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POLICY IN RELATION TO EMPLOYMENT OF SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANTS

Introductory Statement

This policy was formulated as a result of the following process:

1. A draft policy was formulated by the Principal and circulated to all staff. This document was compiled after reviewing similar policies in other schools where Special Needs Assistants are employed, Department of Education guidelines and literature written on the employment of Special Needs Assistants in Primary Schools.
2. Special Needs Policy was addressed as part of School Planning Day 11th December 2006. Issues discussed were:
 - a) How the S.N.A. can support the Principal?
 - b) How the S.N.A. can support the school?
 - c) How the school can support the S.N.A.?
 - d) Rotation of S.N.A.'s between Assisted Learning Class and Mainstream classes.

How will the S.N.A. support the pupil?

Special Needs Assistants are employed specifically to assist children with disabilities in an educational context. (Dept of Education circular 10/76)

The primary focus of the S.N.A. work is therefore to attend to the specific needs of the pupil to whom he/she has been assigned.

S.N.A.'s can support the pupil by:

1. Developing background knowledge of the specific needs of the pupil as well as information on specific educational needs.
2. Fostering independent learning skills and self-help/survival skills in the child.
3. Assisting the child with positive social integration and fostering peer acceptance.
4. Respecting the child as an individual.
5. Provision of regular positive feedback.

1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, to be fostered in order to contribute to the nurturing of the child's self esteem.

1. Maintaining confidentiality regarding all aspects of the child's life at school.

How will S.N.A. support the teacher?

- a) Assisting the teacher with the smooth running of the class.
- b) Providing regular feedback about the child.
- c) Participating in teacher-led activities for the class to facilitate role modelling.
- d) Assisting with labour intensive classroom duties in order to free up teacher.
- e) Maintaining confidentiality.
- f) Referring all queries in relation to the child's academic progress and social behaviour to the class teacher.
- g) Recording information.
- h) Assisting with division of class and distribution of worksheets when class teacher is absent.
- i) Help in setting targets, monitoring and evaluating programmes - teacher sets the 'what' but you may help with the 'how'.

How will the S.N.A. support the school?

- a) Yard supervision and supervision of the child in contexts other than the classroom.
- b) Attending appropriate in-service training.
- c) Respecting school structures and procedures and being flexible in relation to this.
- d) Upholding the ethos.
- e) Fulfilling duties as assigned by the Principal in order to ensure that the school day runs smoothly.
- f) Volunteering to use special skills for benefit of the school.
- g) Upholding confidentiality regarding all matters discussed within the school.
- h) Working as part of a team.
- i) Being discreet in relation to all aspects concerning school life.

How will S.N.A. be supported?

- a) Provision of clear job description outlining roles and responsibilities.
- b) Induction where S.N.A. is given clear background information on the individual child's difficulties and how he/she may experience these difficulties.
- c) Regular meetings between all S.N.A.'s, Principal and Deputy Principal.
- d) Provision of forum at staff meetings for open communication and conflict resolution.
- e) Support for S.N.A.'s to use special skills/interests/hobbies.
- f) Valuing opinions and suggestions of the S.N.A.'s and incorporating them, where appropriate into classroom practice.
- g) Access to resource material for personal and professional development.
- h) In-service training provided by members of teaching staff / other professionals in educational institutions.
- i) Positive feedback on a regular basis.

Whole school policies in relation to S.N.A.'s

Times of duty for S.N.A.'s is 8.30am to 3.00pm

The S.N.A.'s who are initially assigned to work in the Assisted Learning Class may be assigned to work with children in mainstream classes and vice versa, with S.N.A.'s who are assigned to mainstream classes. This rotation of S.N.A.'s will take place from time to time in the school.

When the child to whom the S.N.A. is assigned is absent:

- a) Talk to the class teacher to see if he/she has work that needs to be done.
- b) Refer to Principal to see if he/she has work to be done.
- c) Offer assistance to other class teachers who do not have an S.N.A.

While child is attending resource teacher/therapists/integration in mainstream classes.

- a) S.N.A. may accompany the child.
- b) Liaise with teacher re other assignments that need to be done.
- c) Work with another child.
- d) Make resources
- e) Assist with other classroom duties.

When the class teacher is absent and if the class is being split up, the Principal will decide whether the S.N.A. goes to another class to accompany the child, or is otherwise deployed.

If an incident of misbehaviour occurs on the yard in the absence of the class teacher, it is incumbent on the S.N.A. to report the incident either to the yard duty teacher, class teacher or both.

Before the pupils arrive into school (8.50am) and after they go home

(2.30pm), S.N.A.'s should offer assistance to teachers who do not have an S.N.A. The Principal may assign duties at these times also, if the need arises.

Roles of S.N.A. in Planning

S.N.A.'s have a role in feeding into the planning process through the following channels:

- a) Regular meetings with the class teacher.
- b) Meeting with the whole group of S.N.A.'s and Principal on a monthly basis / Staff meetings.
- c) Liaising with resource teachers.
- d) Attendance at school planning meetings if requested.

Rationale

- To clarify how the needs of the children, S.N.A.'s and the school in general can best be served, in terms of the school ethos.
- To clarify the role of the S.N.A. and elaborate on the vague job description available.
- As a result of no written policy or structure to deal with this new development in schools.
- Our school tries to provide the optimum environment for children to develop their personalities, academic abilities and life skills, and to provide opportunities for personal and professional development for those engaged in supporting that process.

Aims: See Introductory Statement for Aims.

Success Criteria:

- Raise the awareness of all staff and pupils to the particular issues affecting children with specific learning needs.
- Regular verbal feedback from S.N.A.'s to Principal / Class teacher / Staff Meetings.
- Increase the efficiency of teaching system within the school in relation to Special Needs.
- Increased self-esteem and independence.

Assessing effectiveness of S.N.A.

- Staff observation and feedback.
- Official reporting based on observations by agents working on behalf of Department of Education and Science, Health and Children and Health Service Executive.
- Parent Feedback

Roles and Responsibilities

This policy will be supported, developed and implemented by the Principal, teachers, inspectors and parents.

Implementation and Review

To be circulated as a draft policy to teachers and S.N.A.'s at Staff Meeting on February 2nd 2007.

Policy is to be presented at next meeting of Board of Management 29th January 2007

Implementation April 2007

Policy to be reviewed annually.