



**St. John the Baptist Boys' National School**  
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# Special Needs Assistant (SNA) Policy

*This policy has been formulated by St John the Baptist BNS and is guided by the relevant legislation such as The Education Welfare Act 2000 and the EPSEN Act 2004 and relevant DES Circulars.*

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## School Details:

Name: St John the Baptist BNS  
Address: Pennywell, Garryowen, Limerick

Telephone: 061 312 411  
Email: office@sjtbb.ie  
Roll Number: 16715H  
Principal: David Nicholas

## **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 best practice and continuity in how we work in St John the Baptist BNS
- To ensure that 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:**

The policy 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 the children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- 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
- To provide staff and parents with clear guidelines and expectations with regard to the SNA role

## **Staff Roles:**

### **The Principal has responsibility for**

- 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 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 Educational Teachers**

- Assume responsibility for IEPs in consultation with all relevant parties including the parents, SNA, class teacher and principal as per the school's SEN policy.

### **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 classroom tasks to be undertaken by the SNA when time is available e.g. Staff meetings, 10 minutes before/after school, etc.

## SNA's

- SNA's will be considered an important part of the school team and carry out duties of a non-teaching nature.
- SNA's are deployed in a manner which best meets the care support requirements to the children enrolled in the school.
- The SNA scheme is designed to:
  - Provide additional adult assistance to children with special educational needs who also have additional and significant care needs
  - Facilitate the attendance of those pupils at school and also minimise disruption to class or teaching time for the pupils concerned or their peers
  - Develop independent living skills
- 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 the curriculum.
- The SNA should be familiar with all relevant school policies, in particular the school Code of Behaviour, Child Protection, Anti-Bullying and Special Needs Assistant policies.
- SNA's are not allocated to individual pupils but to schools, as a school based resource, in the same manner that teachers are allocated to schools.

## Guidelines for Special Needs Assistants:

<b>Hours of Work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 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 outlined by the NCSE. In addition up to 12 additional days per year outside of the normal school year must be worked. These days are at the discretion of the Board of Management in consultation with the Principal and SNA's.</li> </ul>
<b>Confidentiality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Due discretion is expected in all matters of a confidential nature.</li> </ul>
<b>Times and Timetables</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● SNA's will be given a timetable by the Principal at the start of the year. SNA's have a 10 minute break in the morning and a 30 minute break in the afternoon.</li> <li>● As part of the SNA contract, SNA's are required to spend ten minutes each morning and evening preparing, tidying and organising the classroom. SNA's also work up to 12 days outside the school calendar at the discretion of the Board of Management and Principal. This is on a pro rata basis for part-time SNA's.</li> <li>● Class teacher will give the SNA a copy of class timetable also pointing out where the child will work with class or at own level during the day. Suitable times for time-outs will also be identified if needed.</li> </ul>
<b>Planning and Reporting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● SNA should document progress and set targets made on given time period i.e. 2 months. This plan should also record any incidents where the care needs of the child are evident.</li> <li>● A copy of this SNA's plan should be given to SET, Principal and Teacher.</li> <li>● A copy of the SET's IEP should be given to the Teacher, Principal and SNA.</li> <li>● SNA should assist with the Personal Pupil Plan, with a particular focus on care needs.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Time for the teacher to meet with the SNA regarding planning should be organised once a month. Teacher should outline expectations for child and SNA.</li> <li>● SNA must refer all matters on curriculum, classroom management, discipline or incidents of concerns etc. to the classroom teacher</li> </ul>
<b>Level and type of classroom Assistance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Information received on children, and observations made in classrooms, need to be handled sensitively and carefully</li> <li>● 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.</li> <li>● Avoid over-talking and providing a ‘running commentary’ of what to do next – this allows the child to concentrate and think independently</li> <li>● Explain how to do tasks but avoid giving the solution to a task or problem. Instead encourage the child come up with the answer by questioning and prompting.</li> </ul>
<b>Physical contact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 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</li> <li>● Physical contact may be required to protect a pupil from harm to themselves or others</li> <li>● Help where necessary with changing for PE etc. while encouraging independence</li> <li>● Actions of affection from a child towards an SNA should be handled sensitively but also appropriately</li> <li>● 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.</li> </ul>
<b>Intimate Care Needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● SNAs may be required to assist children with toileting and hygiene.</li> <li>● Intimate care needs will be dealt with on a case to case basis in conjunction with parents, principal and other professionals as required.</li> <li>● A physical care meeting may be held prior to the IEP meeting to address care issues.</li> <li>● The school’s Child Protection Policy will be followed in all such instances.</li> </ul>
<b>Parental contact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● SNAs are encouraged to build a positive relationship based on trust with the parents of children with SEN</li> <li>● If required at the end of the school day, SNAs will escort the child to the school gate and greet the parent</li> <li>● It is helpful to chat about how the day went or upcoming events but do not pass on information regarding child’s educational progress</li> <li>● 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</li> </ul>

	<p>communication. Parents should contact teachers for information on the child's progress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It is not appropriate for parents to have a private phone number of a member of staff or to contact the SNA outside of school hours.</li> <li>● If there are any minor incidents put a note in the homework diary. Any major incidents should be reported to the teacher.</li> </ul>
<b>Seating Arrangements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● An SNA should only sit with a child with SEN when and where deemed necessary by the class teacher</li> <li>● Allow some time during day where child doesn't have an SNA sitting with him/her</li> <li>● SNAs should avoid blocking the view of another child</li> <li>● SNAs should also have their own chair and table in the classroom, not beside the child/children that they support.</li> </ul>
<b>Supervision</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Supervision of pupils should take place from a distance if possible</li> <li>● Supervision in the yard and lunch room should promote social interaction and inclusion. After lunch SNA should assist pupils to form a line on the yard outside the classroom door and await the teacher.</li> <li>● 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.</li> <li>● Be mindful of danger of a child absconding, or of any other identified specific risk.</li> </ul>
<b>Timeout Sessions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Time out sessions may be required as part of the pupil's IEP. These could take place in the classroom, in a Learning Support/Resource room, school hall or another suitable space.</li> <li>● Time out sessions are on a case by case basis.</li> <li>● Time out sessions should follow a specific timetable to be most effective. The content should be worked out with the help from Physiotherapists and/or Occupational Therapists in conjunction with the teacher and a specific programme should be followed.</li> <li>● Teacher should be informed of what's happening and of progress being made</li> <li>● 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 timeouts may be necessary daily.</li> </ul>
<b>Medication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The school's Administration of Medicines Policy should be understood and followed at all times</li> <li>● Administer medication as discreetly as possible in the classroom</li> <li>● Only prescribed medication should be given</li> <li>● Store all medicines appropriately in line with our Health and Safety Policy.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Relevant work</b></p>	<p>SNAs work under the guidance of the classroom teacher and should not be left in sole charge of a pupil or class. They may however work on their own with children provided that the work in question has been allocated by the class teacher. Work may include any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Primary care needs (assistance with feeding, medicine/medical conditions, toileting and general hygiene, mobility and orientation, interventions including withdrawal of a pupil, moving or lifting children, assisting with severe communication difficulties)</li> <li>● Preparation and tidying up of classrooms</li> <li>● Assisting school children to board and alight from school buses. Where necessary travel as escort during school hours on school buses may be required.</li> <li>● Special assistance as necessary for children with particular difficulties e.g. helping pupils with special educational needs with typing, writing, computers or other use of equipment</li> <li>● Assisting children to stay on task, follow classroom procedures and interact appropriately</li> <li>● Assisting children in establishing and maintaining a consistent routine</li> <li>● Assisting children to build self-esteem and to develop independence</li> <li>● Assistance with accessing the curriculum as far as is possible for children with SEN</li> <li>● Assisting on out-of-school visits, walks, examinations and similar activities.</li> <li>● Accompanying and supervising their assigned pupil on swimming outings</li> <li>● Where direct assistance is needed to change into swimming gear, specific parental consent must be received in writing.</li> <li>● Promoting the importance of personal hygiene and report any difficulties to the class teacher.</li> <li>● Assisting the teachers in the supervision of pupils during assembly, recreation and dispersal from the classroom for one reason or another.</li> <li>● Accompanying individuals or small groups who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom for one reason or another.</li> <li>● General assistance to the class teachers, under the direction of the Principal, with duties of a non-teaching nature. (Special needs assistants may not act as either substitute or temporary teachers. In no circumstances may they be left in sole charge of a class or group of children).</li> <li>● Participation with school improvement planning, where appropriate, and co-operation with any such changes with policies and practices arising from the school improvement process.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Engagement with parents of pupils with special educational needs in both formal and informal structures as required and directed by school management.</li> <li>● The encouragement of good attendance and punctuality</li> <li>● Acting as a positive role model for the children in their care</li> <li>● Other duties appropriate to the grade as may be determined by the needs of the pupils and the school from time to time. Special Needs Assistants may be re-assigned to other work appropriate to the grade when pupils with SEN are absent or when particular urgent work demands arise.</li> </ul>
<b>Staff Meetings</b>	SNA's may be required to attend Staff Meetings when issues of relevance to their own particular work are up for discussion. The Principal will have a structured staff meeting with the SNA's at least once per term. On days of In-Service ancillary, SNA's may be required to attend school to complete tasks laid out by class teachers/Principal.

### **Confidentiality:**

Information received on children, and observations made in classrooms, need to be handled sensitively and carefully and are often only to be shared with particular members of staff.

SNA's may be closer to parents than teachers, as they may themselves be from the immediate community, and may, or might have been, themselves parents of pupils in the school. Some parents may therefore consider them more approachable than teachers.

It is very important therefore, that the SNA recognises the rules of confidentiality which govern his/her role as a member of the school staff. No discussion of the child, the teacher, the class or the events of the school day should take place without consultation and agreement with the class teacher.

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 always appropriate for parents to have a phone number of a member of staff).

### **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
- Daily diaries or diaries recording significant events are essential
- An atmosphere of mutual understanding and respect is fostered
- Regular meetings with the principal/deputy principal and the SNA's 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 the whole group of children around the designated child's table. In that way several children in the classroom get the benefit of the SNA's support.
- 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.
- On days when the teaching staff are attending Continuing Professional Development (in-service) courses, SNAs will report for work as usual. They will be assigned duties to help the classroom organisation of the absent teachers i.e. preparation of classroom displays, organisation of the classroom libraries, preparation of teaching equipment, photocopying etc.
- Where existing staff are required to be trained to provide Sign Language or specialist training (Braille, Lámh, Sign Language, Augmentative/Alternative Interventions) to assist in the provision of support for children with a specific sensory impairment, the school will ensure that the most senior SNA staff are the staff that are trained.

## **Relations with Staff.**

Where there is more than one SNA in the school, SNAs should work together as a team collating with one another, consult one another verbally and when documenting relevant Plans for the betterment of the pupil's care needs and to ensure the care needs of pupils are catered for as much as possible in school or at school events.

If an SNA needs to communicate an important issue over and above day to day questions with management team, they should contact the Principal Teacher at a suitable time verbally so as Principal Teacher can convene a meeting that is convenient to both. Issues spoken about at arranged meetings will be documented by a member of management team and communicated to Board of Management as necessary. The Principal Teacher is responsible for co-ordination and supervision of SNAs. This may happen through Principal Teacher, Deputy Principal or Assistant 2 Principal, depending on the Roles of Responsibility for relevant school year. Roles of Responsibility and duties for management teachers are revisited annually and decided on by Principal Teacher, Deputy Principal and Board of Management. SNAs can facilitate teaching lessons within the classroom but must not undermine the responsibility and authority of the Class Teacher to teach. All staff in St John the Baptist BNS are expected to be respectful of each other's roles and create a positive working atmosphere in the school. The Teaching Principal manages the day to day running of the school and communicates as necessary with staff. SNAs follow instructions of Principal, Deputy Principal and class teacher as appropriate so as to ensure the care needs of the full school are met and to promote the smooth running of each school day.

## **Recruitment Procedures:**

The recruitment procedures for the appointment of ancillary staff (SNAs) to St John the Baptist BNS are as follows:

- The post is advertised in the newspapers and/or relevant websites
- The nature of the post is stated and the applicant is asked to supply references / referees
- The closing date is listed on the advertisement with an appropriate response window clarified - generally set at 2 weeks as a norm

- The selection Board gives at least one week's notice of interview
- Agreed criteria are agreed prior to interview and applied equally to all candidates
- The Selection Board consists of the nominated person from the Board of Management (usually the 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 of the process
- All appointments are subject to Board of Management approval, checking of references, meeting any Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) requirements, satisfactory Garda vetting, and the provisions of the Employment Equality Act.
- The SNA must agree to respect the ethos of our school.
- If an employer receives an application for a vacancy from one or more SNAs who are due to be made redundant and who furnishes the employer with a certified copy of Panel Form 1 (PF1), then the employer is obliged to offer the vacancy to one of those SNAs. This is subject to the SNA meeting any specific competencies and/or requirements to meet the special educational needs of the pupil(s) and will require an interview process to ascertain.

The successful candidate is required to furnish the Board with:

- a) A medical cert
- b) A Garda Clearance Cert
- c) A signed Confidentiality Clause.

## **On Appointment:**

On appointment, each SNA is required to:

- Sign a contract of employment and a Confidentiality Clause
- Supply school administration with PPS number, telephone number etc.
- Asked to become familiar with circulars detailing sick leave, maternity leave, leave of absence etc.
- Sign the DES appointment form
- Become familiar with the school's policies

## **Contract of Employment:**

SNAs are not specifically assigned to an individual child but rather to the school as a whole. However, during lunch break each SNA must have direct responsibility for a particular child. 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 special need assistants are appointed to the school determines their seniority. Seniority is important in determining which special need assistant(s) should be offered reduced hours or have their employment terminated when the allocation of the school is reduced. The seniority listing will be used in determining 'last in, first out' for the purpose of redundancy.

The Board of Management determines the seniority based on special need assistants' date of commencement of duty as an SNA in a school.

### **Success Criteria:**

This policy is aimed at making a difference to the teaching and learning of children with Special Educational Needs in our school. We will know that the policy is achieving its aims when

- children with Special Educational Needs are included in whole school activities
- children are experiencing a safe and stimulating environment
- the children are becoming independent learners and acquiring life skills
- the child is reaching the targets set out in Individual Education Plans and Personal Pupil Plans.

### **Ratification and Review:**

The policy was reviewed by the Board of Management in December 2020

The plan will be implemented by the teachers and SNAs supported by the Board of Management from January 2021. All SNA allocations are subject to annual review by the NCSE.

It will be reviewed every 2 years.

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

Date: December 2020

Chairperson, Board of Management

**Sample SNA Weekly Timetable School Year 20\_\_ - 20\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_**  
**Month: \_\_\_\_\_ Week 1 2 3 4**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Class</b>	<b>Pupils worked with</b>	<b>Work carried out</b>
8.30	Playground Duty		
8.40			
9.10			
9.40			
10.40: BREAK & Playground Duty			
11.00			
11.10			
12.20: LUNCH BREAK & Playground Duty			
12.50			
1.20			
2.20			
<b>Late Day: Tasks &amp; Class worked with:</b>			
<b>Additional information:</b>			

Kind Regards,

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Mr. Nicholas