



Scoil Chéile Chríost Rathmore NS

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Principal: Caitríona Lancaster

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Special Needs Assistant (SNA) Policy

Scoil Chéile Chríost, Rathmore N.S., is committed to providing an inclusive, safe and supportive learning environment for all pupils. This policy outlines the role, deployment and management of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support within the school in accordance with Department of Education and NCSE guidance.

SNAs are valued members of the school staff and play a key role in supporting pupils with significant additional care needs, enabling access to education while promoting independence and participation in school life.

SNAs in Scoil Chéile Chríost Rathmore N.S. are allocated as a whole-school resource and work under the direction of the class teacher and school leadership to support pupils with significant additional care needs, in line with DES Circulars 30/2014, 49/2024 and 32/2025. Their role is care-focused, enabling pupils to access education while promoting independence and participation.

Legislative and Policy Context

This policy is informed by and operates within the framework of:

- Education Act (1998)
- EPSEN Act (2004)
- DES Circular 0030/2014 and subsequent circulars (Appendix B)
- NCSE Comprehensive Review of the SNA Scheme (2018)
- NCSE SNA Toolkit: Deployment of SNA Support (2024) (Appendix A)
- The School Inclusion Model and Continuum of Support

- Relevant school policies including Child Safeguarding, Code of Behaviour, SEN Policy, Health and Safety Statement, Intimate Care Policy, Critical Incident Policy, to name but a few.

Rationale

The policy was formulated:

- Clarify the role and responsibilities of SNAs within Scoil Chéile Chríost, Rathmore N.S.
- Ensure SNA support is deployed fairly, transparently and flexibly
- Prioritise pupils with the most significant care needs
- Promote the development of pupil independence, dignity and wellbeing
- Ensure consistency in practice across the school

Aims

- Ensure pupils with additional and significant care needs can access education safely and reach their full potential
- Support inclusion and participation in all aspects of school life
- Promote independence rather than dependency
- Support teachers in meeting pupils' care needs
- Ensure effective monitoring, review and deployment of SNA support
- Foster positive collaboration between SNAs, teachers, parents and external agencies

Current SNA Allocation

Scoil Chéile Chríost, Rathmore National School currently has an allocation of 2.83 full-time Special Needs Assistants, allocated under the General Allocation Model.

This allocation is subject to change at the end of each year, when pupils with care needs leave the school and following any Exceptional Review by the NCSE.

SENO Liaison

The Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) currently assigned to the school is: Liam Hayes. Scoil Chéile Chríost Rathmore N.S. works closely with the SENO in relation to:

- allocation and review of SNA support
- exceptional review applications

- clarification of care needs and eligibility criteria

Principles Governing the Deployment of SNA Support

In line with the NCSE SNA Toolkit (2024), (Appendix A), the following principles guide deployment:

- SNAs are allocated to the school, not to individual pupils
- Pupils with the greatest level of need receive the greatest level of support
- Deployment is flexible and responsive to changing needs and must promote independence
- SNA support is provided only where significant care needs cannot be met through:
 - whole-school approaches
 - classroom strategies
 - teaching and SET supports

All supports are focused on the development of independence.

Identification and Prioritisation of Care Needs

SNA support is considered where a pupil has significant additional care needs, including primary care needs and associated secondary care tasks, as outlined in DES Circular 0030/2014 (See appendix B)

The school uses:

- the Continuum of Support
- Student Support Plans and Pupil Care Plans
- professional reports (where relevant)
- consultation with parents/guardians
- the voice of the pupil (where appropriate)

Pupils with the most significant care needs are prioritised, while ensuring a balance between meeting basic care needs, and promoting independence and self-regulation.

Staff Roles

Principal

- Ensure SNA deployment complies with DES Circular 0049/2024 and 0032/2025, prioritising students with the highest care needs
- Assign role-specific and child-specific tasks in association with the SEN Coordinator and class teacher.

- Coordinate integration and develop SNA role profiles.
- Monitor SNA effectiveness.
- Encourage CPD.
- Assign tasks for out-of-school pupil time.
- Manage conflict with support of Deputy Principal.

Special Education Needs Co-Ordinator & SET Teachers

- Oversee School Support Plans in consultation with relevant parties.
- Identify SNA tasks with class teacher approval.
- Ensure SNA support is available for integration in line with DES and NCSE guidance.

Class Teachers

- Ensure SNA roles focus on care needs, not curriculum delivery, in line with Circular 30/2014 and 0049/2024
- Provide suitable seating arrangements for the SNA and child in the mainstream setting.
- Collaborate with the SNA on planning and timetabling.
- Provide tasks for non-contact periods.e.g. Staff Meetings, 10 minutes before/after school, etc.
- Communicate with parents/guardians.

The Role of the SNA

The role and responsibilities of the SNA in Scoil Chéile Chríost Rathmore N.S are aligned with Department of Education Circular 30/2014, 0049/2024 & 0032/20

SNAs:

- Assist with personal care, mobility, medical, behavioural or communication needs where required.
- Support pupils with identified care needs to access the curriculum
- Support inclusion during class time, yard time, assemblies, and school activities
- Support the implementation of care targets identified in Student Support Plans
- Contribute to observation and monitoring of care needs
- Carry out non-teaching duties under the direction of the class teacher and/or Principal

SNAs do not:

- Replace the role of the teacher (SNAs provide care support; teachers provide instruction and lead assessment/IEP/SSP processes.)

- Teach new curricular *content* (instructional teaching is a teacher's role; SNA tasks are *non-teaching* in nature.)
- Act as substitute teachers (SNAs must not be left in charge of a class or used as subs.
- Work independently of teacher direction.

Promoting Independence

A core principle of SNA support in Scoil Chéile Chríost, Rathmore N.S. is the promotion of independence.

SNAs will:

- avoid unnecessary proximity (“velcro support”)
- encourage pupils to attempt tasks independently
- gradually reduce support where appropriate
- reinforce skills that promote self-care, confidence and autonomy

Planning, Monitoring and Review

- SNA support is planned and reviewed as part of the Student Support Plan/ Pupil Care Plan process
- Care targets are reviewed regularly (at a minimum once per year and twice a year, if the child's needs are evolving).
- Deployment is adjusted in response to pupil progress or changing needs
- Detailed records are maintained in line with NCSE guidance SNA-Toolkit-2024

Confidentiality

All SNAs are required to:

- treat pupil and family information with strict confidentiality
- share information only with relevant staff on a need-to-know basis
- adhere to GDPR, Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures and school policies

Professional Collaboration

Effective SNA support depends on positive collaboration between:

- Principal
- class teachers
- SET teachers
- Other SNAs

- parents/guardians
- external professionals (where appropriate)

Mutual respect, open communication and shared responsibility are essential.

Physical contact

- The SNA will try to have as little physical contact as possible with the child. If the child's attention is required, place a hand lightly on the child's shoulder.
- Physical contact may be required to protect a pupil from harm to themselves or others or to assist a pupil with a physical disability.
- The SNA will help where necessary with toileting, changing for PE, swimming lessons etc. while encouraging independence skills.
- 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.

Parental Contact

- SNAs should maintain positive, professional relationships with parents while upholding appropriate boundaries.
- Where required, SNAs may escort a child to the car park or bus and briefly greet the parent or guardian.
- Brief, general conversation (e.g., how the day went or simple reminders) is appropriate; however, SNAs must not discuss the child's educational progress, which is the responsibility of the class teacher.
- Any parental questions, concerns, or requests about school policy, practice, or the child's learning must be directed to the class teacher or Principal.
- Parents must not have an SNA's personal phone number or contact them outside school hours.

Supervision

- Pupils should be supervised from an appropriate distance whenever possible, allowing them to develop independence while ensuring their safety.
- Yard supervision during break times should actively promote social interaction and inclusion. After lunch, the SNA should assist pupils in joining their class line and remaining there until the class teacher arrives.
- An SNA must not supervise a class alone. If the class teacher needs to leave the room at any point, the classroom door must remain open, and a neighbouring teacher should be asked to supervise until the teacher returns.

- During break times, each SNA (or another SNA where necessary) may have direct responsibility for a particular child, if resources allow. SNAs must always remain vigilant, particularly regarding the risk of flight risk.

Sensory/Movement Breaks

- Use scheduled programme developed with professionals in conjunction with the class teacher/SEN teacher.
- Inform teachers of progress.
- Should be of a ten-minute duration and daily to be effective, if timetable allows.

Medication

- The school's "Administration of Medicines Policy should be understood and always followed.
- Administer medication discreetly.
- Prescribed medication only.
- Store all medicines appropriately in line with our Health and Safety Policy.

Hours of Work

- Full-time: 32 hours per week, the school day in Scoil Chéile Chríost Rathmore N.S. i.e. from 8.45am to 2.40pm
- Part Time: (0.83): 26.5 hours/week, the school day in Scoil Chéile Chríost Rathmore N.S. i.e. from 8.45am to 1:40pm
- All SNAs must be available for pre- and post-school duties as required.
- Croke Park/Haddington Road hours are at discretion of the Board of Management in consultation with the Principal and SNAs

Times and Timetables

- Timetables are issued annually.
- Break schedules vary according to timetable:
Morning break: **10:25–10:45 or 11:15–11:35**
Lunch break: **01:40–02:00 p.m.**
- Full-time SNAs work 12 days outside the school year (pro rata for part-time).
- Class teachers will give the SNA a copy of the class timetable pointing out where the child will work with the class or in a group or at own level during the day. Suitable times for sensory/movement breaks will also be identified.

Staff Meetings

SNAs may be required to attend Staff Meetings when issues of relevance to their own work are up for discussion.

On days of in-service ancillary staff and SNAs will be required to attend school to complete tasks and relevant CPD will be organized.

Contract of Employment

- SNAs are not specifically assigned to an individual child but rather to the school.
- Seniority is determined by commencement date.
- It must be noted that all positions are up for regular review in association with the DES and NCSE.

Success Criteria

This policy is designed to enhance the teaching and learning experiences of children with Special Educational Needs in our school. Its effectiveness will be evident when:

- Children with Special Educational Needs are fully included in whole-school activities.
- Children experience a safe, supportive and stimulating learning environment.
- Pupils demonstrate increasing independence and develop essential life skills.
- Children make progress towards the targets identified in their School Support Plans.

Ratification and Review

The policy will be reviewed every two years, or earlier if required due to an NCSE SNA review, the enrolment of a pupil granted SNA support, or any change in the school's SNA allocation.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in February 2026.

Signed: Seamus Lane
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 11/02/2026

Signed: Caitríona Lawcasler
Principal

Date: 11/02/2026

Appendix A: NCSE SNA Toolkit (2024)

Available at the following link: - <https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/SNA-Toolkit-2024-1.pdf>

Significant Primary Care Needs

Description of Primary Care Need:	A Significant Primary Care Need includes:	A Significant Primary Care Need does not include:
Toileting	Care of students who are incontinent (wearing nappies or other continence wear) Clean Intermittent Catheterisation (CIC) (where the student cannot self-catheterise) Care of in-dwelling catheter or stoma (young children) Changes after toileting “accidents” (young children) in conjunction with toileting programme May include escorting a young or vulnerable student to the toilet, if the toilet is outside the classroom and is inaccessible to the student A student who has primary significant care needs around toileting is a student who cannot toilet independently even with the use of appropriate strategy and re-arrangement of the environment and therefore requires SNA support Preserving the dignity of the student	Prompting a student, who does not have a toileting plan with appropriate strategies and rearrangement of the environment, to use the toilet Reminding a student to wipe themselves or wash/dry their hands Arranging clothing after use of the toilet
Feeding	Feeding a student who cannot physically feed themselves PEG or tube feeding Supervision of a student who has a Feeding Eating Drinking Swallowing (FEDS) care plan owing to a risk of choking/aspiration	Encouraging or reminding a student to eat; assisting them in opening their lunchbox Supervising a student in case they overeat or put too much food into their mouth
Administration of Medicine	Giving medicine to a student who is unable to self-	Administration of medication not included in a

	administer medications owing to age or learning or other need, according to the student care plan and school policy Administering emergency medication if required for conditions such as epilepsy or in the cases of sudden collapse, according to the student care plan and school policy Giving assistance with inhalers or nebulizer or other medicinal intervention where the student is unable to do so on account of age, learning or other need	student care plan or outside of school health policy
Assistance with mobility and orientation	Assisting a student whose mobility is compromised so that they use a wheelchair, walker or other aid Assisting students who are vision impaired to negotiate the school premises	Students who may trip or fall on occasion General management of environmental hazards e.g. moving bags and chairs
Assisting teachers to provide supervision	Yard supervision, in addition to teacher supervision, for students who require support on account of a significant physical disability, medical condition or behaviour of concern Supervision in class and during transitions for students with significant behaviours of concern	Supervising classes Supervising students with additional needs during class periods where there is a reduced curriculum Replacing teacher supervision on yard Replacing environmental adaptations
Non-nursing care needs	Care of a student during a seizure Assisting with monitoring of medical condition for younger or vulnerable students e.g. diabetes, as part of medical response plan Procedures which may involve withdrawal of the student from class (younger or vulnerable students)	Procedures which would normally be carried out by a medical professional

Care needs involving withdrawal of the student from class	Withdrawal for brief periods to assist with medical procedures, administration of medicine Brief withdrawal for students who become dysregulated due to stress factors. Withdrawal should include a regulating activity as informed by information gathered from parents/guardians, the student and other relevant professionals. This withdrawal should be an exception with regular regulating activities taking place in the classroom to prevent unnecessary withdrawal. Regulation should be understood as necessary for engagement and participation.	Scheduled movement breaks which can be completed independently by the student or are part of an Occupational Therapy programme Withdrawal as a part of reward/sanction for behaviour To give the teacher or class a break
Moving and lifting, operation of hoists and equipment	Use of hoists or other equipment in order to provide toilet, personal or physical care to a student Lifting or otherwise transferring a student in order to provide personal care or a transfer between equipment or between floor and equipment.	In general, one SNA can operate a hoist. The hoist carries the load and replaces the need for a second adult. The dignity of the student must be maintained
Assistance with severe communication difficulties, arising from physical, visual, hearing, and/or social-emotional difficulties	Assisting the class teacher with Braille, Lámh, Sign Language, and augmentative and alternative communication systems Assisting the class teacher to adopt a total communication approach Preparation of class materials-large print Managing and transferring equipment as required Supporting transitions to and from classes and to and from yard time	Students with Developmental Language Delay Students with phonological difficulties Keeping on task Checking batteries for students who can otherwise do this independently

Behaviour Related Care Needs	Assisting with the implementation of the Behaviour Support Plan Providing additional supervision in class, for transitions and on yard, as required Withdrawal from class if necessary (as outlined above)	Using the SNA as a first response to meet behavioural needs Prompting a student to remain on task, follow instructions, engage in expected behaviours. Assisting a student with the completion of academic work missed as a result of behaviour Repeating teacher instructions Keeping on task
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Appendix B: Circular 0030/2014 (See appendix B)

The full circular can be accessed at the following link: -

<https://circulars.gov.ie/pdf/circular/education/2014/30.pdf>

Section 4 Care Needs

Primary Care Needs: -

Assistance with feeding: where a child with special needs requires adult assistance and where the extent of assistance required would overly disrupt normal teaching time.

Administration of medicine: where a child requires adult assistance to administer medicine and where the extent of assistance required would overly disrupt normal teaching time.

Assistance with toileting and general hygiene: (including catheterisation) where a child with special needs cannot independently self-toilet, and until such time as they are able to do so.

Assistance with mobility and orientation: on an ongoing basis including assisting a child or children to access the school, the classroom, with accessing school transport (where provided, school Bus Escorts should, in the first instance, assist a child to access school transport), or helping a child to avoid hazards in or surrounding the school. (Every effort must be made by the school to provide opportunities for independence e.g. the removal of hazards.)

Assisting teachers to provide supervision in the class, playground and school grounds: at recreation, assembly, and dispersal times including assistance with arriving and departing from school for pupils with special needs where the school has made a robust case that existing teaching resources cannot facilitate such supervision.

Non-nursing care needs associated with specific medical conditions: such as frequent epileptic seizures or for pupils who have fragile health.

Care needs requiring frequent interventions including withdrawal of a pupil from a classroom when essential: This may be for safety or personal care reasons, or where a child may be required to leave the class for medical reasons or due to distress on a frequent basis.

Assistance with moving and lifting of children, operation of hoists and equipment.

Assistance with severe communication difficulties including enabling curriculum access for pupils with physical disabilities or sensory needs (See also section 9) and those with significant and identified social and emotional difficulties. Under the direction of the teacher, this might include assistance with assistive technology equipment, typing or handwriting, supporting transition, assisting with supervision at recreation, dispersal times etc.

Secondary Care Needs

Preparation and tidying of workspaces and classrooms or assisting a child who is not physically able to perform such tasks to prepare and tidy a workspace, to present materials, to display work, or to transition from one lesson activity to another. To assist with cleaning of materials.

Assistance with the development of Personal Pupil Plans for children with special educational needs, with a particular focus on developing a care plan to meet the care needs of the pupil concerned and the review of such plans.

Assist teachers and/or Principal in maintaining a journal or care monitoring system for pupils including details of attendance and care needs. Assist in preparation of school files and materials relating to care and assistance required in class by students with special needs.

Planning for activities and classes where there may be additional care requirements associated with particular activities, liaising with class teachers and other teachers such as the resource teacher and school principal, attending meetings with parents, SENO, NEPS Psychologists, or school staff meetings with the agreement and guidance of class teacher/principal.

Assistance with enabling a pupil to access therapy or psycho-educational programmes such as anger management or social skills classes, under the direction of qualified personnel, including class teachers or support teachers.

Assistance to attend or participate in out of school activities: walks, or visits, where such assistance cannot be provided by teaching staff.