

Urlingford NS Special Needs Assistants Policy – October 2025

SNAs are appointed by the Board of Management subsequent to the allocation of SNA hours for individual children by the SENO. Depending on the cumulative number of hours allocated to the school they may be appointed on a full-time or part-time basis.

All SNAs, whether full-time or part-time, will be required to sign an appointment form which lays out the terms of their employment.

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 DES Circulars 07/02, 08/03, 24/03, 13/04, 02/05 and in consultation with school's SEN Policy.

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 Urlingford School.
- To ensure SNAs are familiar with school policies and procedures.
- To ensure SNAs are respectful of the role of management and class teachers

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 Education 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 provide clarity to SNAs of what necessary/acceptable physical contact and what unnecessary/unacceptable physical contact with pupils involves/consists of
- To clarify the tasks and duties to be undertaken by the SNA
- To ensure accountability and effective record keeping

Staff Roles:

The Principal has responsibility for:

- Appoint a SENCO to co-ordinate SEN in Urlingford NS.
- Monitor SEN closely in school to ensure role specific and child specific tasks have been assigned 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 that may arise, with the assistance of the Deputy Principal and SENCO.
- Promote the undertaking of regular meetings between SNAs and SENCO so as good communication is in place.
- Ensure our school has an up to date Child Safeguarding Statement, Health and SAFETY Statement, Code of Behaviour and Supervision Policy in place and that all SNAs have access to the policies.

Special Education Teachers

- Assume responsibility for IEPs in consultation with all relevant parties including the parents, SNA, class teacher, SENCO 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 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.

SNAs

- There are three SNAs presently employed in the school. They 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 SENCO 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 and Child Protection guidelines.

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 outlined by the NCSE. In addition 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 SNAs.
Confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due discretion is expected in all matters of a confidential nature. Items of a sensitive nature should be discussed at planned meetings and not in a public setting where outside parties could be made aware of sensitive information. All Staff including SNAs should note that our school staffroom

	contains visitors, Work Experience Candidates and outside tutors on a regular basis throughout the school year. Items of a sensitive nature should not be discussed at planned meetings
Times and Timetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In consultation with SENCO, Class Teacher and Principal all SNAs will devise a Timetable at the start of the year. Timetables need to be flexible and can be altered where necessary. • As part of the SNA contract, SNAs are required to spend ten minutes each morning and evening preparing, tidying, supervising and organising the classroom. SNAs also work 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 SNAs. • Class teacher will give the SNA a copy of class timetables 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.
Planning and Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNA should document progress made and set targets for a given time period, i.e., 2 months. This plan should also record any incidents where the care needs of the child are evident. • A copy of this SNA's plan should be placed in the SNA Planning Folder. • A copy of the SET's IEP for individual pupils will be in the SEN Folder. • Time for the teacher to meet with the SNA will be given using Croke Park Hours so as Class Teacher can outline expectations for child and SNA during Mainstream SNA Slots. Croke Park Hour Time will be given so as ASD Teacher can meet with ASD CLASS SNAs to outline expectations for Child and SNA. • SNA must refer all matters on curriculum,

	classroom management, discipline or incidents of concerns etc., to the classroom teacher.
Level and type of classroom Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information received on children, observations made in classrooms, need to be handled sensitively and carefully. • 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.
Physical Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to have as little physical contact as possible, if a child's attention is required, place a hand lightly on the child's shoulder (no hugging) • Physical contact may be required to protect a pupil from harm to themselves or others. • Help where necessary with changing for PE etc., while encouraging independence. • Actions of affection 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. • The threshold of possible harm, at which you must report to Tusla under the Children First Act 2015, is reached when you know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being assaulted and that as a result the child's health, development or welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.
Parental contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNAs are encouraged to build a positive

	<p>relationship based on trust with the parents of children with SEN.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If required at the end of the school day, escort the child to the school gate and greet the parent. • It is helpful to chat about how the day went or upcoming events but do not pass on information regarding child's education progress. • Parents with question, requests or concerns regarding school policy or practice should be referred directly to the class teacher. 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 have a private phone number of a member of staff or to contact the SNA outside of school hours depending on the SNA. • If there are any minor incidents, put a note in the homework diary. Any major incidents should be reported to the Class teacher.
Seating Arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An SNA should only sit with a child with SEN when and where deemed necessary by the class teacher. • Allow some time during the days where child doesn't have SNA sitting with her/him • Avoid blocking view of another child. • SNA should also have their own chair and table not beside the child.
Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervise pupils from a distance if possible • Supervision in the yard and lunch room should promote social interaction and inclusion. After lunch SNA should assist pupils form a line on the yard outside the classroom door and await the teacher. • SNAs correct appropriately as necessary to promote smooth running of day.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the class teacher leaves the room at any stage, the classroom door should remain open. • Be mindful of the danger of child absconding. • SNAs will be positioned strategically on yard at breaktimes so as to ensure SEN pupils in all areas of school are catered for at breaktime and to help with the smooth running at breaktimes. SNA positions on yard will be discussed with Class Teachers regularly and at SNA Meetings with SENCO and Principal.
Needs that SNAs assist with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical/First Aid • Administration of Medicine • Emotional • Care • Supervising • Behavioural • Physical • Toileting • Dietary • Planning • Health and Safety
Timeout Sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time out sessions should follow a specific timetable to be most effective. The content should be worked out with help from Physiotherapists and/or Occupational Therapist in conjunction with the Class teacher and a specific programme should be followed. • Teacher should be informed of what's 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, timeouts are necessary daily and should last 10 minutes
Medication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's Administration of Medicines Policy should be understood and followed at all times. • Administer medication discreetly in the classroom. • Only prescribed medication should be given. • Store all medicines appropriately in line with our Health and Safety Policy.
Relevant work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNAs work under the guidance of the classroom teacher and Management team. SNAs may 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: • Preparation and tidying up of classrooms. • Assisting school children to board and alight from school buses. Where necessary, travel as escort during school hours on school buses may be required. • Special assistance as necessary for children with particular difficulties e.g. helping special needs pupils with typing, writing, computers or other use of equipment. • Assisting children to stay on task, follow classroom procedures and interact appropriately. • Assisting children in establishing and maintaining a consistent routine. • Assisting children to build self esteem and to develop independence. • Assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene and being mindful of health and safety needs of the pupil. • Assistance with accessing the curriculum as far as is possible for children with SEN • Assisting on out-of-school visits, walks, examinations and similar activities.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answering door when secretary is not in school (Wednesdays 12.30 to 2.45) • Taking phone calls and messages when secretary is not in school (Wednesdays 12.30 to 2.45) • Accompanying and supervising their assigned pupil on swimming outings after Consultation with Class Teacher and SENCO. Where direct assistance is needed to change into swimming gear, specific parental consent must be received in writing. • Assisting the teachers in the supervision of pupils during assembly, yard, recreation and dispersal from the classroom. General assistance to the class teachers, under the direction of the Principal and SENCO, with duties of a non-teaching nature. • Participation with school improvement planning, where appropriate, and co-operation with any such changes with policies and practices arising from the school improvement process. • Engagement with parents of special needs pupils in both formal and informal structures as required and directed by school management. • The encouragement of good attendance and punctuality and timekeeping. • Acting as a positive role model for children in their care. • Creating a positive attitude to school and life in general. • 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 special needs pupils are absent or when particular urgent work demands arise.
--	--

Staff Meetings	SNAs may be required to attend Staff Meetings when issues of relevance to their own particular work are up for discussion. The SENCO will have structured meeting with SCHOOL SNAs at least once a term. On days of In-Service, SNAs may be required to attend school to complete tasks laid out by class teachers/Principal/SENCO.
Documentation/Planning	<p>NCSE and SENO in consideration of best practice expect the following to be in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequency Log Charts of clearly detailed care needs • Personal Pupil Improvement Plans • Care Needs Plans • Behaviour Plans • Individual Timetable. • Personal Reflection Log Books. <p>- The above planning is a collaboratively put together by SNA, Class Teacher and SET Teacher if applicable. Principal will dedicate time so as SNAs can plan with relevant Class teachers, ASD Teacher and SET Teachers (Induction Day in August, Friday Planning Time with SET Teachers and Croke Park Hours)</p>

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 value the role of the SNA
- Daily Diaries or diaries recording significant events are essential
- An atmosphere of mutual understanding and respect should be fostered
- Regular meetings with Class Teachers, SENCO and Principal if necessary 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 him to make his/her 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 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.
- SNAs should act in a professional manner so as to maximise teaching and learning time in all classrooms they attend. Communication re Day ahead and needs of pupils, where resources needed are etc should ideally be undertaken before or after class time or at scheduled planning meetings.

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/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. All schools now receive NCSE SNA Care Needs Inspections at least once every two years.

Seniority

The sequence in which special needs assistants are appointed to the school determine their seniority. Seniority is important in determining which Special Needs 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 the school.

Relations with Staff.

Where there is more than one SNA in the school, SNAs should work together as a team collaborating 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 or SENCO at a suitable time verbally so as Principal Teacher or SENCO 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 and SENCO are 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 Urlingford N.S are expected to be respectful of each other's roles and create a positive working atmosphere in the school. The 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.

When School is granted SNA access/allocation

In the event of a pupil enrolling with care / medical / emotional / behavioural/physical disability needs, school management as long as they have parental consent and confirmation of medical/care needs from Medical Expert in the form of a Report, can apply for SNA support for the school. If successful in application for SNA, all school staff, parents and SNAs will be made aware that the SNA allocation granted to the school will be reviewed annually or termly by the Special Education Needs Officer (SENO). A school's SNA allocation can go down or up depending on the care needs present in the school in the eyes of the SENCO as evidenced by his/her school visit and documentation in place by the SNAs. Neither the Board of Management or School Management Team (5) have input into the SNA allocation during or after reviews. The National Council for Special Education Needs (NCSE) and SENCO have full control over SNA allocation granted to a school and whether it changes or not. The NCSE and SENCO have autonomy to change /adapt the use

of allocation to school also i.e., they can recommend number of personnel (SNAs) needed and division of hours so as to best cater for pupils care needs in school.

In consultation with Parents and once the Board of Management have parental consent, a school may apply for SNA assistance for particular pupils. If successful and allocated, these hours are allocated to the whole school, not just the child in question. It is the NCSE who grant and decide whether an SNA application will be successful. The granting of SNAs by the NCSE is dependent on parental input and reports from Medical Experts and input of pre-school.

Planning and documentation

In consultation with Management Team (SENCO), Class Teacher, Parents AND set Teacher if applicable. SNAs must ensure relevant documentation is in place as expected by the NCSE and SENO during NCSE SNA Care Needs Reviews. The following are plans that apply to SNA access to children.

- Care Needs Plans
- Personal Pupil Improvement Plans
- Frequency Log Charts of Care Needs of Individual Pupils
- SNA Individual Timetable
- Behaviour Plans
- Reflection Notebooks

Confidentiality

Respecting confidentiality of school business and respecting different roles of management team, SENCO and class teachers are essential for maintaining a positive working atmosphere within Urlingford School community.

SNA Break times

SNA Break time will be decided on by Management Team and Board of Management. Decisions on break times will be made so as to maximise yard supervision and ensure care needs of all pupils are catered for as much as possible. If SNAs deem a change to break times is necessary to ensure smooth running of the day, changes to break times must be communicated to SENCO and Principal Teacher. The Board of Management and Management Team will decide on

SNA start and finish times of SNA Breaks as necessary so as to best cater for the care needs of the school.

Yard Supervision

Yard supervision is a large part of covering care needs of SEN pupils. At break times SNAs and teachers walk full yard area so as to eliminate unwanted instances of bad behaviour as much as possible. If necessary staff should complete Incident or Accident Report Book if an incident of note or accident of note has taken place on the yard. If in at break times, three staff on yard supervision should supervise all classrooms and all areas within the school so as to eliminate unwanted situations. In collaboration with teacher on yard SNAs should promote good behaviour, correct pupils suitably and as necessary so as to ensure a healthy safe playing area for all children. SNAs are to be vigilant so as to eradicate flight risk posed by certain pupils. SNAs encourage good behaviour in line at end of break so as to promote pupils readiness for teaching and learning. SNAs should walk full yard area proactively so as to minimise accidents, unwanted behaviour and complaints.

Illness/Sickness/Medical Appointments/Absence from School

In the event of an SNA being absent from school or for part of school day, the SNA is expected to notify the Principal Teacher first and then Class Teacher as early as possible. It is essential and expected that the SNA also notifies the second SNA and plans with SNA as to what work is to be covered by the second SNA in the event of SNA being out so as to cater for the care needs of all pupils as best as possible. In the event of absence, SNA should communicate verbally or by phone; call (1) Principal Teacher (2) Class Teacher (3) Second SNA in school. SNAs must furnish School Secretary with sick certificate from Medical Expert to explain absence due to illness or medical appointment. Where possible it is expected that SNAs re-arrange appointments so as not to lead to absence to ensure the smooth

running of school and the care needs of pupils are catered for as much as possible in school or at school events.

Success Criteria

- This policy is aimed at making a difference to the teaching and learning of children with Special Education 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 children are reaching the targets set out in Individual Educational Plans.

Ratification and Review

This plan was ratified by the Board of Management on October 22nd 2025.

Signed: 
Chairperson
Board of Management

Date: 22.10.2025