteria**

This SNA policy will be considered successful if:

- All staff have a clear understanding of the role SNAs play within the school.
- All staff have an appreciation for the role of SNA
- SNAs have an understanding of their roles and responsibilities
- SNAs deployed within classes are utilised effectively

**Implementation and Review**

This policy will be implemented from June 2018 and reviewed in 2022 or sooner should the need arise.

**Ratification & Communication**

This policy was ratified by the Co-Managers in May 2018 and communicated to school community thereafter.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_