

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
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AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT  
OIDEACHAIS | OF EDUCATION  
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS

## **Public Service (Croke Park) Agreement - Special Needs Assistants**

**Circular Number 0071/2011**

**To: The Managerial Authorities and Special Needs Assistants of recognised Primary, Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools and Vocational Education Committees (VECs)**

A Departmental letter issued on 1 February 2011 providing for immediate and full implementation of two aspects of the Public Service Agreement relating to Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) namely:

1. Flexible deployment of Special Needs Assistants within schools to respond to urgent work demands and to cover for periods of absences by SNA colleagues;
2. Where work demands arise during non-instruction days, school management will continue to have discretion to deploy staff to appropriate SNA duties.

In accordance with the Public Service Agreement, a comprehensive review of existing employment terms and conditions has also taken place. Following the conclusion of discussions under the auspices of the Labour Relations Commission between all parties to this process (IMPACT, SIPTU, Management Bodies and the Department of Education and Skills) the attached document is now forwarded to schools for immediate implementation of all of its provisions.

Schools and VECs should now take the necessary steps to ensure optimum usage of the document's provisions. It should be noted that the utilisation of the provisions in this circular shall not be used as a mechanism for the reduction of the hours of work of existing staff in a school or VEC nor for the displacement of work carried out by other grades.

A central requirement of the re-configuration of the usage of the 12 days, is that the time be utilised and delivered outside of normal school opening hours and/or the normal school year. No existing agreements or arrangements can be incorporated into the utilisation of this time requirement. For example, the re-configured time cannot be used for duties which SNAs must already perform before and after school i.e. the preparation and tidying up of classrooms, reception and dispersal of children etc.

These 12 days now equate to 72 hours (pro-rata for part-time SNAs) and schools and VECs should plan for the utilisation of the hours available and a communication strategy should also be developed to highlight the benefits to be derived from implementation of this circular.

Schools and VECs should ensure that they give reasonable notice to staff regarding the utilisation of this time and should ensure that accurate records are kept in relation to same.

Except as specifically provided for, this agreement does not amend existing circulars setting out the duties, terms and conditions of SNAs. For example, nothing in this agreement should be taken as altering the definition covering the weekly working hours for SNAs as set out in paragraph 2.5 of the existing SNA contract (Primary – Circular SNA 15/05, Post-Primary Circular SNA 12/05) which states that SNAs are required to “work normal classroom hours including class break periods and in addition to attend before and after school in order to help with the preparation and tidying up of classrooms, reception and dispersal of children etc.” Furthermore, SNAs are still required to carry out the duties already set out in the Appendix of the existing SNA contract.

Please ensure that all serving SNAs, including those on leave of absence, receive a copy of this Circular, and a copy of the Grievance and Disciplinary procedures, and that a copy of this circular and a copy of the Grievance and Disciplinary procedures, are also given to all SNAs upon their recruitment.

Philip Crosby  
Principal Officer  
External Staff Relations  
15 December 2011

## **Public Service (Croke Park) Agreement - Special Needs Assistants**

A comprehensive review of existing employment terms and conditions has taken place in line with the provisions of the Public Service Agreement. Following the conclusion of discussions under the auspices of the Labour Relations Commission between all parties to this process (IMPACT, SIPTU, Management Bodies and the Department of Education and Skills), this document is now forwarded to schools for immediate implementation of all of its provisions.

### **Revised employment terms and conditions for Special Needs Assistants (SNAs):**

1. The duties of an SNA are now restated to include the necessary duties that are required to support the care needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing pupils and blind and visually impaired pupils.
2. The duties of an SNA are now restated to give clear understanding and effect to the fact that SNA duties are assigned at the discretion of the Principal, or another person acting on behalf of the Principal, and/or the Board of Management of a school or VEC.
3. The existing SNA contract (circular SNA12/05 – post-primary and SNA15/05 – primary) outlines, as part of the conditions of service, that *“Their work is supervised either by the Principal or another teacher as determined by the Principal”*. The duties of an SNA are now restated to give clear understanding and effect to the fact that this term of employment does not state or imply a requirement for a Principal or a teacher to directly supervise an SNA at all times.
4. The attached document (Appendix 1) produced by the Labour Relations Commission relating to the utilisation of the “12 Days” by schools and VECs has been agreed for immediate implementation of all of its provisions in schools and VECs. It is envisaged that this will significantly enhance the benefit to be derived by schools from the provision of these “12 Days”.
5. Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures for SNAs have been agreed between all parties (IMPACT, SIPTU, Management Bodies and the Department of Education and Skills) for immediate implementation in all schools. These procedures are contained in Circular 0072/2011. It should be noted that separate Grievance and Disciplinary procedures are in place for staff in VECs

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) – Labour Relations Commission document regarding Public Service Agreement Contract Review**

1. The Public Service Agreement provided for a comprehensive review and revision of the existing employment terms and conditions of SNAs to identify and remove any impediments to the provision of efficient and effective support for pupils with special care needs.
2. Except as provided for below, this agreement does not amend existing circulars setting out the duties, terms and conditions of SNAs.
3. Under the existing contract, SNAs are required to be available for a number of days at the start and finish of each school term, not exceeding 12 in total, and no more than 5 consecutive days.
4. It is intended to introduce greater flexibility to the use of these 12 days. Instead of these days being solely used as days outside of the normal school calendar, they can be used as an additional bank of hours to be utilised and delivered outside of normal school opening hours and/or the normal school year. These 12 days equate to 72 hours (pro-rata for part-time SNAs).
5. A list of duties is set out in point 9 of this document. Items on the list form part of the normal range of SNA duties, and are liable to be performed at any time during normal working hours. Similarly, because these duties can be carried out at times when pupils with special needs are not present, they are appropriate activities to be carried out during the 72 hours. It is also noted that the duties set out in point 9 of this document, are appropriate to be carried out in post-primary schools when pupils with special needs are not present in the month of June.
6. No existing agreements or arrangements can be incorporated into the utilisation of the 72 hours; for example SNAs in addition to working normal classroom hours including class break periods are also required to attend before and after school in order to help with the preparation and tidying up of classrooms, reception and dispersal of children etc.
7. The 72 hours can be used in one of the following two ways (or a combination of both):
  - a. At the discretion of school management, the hours may be aggregated in blocks of between 1 hour and 2.5 hours, scheduled on days when SNAs would normally be in attendance and outside of normal attendance hours. A block of time so scheduled should be immediately before or after normal attendance hours. However, a reasonable period may be allowed for a work break. A longer delay may be allowed (e.g. because of an evening event in the school) where there is a consensus to do so;

- b. At the discretion of school management, the hours may be aggregated in blocks of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 consecutive days (Maximum 5 at any one time), scheduled outside of days when SNAs would normally be in attendance. A block of days so scheduled will immediately follow or precede school terms or occur within a couple of days thereof. A longer gap to the start or end of terms may be allowed where there is a consensus to do so.
8. The 72 hours can be designated at the sole discretion of school management to deal with some or all of the items set out in set out in point 9 of this document. However, it is recognised that because of the number of schools and the range of needs of pupils, it is not possible to identify every circumstance that might arise, and therefore other appropriate duties might require to be carried out.
9. Non-exhaustive list of duties.

**SEN pupil-centred activity:**

- Provide input with regard to care needs for the preparation of Individual Education Plans;
- Assist with care planning;
- Provide assistance and information in relation to care needs for preparation of physiological and school reports and files;
- Assist transition process in relation to care needs for pupils from one school or education centre to another;
- Assist SEN pupils to display their work;
- Assist in analysis of attendance for SEN pupils;
- Assist teachers and/or principal in maintaining a journal and uniform care monitoring system for SEN pupils;
- Assist Principal or other teacher designated by Principal in preparing briefing profiles on SEN pupils;
- Under the direction of the Principal or designated teacher, assist in compiling information for staff for the return to class in the new academic year e.g. special section in staff handbook, particularly in relation to care and assistance required in class for SEN pupils;

**Learning resource administration:**

- Preparation, organising, tidying of Class Room, Resource Room, Learning Support Room, ASD classrooms and such other rooms used by SEN pupils, and appropriate equipment and resources used, including those related to ICT;
- Prepare materials and equipment in classrooms used by SEN pupils including cleaning any specialist equipment used by SEN pupils, e.g. computer keyboards, special desks;
- Provide assistance for SEN pupils in relation to assembling their class materials, displays, programmes, books and preparing their materials for class.

**Class and school planning and development:**

- Participation with school development planning and policy development, where appropriate, including reference to particular assistance required by SEN pupils to participate fully in school;
- Planning for the following day's classes; in particular where there may be additional care or assistance requirements for certain classes or projects;
- Liaising with the class teacher;
- Liaising with other teachers such as resource teachers and/or Principal;
- Meetings with parents as appropriate with the agreement and guidance of the Principal and/or class teacher;
- Preparation for and attendance at whole team meetings and staff meetings;
- Participation in and assistance with school operational structures which are in place to facilitate the full integration and participation of SEN pupils in school;

**Examinations (Both State and House Examinations):**

- Assist in the setting up of Special Examination Centres and appropriate accommodation centres for examinations;
- Assist in ensuring that special centres are properly organised, and that SEN pupils with assigned SNA are present and have the appropriate equipment;
- Where rooms are adapted for use as special centres, assist in restoring those rooms for normal school use after the examinations have finished.

**Training and development:**

- Training (nationally or school mandated);
- Inform colleague SNAs of best practice based on professional and experiential knowledge in relation to the educational and care needs of SEN pupils, with the agreement and guidance of the Principal, and/or class teacher;
- Up-skill in use of ICT as learning tools for SEN pupils;

**Other:**

- Other work which is appropriate to the grade as may be determined by the needs of the SEN pupils and the school.