



Lucan Educate Together Policy on **Special Needs Assistants**

Policy Relating to the Role, Responsibilities and Employment of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) at Lucan Educate Together National School (L.E.T.N.S.)

Introduction and Rationale:

Our school believes in providing the optimum environment for children to develop their personalities, academic abilities and life skills. It is also committed to providing opportunities for the personal and professional development of all those engaged in supporting this process. As part of this process, this policy seeks to:

- Clarify, for our school community the role and responsibilities of the special needs assistants (SNAs) as valued members of the staff team at Lucan Educate Together National School (L.E.T.N.S.).
- Clarify how the needs of the children, SNAs and, therefore, the whole school can best be met within the framework of our school ethos.
- Ensure a culture and fairness and equality is seen to be promoted and endorsed throughout the school.
- Address procedures in relation to issues such as seniority and recruitment.

Aims:

- To facilitate the inclusion of SNAs as valuable members of staff in a whole school context.
- To ensure the effective deployment of SNAs in enhancing the learning potential, social skills and self-esteem of children with special educational needs (SEN).
- To enable each SNA to be an effective support to the class teacher.
- To provide optimum learning experiences for all children through the most effective use of the skills and talents of each SNA.
- To clarify the tasks and duties to be undertaken by SNAs in our school.

Staff Roles

Principal

The principal has responsibility for:

- Assigning role specific and child specific tasks to each SNA in association with the class teacher
- For co-ordinating the deployment and devising the role profile of each SNA
- Ensuring SNA support is available for those who need it in a class situation and when being included into mainstream.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of each SNA's contribution to the needs of designated children, in consultation with the class teacher
- The provision of relevant in-service training.

- Setting appropriate and relevant tasks to be undertaken 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 school senior management team

Learning Support/Resource Teachers

Members of the LSRT team will be responsible for:

- Helping to identify specific, appropriate tasks to be completed by the SNAs, with approval of the class teacher/principal.
- Assuming responsibility for I.E.P's in consultation with all relevant bodies, including the SNAs.
- Setting regular observation targets with each SNA as appropriate.
- Ensuring the filing of any SEN observations from SNAs on a regular basis.

Class Teachers

The class teacher will be responsible for:

- Providing suitable and appropriate work for the SNA to engage in.
- Planning for the term or the year with the SNA. These planning meetings will take place at regular intervals throughout the year. These planning meeting will be organised outside of class time at a time mutually agreeable to both the SNA and the teacher.
- A timetable may be drafted for the SNA if required.
- Providing a suitable seating arrangement for SNA/Special Needs child in the mainstream setting
- Working collaboratively with the SNA
- Devising a list of appropriate classroom tasks to be undertaken by the SNA at such times as direct support of a child is not necessary (e.g. when they are attending Learning Support/Resource).
- Reviewing observation notes etc. in relation to any child with SEN in their class.

The Role of the SNA – Guiding Principles:

- The SNAs in L.E.T.N.S. are not specifically assigned to an individual child but rather to the school as a whole.
- Each SNA is considered an important part of the school team and carry out duties of a non-teaching nature.
- Each SNA works under the direction of the class teacher/principal. However, their insights and ideas about the pupils they have responsibility for will inevitably contribute to the overall approach used to support the children.

- Teachers plan lessons and direct learning. The SNAs provide support to the teachers and through this to the pupils and to the teaching of the curriculum.

The role and responsibilities of the SNAs in L.E.T.N.S. are:

- To assist the teacher in whatever way is necessary to help the child/children be included as fully as possible in all social and academic aspects of school life.
- To offer any appropriate assistance required to enable a child to access the school curriculum as successfully as possible.
- Supervising and assisting individual/small groups of pupils in activities set by the teacher and promoting the inclusion of children with SEN in all aspects of class. This may also include tasks such as escorting groups of children to work areas outside the classroom, boarding and alighting from buses, assisting in P.E and Art classes etc.
- To supervise pupils with identified needs during break times and other children on yard. SNAs may also assist in the inclusion of particular children in yard games/activities.
- To enable the pupils they support to become more independent learners. (SNAs are encouraged to develop independence in the children through promoting their increasing involvement in both classroom and yard/free time activities and the development of daily living skills). It is the policy of the school to rotate SNAs between pupils with SEN, as required.
- To support the work by outside agencies such as Speech and Language Therapists (SLT) and Occupational Therapists (OT) under the guidance of the class teacher.
- To assist teachers in the supervision of pupils during assembly, recreational and dispersal periods, school visits, walks and similar activities. This applies to assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene. (In accordance with school policies in these areas)
- To help to raise standards of achievement of all pupils. This form of support for pupils is achieved through being involved at whole class level in activities that can support the teacher such as listening to reading, assisting with art, games and P.E and preparing classroom materials.
- To endorse established classroom behaviour management procedures.
- To observe appropriate contact with children: personal space should be respected. 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. Emotional support, when it is needed should in the main, be given verbally and with supportive gestures and facial expressions.
- To be present at formal meetings (e.g. IEP meeting /staff meeting / staff development) as required.
- To make observations on each child they work with and regularly discuss these observations with the class teacher. (Providing constructive feedback to pupils may also happen, as appropriate).

- To meet with class teacher(s) daily to discuss concerns, timetables and activities for the coming day.
- To follow the school's Health and Safety/Child Protection/Administration of medicines procedures at all times.

Classroom Procedures:

- All pupils will address the SNA by their first name in keeping with school policy
- Each SNA will have a work station somewhere in the classroom.
- Each SNA should confer with the class teacher on all matters e.g. curriculum, classroom and behaviour management etc.
- Supervise and assist specific pupils / groups of pupils as requested by the class teacher.
- Assist pupils in focusing/organising themselves while commencing and preparing tasks.
- Ensure pupils remain on task for duration of lesson.
- Keep informal class records under the guidance of the class teacher.
- Written reports may be required by the classroom teacher on individual children on a case by case basis.
- Support the class in general during independent/group work/activities.
- If an SNA is absent for a certified length of time, every effort will be made to try and find a substitute.

Confidentiality:

Information received on children, and observations made in classrooms, should always be handled sensitively, carefully and confidentially. Parents with questions or issues about school policy or practice should be referred directly to the class teacher or the Principal.

Recruitment Procedures:

The recruitment procedures for the appointment of SNAs to L.E.T.N.S. 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
- After shortlisting, a selection Board gives at least one week's notice of interview to shortlisted candidates.
- The Selection Board consists of the nominated person from the Board of Management (BOM) (usually the Chairperson), Principal and an independent assessor, with an appropriate gender balance

- Agreed scoring criteria are established prior to interview and applied equally to all candidates
- A marking scheme is used and retained as a record of the interview process
- All appointments are subject to the 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 is expected to 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 will have direct responsibility for a particular child/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(s) should be offered reduced hours or have their employment terminated when the allocation of the school is reduced. The seniority listing will only be used in determining 'last in, first out' for the purpose of redundancy. Seniority is based on an SNA's date of commencement of duty as an SNA in the school.

Success Criteria:

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

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

Communication:

The draft policy has been devised by members of the teaching staff and SNAs. It has been reviewed and amended through consultation with the wider staff body.

Ratification and Review:

This policy was formally ratified by the BOM on _____

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

It will be reviewed every 2 years.

Signed: _____

Date: _____