



Circular SNA 03/03

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE PAYROLL DIVISION

### TO BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT, PRINCIPALS AND SPECIAL NEED ASSISTANTS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

#### **Appointment Procedures for Special Need Assistants (Updated August 2007)**

#### **1. Introduction:**

- 1.1 The Minister for Education and Science wishes to inform management authorities that this Circular – SNA 03/03 has been updated in August, 2007 and now sets out revised appointment procedures for Special Need Assistants in primary schools.
- 1.2 Boards of Management, in accordance with the guidelines hereunder, are responsible for the appointment of Special Need Assistants in primary schools. Any such appointment is subject to the prior approval of the school's Patron.
- 1.3 A Special Need Assistant shall only be appointed to a post which is to be filled within the allocation of posts approved by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).

#### **2. Advertising a Special Need Assistant Post:**

- 2.1 A Special Need Assistant post must be advertised in a local newspaper. The advertisement shall invite applications from eligible persons to be submitted by a specified date to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.
- 2.2 Subject to any exceptions permitted by the Employment Equality Acts, 1998 and 2004 the advertisement must not indicate an intention to discriminate or contain information in any form which might reasonably be understood as indicating an intention of this kind.

#### **3. Details that must be included in the advertisement:**

- i. The name and address of the school.
- ii. The date of commencement of the post.
- iii. State if the post is full time or part time and the number of part time hours.
- iv. A general description of the duties of the post.
- v. The latest date for receipt of application.
- vi. State that curriculum vitae must be submitted with the application.
- vii. State that references or the names and addresses of referees are required.
- viii. State that a list of suitable applicants may be set up from which future vacancies may be filled (valid for the duration of the school-year).

#### **4. Selection Board for Appointment of Special Need Assistants:**

- 4.1 The Selection Board shall consist of the Chairperson of the Board of Management, the Principal of the school and one other person nominated by the Patron.
- 4.2 The Selection Board must include at least one male and one female.
- 4.3 If any member of the Selection Board, including the Chairperson, stands in a relationship to a person who is a candidate for employment in the school, s/he shall withdraw from the Selection Board and the Patron shall nominate another Chairperson or member in his/her place.

## **5. Functions of the Selection Board:**

- 5.1 The Selection Board, prior to interviewing the candidates shall establish in writing the criteria for assessment of applications, having regard to appropriate legislation and the requirements of the post. Established criteria of the Board shall take account of the Employment Equality Acts, 1998 and 2004 and the Code of Practice of the Equality Authority.
- 5.2 The Selection Board shall meet within a reasonable period after the closing date for receipt of applications to determine those applicants to be called for interview.
- 5.3 The Chairperson of the Selection Board shall keep a record of the criteria used.

## **6. Interviews:**

- 6.1 While the Selection Board may decide to limit the number of applicants called for interview, a minimum of three eligible applicants must be called. If less than three applicants have applied for the post, all of the eligible applicants must be invited to interview.
- 6.2 The Selection Board must adhere to the agreed criteria for the assessment of applicants.
- 6.3 The Chairperson of the Selection Board must keep a record of the agreed criteria and of the scoring used to assess applications and interviews.
- 6.4 When interviewing applicants, particular caution must be taken to ensure that no questions, comments or statements might be construed as discriminatory e.g. on grounds of gender or marital status.

## **7. Appointing the Successful Candidate:**

- 7.1 Schools are reminded that the minimum qualification necessary for appointment as a Special Need Assistant is an award of Grade D (or pass) in Irish, English and Mathematics in the Intermediate Certificate/Junior Certificate or the Day Vocational Certificate Examination or in an examination of equivalent standard.
- 7.2 Having interviewed such applicants as present themselves, the Selection Board shall submit a written report to the Board of Management, nominating
  - a) the applicant whom it considers most suitable for appointment and
  - b) a list of candidates in order of merit suitable for appointment to any further post arising in the school over the course of the school-year.
- 7.3 The Board of Management shall meet and appoint the candidate nominated by the Selection Board unless it has good and sufficient reason not to do so, in which instance the matter shall be referred to the Patron, whose decision in this matter shall be accepted by the Board.
- 7.4 The Board of Management shall also retain the list of candidates deemed suitable for appointment. This list will be effective for the duration of the school-year in question in respect of any appointment to posts of Special Need Assistants which may arise in the school.
- 7.5 If two or more Special Need Assistants commence duty on the same day, the Board of Management shall establish the order of seniority based on the order that the Special Need Assistants were listed as a result of the interview process i.e. the Special Need Assistant who was ranked highest following the interview process should be given the higher seniority rating. Please refer to [Circular 0059/2006 – Seniority of Special Need Assistants](#) which is available on the Department's website at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) under Education Personnel/Special Need Assistants.

## **8. Medical Certification:**

- 8.1 The Board shall obtain from the successful candidate, prior to appointment, a certificate of medical fitness that s/he is fit to undertake the duties of the post. A sample form is attached as [Appendix A](#).
- 8.2 While the medical practitioner shall be nominated by the Board of Management, any costs incurred shall be borne by the successful candidate.

## 9. References:

- 9.1 Before notifying the successful candidate the Board of Management shall check his/her references.

## 10. Vetting:

- 10.1 It is the responsibility of the Board of Management to ensure that any proposed new appointee as Special Need Assistant is vetted. However, school authorities shall ensure that vetting is only sought in respect of a person to whom it proposes to make an offer of employment. Applications should not be sought prior to a decision being taken to offer appointment.
- 10.2 Please refer to [Circular 0094/2006](#) – ‘New arrangements for the vetting of teaching and non-teaching staff’ which is available on the Department’s website at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) under Education Personnel/Special Need Assistants.

## 11. Contracts of Employment

- 11.1 New appointees must be offered a contract of employment in accordance with the terms outlined in [Circular SNA 15/05](#) – ‘Contract of Employment for Special Need Assistants’ which is available on the Department’s website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) under Education Personnel/Special Need Assistants.

## 12. Notification of the appointment to the Department of Education and Science:

- 12.1 On completion of the appointments procedure as outlined above, Boards of Management shall complete and submit the form “[Notification of Appointment – Special Need Assistant](#)”, which is available on the Department’s website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) under Education Personnel/Special Need Assistants, to

Non Teaching Staff (NTS) Payroll,  
Payroll Division,  
Department of Education and Science,  
Cornamaddy,  
Athlone,  
Co Westmeath.

## 13. Queries

- 13.1 If you have any query in relation to this circular please e-mail your query to [sna\\_pay@education.gov.ie](mailto:sna_pay@education.gov.ie) or telephone 090 648 4136.
- 13.2 This circular should be retained for future reference in the school. It may also be accessed on the Department’s website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) under Education Personnel/Special Need Assistants.

P. Maloney,  
Principal Officer.

August, 2007

Certificate of fitness to commence employment as a Special Need Assistant

**To be completed by a Medical Practitioner nominated by the Board of Management.**

**Surname:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Forename:** \_\_\_\_\_

I certify that I have examined the above named and found that s/he is fit to undertake duties as a Special Needs Assistant.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Stamp or Seal**