



St. Patrick's College

Lacken Cross, Killala - Co. Mayo

Special Needs Assistant Policy and Guidelines

St Patrick's College
Lacken Cross
Killala
Co Mayo

Roll No.: 72130S
Ph.: 096 34177
Email: info@lackencross.ie
www.lackencross.ie

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St. Patrick's College is a co-educational school which aims to provide a broad education designed to help each pupil achieve their potential. Administrators and teachers see themselves as supporting the parents and guardians who are the primary educators of their children. The broad education offered strives towards not only academic achievements but the complete development of each pupil.

'We value respect, fair play and everyone's right to be himself or herself.

We aim to help our students to develop a sense of their own unique worth, and to respect the rights of others.

We strive for good relationships between our students, our staff and our parents. We educate our students not only for now, but also for life.'

1. Introduction

The Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) policy of St Patrick's College, with reference to relevant legislation such as The Education Welfare Act 2000, the EPSEN Act 2004 and D.E.S Circulars 07/02, 08/03, 24/ 03, 13 104, 021 05, 30/ 14 &, 49 124 is formulated so that all SNA staff have clear guidelines on procedures within the school and that 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 St Patrick's College, 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. School Mission Statement

St Patrick's College seeks to create an inclusive school community where values, behaviours and attitudes are consistent with our mission statement which states;

'We believe we can make a difference by providing a quality education to our students in a caring and respectful environment.

We value respect, fair play and everyone's right to be himself or herself.

We aim to help our students to develop a sense of their own unique worth, to become their best selves and to respect the rights of others.

We strive for good relations between our students, our staff and our parents.

We educate our students not only for now but for life.'

4. Rationale

This policy statement has been drawn up in consultation with the Board of Management, Staff, Parents and Students of St Patrick's College. This Policy outlines the role and function of the SNA (Special Needs Assistant) in St Patrick's College. The policy was formulated:

To provide staff and parents with clear guidelines and expectations about the SNA role and responsibilities within the school.

To ensure each SNA appreciates and understands the significant role they have in contributing positively to the learning experiences of the students and the overall efficiency of the school.

To ensure best practice and continuity in how we work in St Patrick's College.

5. Aims

1. To facilitate the recognition of SNAs as valuable members of staff in a whole school context.
2. To ensure the effective deployment of SNAs in enhancing the social skills and self-esteem of the students with Special Educational Needs.
3. To enable the SNA to be an effective support to the subject teacher.
4. To provide optimum learning experiences for all students through judicious use of the skills and talents of the SNA.
5. To clarify the tasks and duties to be undertaken by the SNA.
6. To ensure accountability and effective record keeping.

6. Aims of the SNA

The aim of the SNA in St Patrick's College is to support and facilitate those students with SEN (Special Educational Needs), so that they feel happy, valued, and supported to enable them to develop to their full potential.

At all times SNAs should endeavour to create an environment which is conducive to achieving the aims of St Patrick's College and recognise that the aims of SNA's are best achieved in a caring, mutually supportive, and respectful manner.

7. Staff Roles in Relation to the SNA Team

Principal

- Assigning role specific and student specific tasks to the SNA in association with the subject 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 students.
- Promoting in-service training.
- Managing areas of conflict which may arise, with the assistance of the Deputy Principal.

The SEN Team

- Taking responsibility for Student Support Files in consultation with all relevant parties including the parents, SNA, subject teacher and Principal.

SEN Teacher

- Taking responsibility for a year group and ensuring that the needs for all students with SNA access are catered for in consultation with the SNA.
- Working with SNAs for that year group in ensuring all SSFs are up to date in relation to targets and that targets are being monitored by SNA.
- Liaising with SNA re documentation for applications to SENO/SEC/NCSE for all students in the group in conjunction with the SNA and SENCO (SEN Coordinator).

Subject Teachers

- Ensuring SNA support is available for those who need it in a class situation and identify the appropriate tasks to be completed by the SNA.
- Provide a suitable seating arrangement for the SNA and student in the mainstream setting.
- Collaborate with the SNA about planning and timetabling.

Special Needs Assistants

- SNAs are considered an important part of the school team and carry out duties of a non-teaching nature.
- The SNAs always work under the direction of the SEN co-ordinator, subject teacher or Principal.
- The teacher plans lessons and directs learning. The SNA provides support in assisting the student to access the curriculum.
- The SNA should be familiar with all relevant school policies.

8. Responsibilities of the SNA

- Support the care needs of students in effectively accessing the curriculum.
- Contribute to the quality of care and welfare of the students.
- Support learning and teaching in the classroom.

- Support the supervision of students at break times.
- Attend, where possible, training courses/workshops provided by the school.
- Liaise with the keyworkers on a weekly basis to discuss and develop AEN matters.
- Liaise with Principal, Deputy Principals and Assistant Principal (AEN coordinator)
- Attend student support plan meetings and/or meetings with relevant professionals, when requested.
- Maintain an observation record/record of support provided to their AEN student.
- Assist and escort students on school trips.
- Facilitate sensory breaks and maintain a record of such.
- Collaborate with other SNAs by providing profiles of students at start of year and updating at the end of the year for handover.
- Carry out other appropriate duties as determined by the needs of the students and the School.
- Be available to substitute when another SNA is absent or when needs arise.
- Recognise their role in the health and safety of the student and in their social, emotional and educational development, whilst promoting a culture of independence.
- Where appropriate, ensure a second SNA is present when attending to a student's personal care needs.
- Communicate with parents/guardians when necessary, and as directed by the Principal, Deputy Principals, Assistant Principal (AEN Coordination), or AEN team
- Treat all matters relating to school business and their work in strict confidence.
- Being available during the month of June to assist with exam centres for State Examinations.
- Being available for a couple of days at the start and end of each school term, as per contract. These days (12 in total) may be combined at the discretion of school management to be utilised flexibly throughout the year for work appropriate to the grade, including training.

9. Duties of Care

The SNA supports the care needs of students. They assist teachers (mainstream and additional education needs teachers) to ensure that the student can access education (Section 5, Circular Letter 0030/2014)

When deploying SNAs to students, the school's most vulnerable students with the highest care needs are prioritised. Supports are in place from the start of the school year where possible.

SNAs are important and valued members of the school community. An SNA is an important whole school resource. SNAs participate fully in the life of the school and may therefore also assist other children in the school, who from time to time need assistance, or who have intermittent care needs, but who may not have been assessed as requiring SNA support on a permanent basis.

The SNA works under the direction and supervision of the Principal, Deputy Principals, and/or Additional Educational Needs (AEN) team and specifically under the direction and supervision of the AEN keyworkers of the students presenting with care needs.

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 a teacher).
- Assistance with enabling a pupil to access therapy or educational programmes (under direction of qualified staff - Teachers, Physio, OT, Speech & Language).

10. 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.

11. Developing the Role of the SNA

The SNA Team are encouraged to engage with CPD both during school (where other staff are training on curricular or non-SNA related areas) or in their own time. SNAs are welcomed to suggest areas of training in which they would like to engage. All suggestions for implementing approaches or strategies for the role of SNA should be discussed at weekly meetings or brought to the attention of the SENCO or Principal.

12. General Guidelines for Special Needs Assistants

	General Guidelines for Special Needs Assistants
Hours of Work	<p>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 (National Council for Special Education).</p> <p>In addition, the SNA will be available to work up to 72 non-contact hours on work appropriate to the grade at the discretion of the Principal.</p>
Confidentiality	<p>SNA's will carry out their duties in a caring, professional, and confidential manner.</p> <p>Information on SEN students shall only be disclosed on a need-to-know basis to the relevant people.</p> <p>While supporting the student's development in ways that will foster security and confidence, SNA's must be aware that they have a professional responsibility to share information with school management in order to safeguard children.</p>
Times and Timetables	<p>SNAs will be allocated their students and year groups at the start of each academic year, and timetables will be set accordingly.</p>

	<p>SNA break and lunchtime supervision timetables will be agreed at the start of the academic year, and timetables will be set accordingly.</p> <p>As part of the SNA contract, SNAs are required to be available to assist students with lockers before and after school in the presence of a teacher.</p>
<p>Meetings, Planning and Reporting</p>	<p>Where possible, the school's complement of SNAs will meet, on a weekly basis with the SEN Co-ordinator, to discuss and develop any SEN related matters. These meetings aim to encourage commitment, team spirit, and provide an opportunity for the SNAs to pool their skills for the overall benefit of the students and school. A record of these meetings is kept in a Meetings record binder.</p> <p>SNAs should document progress and set targets made on a given time period i.e. per term. This plan should also record any incidents where the care needs of the student are evident.</p> <p>A copy of this SNA's plan should be given to SEN Team, Principal and Teacher. A copy of the SEN Team's Student Support File should be given to the Teacher, Principal, and SNA.</p> <p>SNA should refer all matters on curriculum, classroom management, discipline, or incidents of concerns etc. to the subject teacher/CT/Year Head.</p>
<p>Level and type of classroom Assistance</p>	<p>Information received on students, and observations made in classrooms, need to be handled sensitively and carefully.</p> <p>The focus will be on an "Promoting Independence." Avoid over-talking and providing a 'running commentary' of what to do next – this allows the student to concentrate and think independently.</p> <p>Explain how to do tasks but avoid giving the solution to a task or problem. Instead encourage the student come up with the answer by questioning and prompting.</p>
<p>Physical Contact</p>	<p>Try to have as little physical contact as possible, if the student's attention is required, place a hand lightly on the student's shoulder.</p> <p>Physical contact may be required to protect a student from harm to themselves or others.</p>

	<p>Help where necessary with changing for PE etc. while encouraging independence.</p> <p>Actions of affection from a student towards an SNA should be handled sensitively but also appropriately.</p> <p>To carry out some activities, an SNA may need to guide the student's body. This should be done by gently touching the shoulder, back, arms, hands, or lower leg only.</p>
Parental Contact	<p>SNA's are encouraged to build a positive relationship based on trust with the parents of students with SEN.</p> <p>If required at the end of the school day, escort the student to the school gate and greet the parent.</p> <p>It is helpful to chat about how the day went or upcoming events but do not pass on information regarding student's educational progress.</p> <p>Parents with questions, requests, or concerns regarding school policy or practice should be referred directly to the Deputy Principal or the Principal.</p> <p>It may be appropriate for SNA's to contact parents during school hours in relation to the student in the care of the SNA.</p> <p>If there are any minor incidents put a note in the homework diary. Any major incidents should be reported to the year head/SENCO.</p>
Seating Arrangements	<p>An SNA should only sit with a student with SEN when and where deemed necessary by the subject teacher.</p> <p>Allow sometime during day where student does not have an SNA sitting with him/her.</p> <p>Avoid blocking view of another student.</p>
Supervision	<p>Supervise students from a distance if possible.</p> <p>Supervision at breaks and lunchtime should promote social interaction and inclusion.</p> <p>The SNA should never supervise alone in the classroom. If the subject 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.</p>

	<p>Be mindful of danger of a student absconding.</p> <p>SNAs should wait for subject teachers to arrive before letting a class in to a room unless health and safety protocols suggest they should do so.</p>
Time Out Sessions	<p>Time out sessions if required should be discussed with the relevant teachers, SEN co-ordinator and Principal and a plan agreed.</p> <p>Teachers should be kept informed of what is happening and of progress being made.</p>
Medication	<p>The school's Administration of Medicines Policy should be understood and always followed.</p> <p>Administer medication discreetly and only prescribed medication should be given.</p> <p>Store all medicines appropriately in line with our Health and Safety Policy.</p>
Relevant Work	<p>SNAs work under the guidance of the subject teacher and should not be left in sole charge of a student or class.</p> <p>They may however work on their own with students provided that the work in question has been allocated by the subject teacher.</p> <p>Work may include any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation and tidying up of classrooms • Assisting school students 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 students with particular difficulties e.g. helping special needs students with typing, writing, computers, or other use of equipment • Assisting students to stay on task, follow classroom procedures and interact appropriately.
Helping Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisting students in establishing and maintaining a consistent routine. • Assisting students 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 student.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance with accessing the curriculum as far as is possible for students with SEN. • Assisting on out-of-school visits, walks, examinations, and similar activities. • Accompanying and supervising their assigned student on swimming outings. Where direct assistance is needed to change into swimming gear, specific parental consent must be received in writing. • Promoting the importance of personal hygiene and report any difficulties to the class teacher. • Assisting the teachers in the supervision of students during assembly, recreation, and dispersal from the classroom for one reason or another. • Accompanying individuals or small groups who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom for one reason or another. • 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 students). • 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 students in both formal and informal structures as required and directed by school management. • The encouragement of good attendance and punctuality. • Acting as a positive role model for the students in their care. Other duties appropriate to the grade as may be determined by the needs of the students and the school from time to time. Special Needs Assistants may be re-assigned to other work appropriate to the grade when special needs students are absent or when particular urgent work demands arise.
Staff Meetings	<p>SNAs may be required to attend Staff Meetings when issues of relevance to their own particular work are up for discussion.</p> <p>The Principal will have a structured staff meeting with the SNAs at least once per term.</p> <p>On days of In-Service, SNAs may be required to attend training courses or school to complete tasks (appropriate to their grade) set by the Principal or SEN Co-ordinator.</p>

13. 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.

14. Declaration

This St Patrick's College 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 St Patrick's College on:

Signed:  Date: 11/02/26

Chairperson of the BOM

Signed:  Date: 11/02/26

Secretary of the BOM

