



Coláiste Pobail Acla

Special Needs Assistant Policy

**Coláiste Pobail Acla,
Polranny,
Achill,
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1. Introduction

The Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) policy of Coláiste Pobail Acla, with reference to relevant legislation such as The Education Welfare Act 2000, the EPSN Act 2004 and D.E.S Circulars 07/02, 08/03, 24/03, 13/04, 02/05, 30/14 & 49/24 is formulated so that

- All SNA staff have clear guidelines on procedures within the school.
- Each SNA can see him/herself as contributing positively to the learning experiences of the children and the overall efficiency of the school.
- We endeavour to provide a culture of fairness, transparency and equality throughout the school.
- The school promotes a policy of Inclusion for all stakeholders.

2. Relationship to Ethos

In keeping with the spirit and ethos of Coláiste Pobail Acla, we endeavour to create an atmosphere of inclusiveness on a whole school level. Our school places great importance on a strong sense of teamwork and co-operation among teachers, students, ancillary staff, parents and Board of Management.

3. Aims

- To outline the role of the SNA in a whole school context
- To ensure the effective deployment of SNAs to meet the identified needs of students with special needs
- To enable the SNA to be an effective support to the student in his/her care
- To enable the SNA to be an effective support to the class teacher in matters relating to SEN students.
- To provide optimum learning experiences for all students with additional care needs through judicious use of the skills and talents of the SNA.
- To clarify the tasks and duties to be undertaken by the SNA.
- To promote collaboration amongst all members of the educational team.
- That the entire school community is aware of roles and duties of the SNA.

4. Relevant Documentation

- Qualifications and Conditions of Service are as per Department of Education & Skills guidelines. Work appropriate to Special Needs Assistants is as per Department of Education & Skills under direction of Principal/Deputy Principal.
- Sick Leave Regulations for Special Needs Assistants are as per Department of Education & Skills.
- Maternity Leave arrangements for Special Needs Assistants as per Department of Education & Skills.
- All Special Needs Assistants are given a copy of these documents on appointment.
- MSLETB retains copy of Notification of Appointment documentation, which is also forwarded to Department of Education & Skills.
- CPA Intimate Care Policy

5. Induction Procedures

- Principal/Deputy Principal responsible for meeting SNA, to outline necessary information.
- SNA will be assigned a senior member of the S.N.A. team to assist in the induction process.
- With the permission of parents, aspects of the child's psychological assessment (where relevant) will be discussed with the SNA with a view to outlining duties/tasks.
- Prior to taking up appointment, if possible, SNA will be introduced to staff.

6. Supervision

Part of the contractual duties of SNAs, is to assist teachers in the supervision of students during assembly, recreational and dispersal periods. As per Circular letter PPT 01/03 the SNA will assist in supervision duty.

7. Attendance Patterns

An SNA is expected to work max 32 hours per week and part-time pro-rata. SNAs are required to be available for a number of days at the start and finish of each school term. These days, 12 in total, may be combined at the discretion of the B.O.M. Specific dates will be relayed to SNA team by Principal/Deputy Principal. SNAs will be consulted re these arrangements, however, ultimate decision, is remit of B.O.M.

SNAs will be present 30 minutes before the official school opening time for supervision and/or specific duties, as per remit of positions. This policy comes into practice on, and will be reviewed at B.O.M. meeting during each school year.

SNAs will attend Coláiste Pobail Acla on days where there is staff in-house / external in-service. Non-attendance on these days will be recorded on Department of Education & Skills Returns.

All non-attendance of SNAs is recorded OLCS, DES - NTS.

8. Training and Development

The SNA will co-operate with programmes of implementation of change and workplace training.

Opportunity to read circulated post will be afforded to all SNAs. Relevant copies of circulars from DES will be given to SNAs when received in post/per e-mail. The SNA will be informed on all in-service relevant to their position. Information will be disseminated via Principal.

The SNA will co-operate with School Development Planning, where appropriate.

At beginning of each school year – an “SNA Pack” is prepared and given to each SNA including school calendar, timetables, break schedules, etc.

9. Role and Responsibilities of the SNA

The following was drawn up by senior management in accordance with all circulars issued by the DES.

- To foster the participation of assigned students in the social and academic processes of the school. This is achieved through supervising and assisting students with additional care needs in activities set by the teacher and promoting the inclusion of these students in work and keeping them on task. It may also include tasks such as accompanying teachers and SEN students to activities outside of the classroom, assisting students boarding and alighting from buses when required, assisting students with additional care needs in P.E and all practical classes.
- The SNA will also support/administer to the intimate care needs of students where this is necessary as per the relevant NCSE guidelines.
- The SNA will help supervise students with additional care needs during break times, where care needs require this. The SNA where required will support the feeding requirements of students where necessary.
- The SNA may bring any observations to the attention of the SENCO, Principal/ Deputy Principal.
- The SNA can also play an important part by supporting the work of other agencies and professionals such as the Speech Therapist, Physiotherapist, Behaviour Therapist and Occupational Therapists under the guidance of the SEN Co-ordinator.
- Assistance with clothing, feeding, intimate care, toileting, general hygiene, general care and observation.
- The SNA will also assist teachers in the supervision of students with additional needs during assembly, recreational and dispersal periods, walks and similar activities.
- The SNA will participate in further training.

10. Classroom Procedure

- The SNA must be aware that the class teacher is responsible for all matters on curriculum, classroom management, discipline etc.
- Recording sheets may be required by the Principal on individual students on a case-by-case basis.
- Information received on students, and observations made in classrooms need to be handled sensitively, carefully and with the utmost confidentiality as per school policy.
- Parents with questions or issues about school policy or practice should be referred directly to the class teacher, Year Head, Deputy Principal, Principal or SENCO. This applies to direct face- to face communication, home/school communication or indirect telephone communication.

11. Duties of Care

Primary Care Needs:

- Assistance with feeding
- Administration of medicine
- Assistance with toileting and general hygiene
- Assistance with mobility and orientation
- Assisting teachers to provide supervision in the class, playground and school grounds
- Non nursing care needs associated with specific medical conditions
- Care needs requiring frequent interventions including withdrawal of a pupil from a classroom when essential
- Assistance with moving and lifting of children, operation of hoists and equipment
- Assistance with severe communication difficulties
- When performing intimate care needs the SNA will complete a daily log identifying the actions performed which are dated and timed. This will be in a dedicated place that is easily accessible during the performing of intimate care needs

Secondary Care Needs:

- Preparation and tidying of workspaces and classrooms
- Contribute to the development of Personal Pupil Plans for children with SEN – focus on developing care plan
- Planning for activities and classes where there may be additional care requirements (under guidance of teacher)
- Assistance with enabling a pupil to access therapy or educational programmes (under direction of qualified staff – teachers, physio, OT, Speech & Language)
- Assistance to attend or participate in out of school activities

12. Staff Roles

The Principal, through the SEN coordinator (SENCO) has:

- Responsibility for assigning role specific and student specific tasks to the SNA.
- Responsibility for co-ordinating the timetable of the SNA
- Responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of the SNAs' contribution to the needs of the students.
- Responsibility for managing areas of conflict, which may arise.
- Responsibility for co-ordinating meetings with SNAs. Minutes of these will be held by the SENCO.
- Assume responsibility for the Student Support Plan (SSP) for students with SNA access in consultation with all the relevant people including SNAs.

Teaching Staff:

- The subject teacher has overall responsibility in the classroom, the successful inclusion of students with special educational needs.
- Collaborate with the SNAs to ensure that the SSP is put into practise.
- The subject teacher has primary responsibility for the educational progress of all students in his/her class.
- To acknowledge the SNA's role of supporting the Care needs of the student in class.

The Special Needs Assistant:

- The SNAs are considered an intrinsic part of the school team. The SNA always works under the direction of the SENCO.
- Each SNA has a duty to maintain confidentiality.
- Each SNA has a duty of care to the student who he/she has access to, supporting the care needs of the student.
- The teacher is responsible for planning lessons, setting educational targets and outcomes and directs learning. The SNA provides support to the teacher and the SEN students thereby facilitating the teaching of the curriculum.

13. Staff Meetings

The SNA team will meet regularly, and the minutes of their meetings will be given to the Principal and the SENCO.

14. Reporting Procedures

All SNAs are expected to report directly to the SENCO. In the event that the SENCO is absent then the SNA will report to the Principal, or in his/her absence the Deputy Principal.

All SNAs must inform the teacher on duty of incidents/accident/injury/observed bruises immediately. An incident report form must then be completed by the appropriate teacher / staff member.

The exception to this reporting procedure is in the case of concerns regarding Child Protection. In this instance report directly to the Designated Liaison Person who is the Principal and in his/her absence the Deputy Designated Liaison Person - the Deputy Principal. These positions have been authorised by the Board of Management.

15. Training

Induction of new SNAs is the role of SENCO and the Principal. A member of the SEN team will assist induction of a new SNA for familiarisation following commencement of employment.


Success Criteria:

This Policy is focused on making a difference to the inclusion of, and teaching and learning of students with additional needs in our school. We will know that the Policy is achieving its aims when:

- Students are experiencing a safe and stimulating environment
- The students with additional care needs are becoming more independent learners and acquiring life skills.
- The students with additional care needs are reaching the targets set out in the Student Care Plan.
- All staff experience teamwork and support.

16. Declaration

This Coláiste Pobail Acla Policy was formed following consultation with all staff, members of the Board of Management, Parents/Guardians, and the Student Council. It is recommended that this policy be reviewed every three years or whenever it is deemed necessary by School Management. It was adopted by the Board of Management of Coláiste Pobail Acla on:

Signed: 

Mr Martin O'Reilly

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: 17/12/25

Signed: 

Mr Jason Ó Mongáin

Board Secretary & School Principal

Date: 17.12.25

17. Appendix 1 – Abbreviations and Acronyms

Below is a list of abbreviations used across several Coláiste Pobail Acla policies and documents.

ACE	Autism Centre of Excellence
ASC	Autistic Spectrum Condition
BOM	Board of Management
BSP	Behaviour Support Plan
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CAT	Cognitive Ability Test
CPNS	Child Protection Notification System
CSPE	Civic, Social and Political Education
DDLp	Deputy Designated Liaison Person
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Education in Schools
DES	Department of Education
DLP	Designated Liaison Person
EP	Education Plan
EPSEN	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs
ETB	Education and Training Board
GRT	Group Reading Test
HSCLO	Home School Community Liaison Officer
HSE	Health Service Executive
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEP	Individual Education Plan
JCSP	Junior Certificate Schools Programme
LCVP	Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
MUGA	Multi Use Games Area
NBSS	National Behaviour Support Service
NCBI	National Centre for the Blind Ireland
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NEWB	National Education and Welfare Board
NLN	National Learning Network
OT	Occupational Therapy
PC	Pastoral Care

PE	Physical Education
RACE	Reasonable Accommodations at Certificate Examinations
RE	Religious Education
RSE	Relationships and Sexuality Education
SCP	School Completion Programme
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENO	Special Educational Needs Officer
SESS	Special Education Support Service
SETS	Special Education Teacher Support
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education
SSE	School Self Evaluation
TUSLA	Child and Family Agency
TY	Transition Year