



Circular 0051/2019

To: The Managerial Authorities of Recognised Primary, Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools and the Chief Executives of Educations and Training Boards

Recruitment and Appointment Procedures for Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)

The Minister for Education and Skills, pursuant to the power contained in Section 24 of the Education Act (as amended), directs employers to implement the regulations and procedures as set out in this circular.

This circular supersedes all previous circulars, memoranda, rules and regulations in relation to the recruitment and appointment procedures for SNAs including Appendix H of the Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2015-2019, Circular 0021/2011 and Circular 0059/2006. This circular can be accessed on the Department's website under www.education.ie.

All queries should initially be brought to the attention of the school management who may wish to consult with their representative organisation. Any further queries may be directed to the following email address: teachersna@education.gov.ie.

Any queries in relation to the SNA supplementary panel should be directed by e-mail only to the following dedicated e-mail address: snasupplementpanel@education.gov.ie.

Alfie Barrett
Teacher/SNA Terms and Conditions
16th August 2019



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DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this circular the following terms shall have the meanings assigned to them here unless the context indicates otherwise:

Standard SNA Post Vacancy	Is a post which is part of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) quantum of SNA support to a school.
A Substitute or Cover SNA Vacancy	Means an SNA is appointed on a temporary basis to cover a vacancy when a Standard SNA post holder is on approved leave of absence i.e. Maternity Leave, Sick Leave, Career Breaks, job-sharing replacement, unpaid leave replacement etc.
Days	Means calendar days unless otherwise indicated.
CE	Chief Executive of an Education and Training Board (ETB). The CE performs the executive function of the ETB including all employment functions.
Department	Means the Department of Education and Skills.
Employer	Means an Education and Training Board (ETB) for vocational schools/community colleges, community national schools and a Board of Management/Manager in the case of primary (excluding community national schools) voluntary secondary, community and comprehensive schools. The ETB or Board of Management/Manager may delegate as appropriate responsibility for matters set out in this circular.
ETB	Refers to an Education and Training Board.
Minister	Means the Minister for Education and Skills.
Post/vacancy	Refers to an SNA post, whether full-time or part-time, which is funded out of monies provided by the Oireachtas.
Recognised School	Means a school recognised by the Minister in accordance with Section 10 of the Education Act, 1998.



1 ROLE OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT/MANAGER/ETB

- 1.1. It is the responsibility of each employer to maintain effective procedures to ensure:
- a) Openness and transparency in the process of appointment to publicly funded posts, and
 - b) Compliance with:
 - i. Relevant legislation in force at the time of making the appointment, and
 - ii. The relevant Department rules and circulars as issued from time to time and in particular the relevant circular that sets out the supplementary assignment arrangements (see [section 6](#)) for SNAs.
- 1.2. Boards of Management/ETBs, in accordance with the procedures hereunder, are responsible for the appointment of SNAs in schools. Any such appointment is subject to the prior approval of the school's Patron/ETB in the case of Primary Schools.
- 1.3. An SNA 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 MINIMUM EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR EMPLOYMENT AS AN SNA

- 1.4. The minimum required standard of education for appointment to the post of SNA is:
1. A level 3 qualification on the National Framework of Qualifications, OR
 2. A minimum of three grade Ds in the Junior Certificate, OR
 3. Equivalent.
- 1.5. Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) www.qqi.ie is responsible for the development and implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Further information on the NFQ can be found at www.nfq.ie. Queries or advice on the recognition of foreign qualifications can be found at www.naric.ie.

3 ADVERTISEMENTS

- 1.6. A Board of Management/ETB must not advertise a standard SNA vacancy without first ensuring that:
- a) In the first instance, all existing part-time SNAs (other than substitute SNAs) have been offered a full-time position in accordance with the relevant circular that sets out the supplementary assignment arrangements for SNAs, subject to any exceptions stipulated therein, and
 - b) Secondly, where applicable, any internal panel established by a school following interviews for a standard SNA post is clear.



- 1.7. All standard SNA vacancies and cover SNA vacancies of 24 weeks or more must be advertised on one of the following websites as soon as practicable (some of these providers may charge to advertise posts on their websites). SNA vacancies may also be advertised locally as required/deemed necessary. This will enable SNAs who are being made redundant to know what vacancies are available.

List of Websites:

www.staffroom.ie

www.educationcareers.ie

www.educatetogether.ie

www.jobsireland.ie

www.educationposts.ie

Any Education and Training Board website.

- 1.8. Subject to any exceptions permitted by the Employment Equality Acts, 1998 to 2015 the advertisement must not indicate an intention to discriminate or contain information in any form which might reasonably be understood as indicating any such intention.
- 1.9. The advertisement shall invite applications with a curriculum vitae or on a standard application form from eligible persons to be submitted by a specified date to the person specified in the advertisement at the specified address/electronically. For standard vacancies, eligible applicants from the SNA supplementary assignment panel, as detailed in the relevant Department circular, shall be invited to submit a valid certified copy of the Panel Form 1 (PF1) as outlined in that Circular.

- 1.10. The advertisement shall state:-

1	The name, address, roll number and patronage of the school or in the case of the ETB the name, address and roll number of the school(s) in which the vacancy arise.
2	The expected date of commencement of the post.
3	State if the post is full time or part time and the number of part time hours.
4	State whether the post is standard or cover SNA vacancy.
5	A general description of the duties of the post.
6	The address to which applications should be sent. This may be a postal or electronic address (see section 4 for electronic application/electronic procedures).
7	The latest date for receipt of applications, which shall not be earlier than 14 days after the first date of publication of the advertisement.
8	State that a curriculum vitae or standard application form must be submitted with the application (applicants should not be required to submit both a curriculum vitae and an application form).
9	State that where appropriate an internal panel of suitable applicants may be set up from which future vacancies (including cover SNA vacancies) may be filled (valid for the duration of the school year). Standard SNA vacancies may not be filled from a panel established following interviews for a cover SNA position.



10	For standard SNA vacancies, applicants should be invited to submit a valid certified copy of the Panel Form 1 (PF1) as outlined in the relevant circular that sets out the supplementary assignment arrangements.
11	The advertisement must list any specific competencies and/or requirements to meet the special educational needs of the pupil(s).

4 ELECTRONIC APPLICATIONS

1.11. Where the employer chooses to accept electronic (e-mail/online) applications then the following procedures should be followed:

- a) An e-mail/online account shall be set up for the application process. Where the employer does not have access to a distinct e-mail address then a service such as g-mail may be used e.g. *Schoolnameapplications@gmail.com*. Only one email address shall appear on the advertisement.
- b) Access to this account shall be restricted to members of the Interview Board only. In ETBs applications shall be opened by the CE/delegated officer in advance of shortlisting.
- c) The closing date and time shall be strictly adhered to. The date and time at which applications are received is as recorded on the e-mail. The applications will be assessed in accordance with procedures as set out in this circular.
- d) Notification of invitation for interview and the relevant documentation listed may be sent to the applicants e-mail address. Applicants may be requested to confirm attendance by e-mail.
- e) Where a number of applicants are e-mailed at the one time then care should be taken that individuals' confidentiality is maintained. Employers should utilise the: bcc option or e-mail applicants on an individual basis.
- f) Employers may decide to reply in writing (including via e-mail) to those unsuccessful applicants who presented at interview. However, if e-mail is used employers should save or print a copy of the letter to the unsuccessful applicant for school records.
- g) The e-mail address may be used for a new recruitment campaign by a new Interview Board. Where the same school e-mail address is utilised for subsequent competitions, the passwords should be changed to ensure that only the new Interview Board have access to the applications. Only those applications received between the advertisement date and the closing date of the competition may be accessed by the Interview Board/CE.



5 COMPOSITION OF INTERVIEW BOARD-

<p>SNA Interview Board</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairperson of the Board of Management. <p>In exceptional circumstances and for valid reasons, the Chairperson of the Board of Management can apply to the Patron/Trustees (at Post Primary) to be excluded from the process (not applicable to apply to Patron in community and comprehensive sector). Where the Patron/Trustees decides to allow the exclusion, the Patron/Trustees will arrange for a replacement appointment to the Interview Board. The Chairperson will nominate person in his/her place if they cannot attend in the community and comprehensive sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Principal. • One other person nominated by the Patron(Primary)/Trustees(Post Primary). <p>In the case of the selection of an SNA in a period after a Principal has been appointed but before that Principal has taken up duty, the newly appointed Principal shall fill the position of Principal on the Interview Board.</p>
<p>ETB schools including Community National Schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Nominee of the CE of the ETB - normally a Principal. • 1 Education Expert appointed by the ETB. • 1 Independent Assessor appointed by the ETB. <p>Education Expert - A person with appropriate education experience.</p>

1.12. The Interview Board must include at least one male and one female.

1.13. Confidentiality must be maintained throughout the process.

6 LIABILITY TO SUPPLEMENTARY PANELS

Strict adherence should be ensured as regards circulars setting out liability to SNA supplementary panels.

7 CRITERIA OF ASSESSMENT

1.14. Subject to paragraph 6 above the Interview Board/ETB shall retain the discretion to re-advertise the post where is it not satisfied with the number of applications received, with a provision included that persons whose applications were received within the time specified in the initial advertisement need not reapply and their application will be held until the next closing date.



1.15. Where the minimum number of applications has been specified in the advertisement and is not met, the post shall be re-advertised with a provision included that persons whose applications were received within the time specified in the initial advertisement need not reapply and their application will be held until the next closing date. Otherwise, at least three eligible applicants shall be called for interview.

1.16. The Interview Board shall meet as soon as practical and shall establish agreed criteria for the assessment of the applications and for interview prior to opening of the applications received. Applications shall be opened by the Interview Board/CE/delegated officer in advance of shortlisting. In establishing the criteria, the following factors shall be taken into account, having regard to the requirements under the relevant circular that sets out the supplementary assignment arrangements and the appropriate legislation, though not exclusively nor necessarily in this order:

- Supplementary Panel rights
- Qualifications
- Any specific competencies and/or requirements to meet the special educational needs of the pupil(s)

Care must be taken to ensure that the criteria do not lead to discrimination on the grounds set out in Section 6(2) of the Employment Equality Acts, 1998-2015 i.e., gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and member of the Travelling Community.

1.17. The criteria selected must reflect the needs of the school/ETB.

1.18. Confidentiality must be maintained throughout the process.

1.19. Selection of applicants for interview will be based on an initial assessment of applications against the established criteria.

8 DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST/INTEGRITY OF INTERVIEW BOARD PROCEEDINGS

1.20. The employer shall inform the Chairperson of the Interview Board that it is the responsibility of the Interview Board to address disclosures of interest/integrity in accordance with the procedures set out in this circular. In ETB schools the ETB distributes the applications and a conflict of interest form to the members of the Interview Board (completed forms are returned to ETBs).

1.21. A member of the Interview Board who has a relationship with a person who is an applicant for appointment shall immediately disclose to the Interview Board/ETB the fact of the relationship and the nature thereof. A professional relationship in itself does not necessarily mean there is a conflict of interest e.g. worked together in the past. In this context Interview Board members are required to make a disclosure not only in the case of a family relationship but in respect of any relationship which could be regarded as prejudicial to ensuring absolute impartiality in the selection process.



1.22. Following this disclosure, the Interview Board/ETB shall determine whether that member shall take any further part in any deliberation or decision concerning the appointment through to ratification at employer level. Where the Interview Board finds that there is a concern regarding an Interview Board member, the Chairperson of the Interview Board shall inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management/ETB who in turn informs the Patron/CE/Trustees (at Post Primary) unless the Chairperson of the Interview Board is the Chairperson of the Board of Management/ETB in which case they should contact the Patron/CE/Trustee(s)/BOM nominee in the voluntary secondary school sector directly. The Patron/CE/Trustees shall nominate another member in his or her place following consultation with the Chairperson of Board of Management/ETB.

1.23. In ETB schools where a conflict of interest is determined applications are returned or deleted.

1.24. In all instances in ETB schools the Conflict of Interest Form is returned to the ETB.

1.25. Failure to disclose any relationship may invalidate the process.

9 INTERVIEWS

1.26. Invitations to interview should normally be issued in writing or by e-mail within three calendar weeks of the closing date for receipt of applications and shall include:

- i. At least 7 days' notice (number of days not specified in community and comprehensive sector) of a specific interview date, time (outside school hours in primary schools other than Community National Schools) and location.
- ii. Details of the established criteria for the post(s).
- iii. A request for the applicant to notify the Interview Board if he/she requires any additional assistance in relation to a special need.

1.27. The interview venue should be fully accessible and in compliance with all Disability and Health and Safety legislation.

1.28. All questions asked at interview shall relate to the requirements of the particular post. No question shall be asked nor information sought in any form from an applicant which might be construed as being discriminatory.

In the selection of staff for boys only and girls only schools special care should be taken to ensure that both male and female applicants are given equal opportunity to present themselves as suitable and that questions should not give the impression that the Interview Board has a preconceived view of the suitability of either a male or a female for a particular post.



Section 9.4 to 9.7 are not applicable to ETB schools. All ETB schools are referred to section 9.8

- 1.29. Each member of the Interview Board is required to complete his or her own individual marking sheet and give it to the Chairperson of the Interview Board on completion of the interviews.
- 1.30. The individual marks shall be added and the final mark for each applicant will be used to produce a ranking of applicants that they deemed suitable for appointment (not applicable in community and comprehensive sector).
- 1.31. If following interview, a number of applicants obtain the same marks then seniority as an SNA should be used to determine the ranking of the candidates. The seniority of the SNAs can be determined from the PF1 Form.
- 1.32. Following completion of the interview process the Chairperson of the Interview Board shall, on behalf of the employer, conduct reference checks of the highest ranked applicant. This should include seeking and following up on references and ensuring that any unexplained gaps in employment records/curriculum vitae are satisfactorily accounted for.

The Interview Board in its sole discretion will determine the suitability of any reference. The Interview Board further reserves the right to seek from an applicant the names of additional referees. Appropriate records of these checks should be retained on the proposed appointee's personnel file.

- 1.33. In ETB schools the interview process will follow established best practice in ETBs.
- 1.34. An applicant's own marking sheets should be made available on request after the recruitment process is complete.

10 APPOINTING THE SUCCESSFUL APPLICANT

- 1.35. Following the completion of the interview process, the Chairperson of the Interview Board shall submit a written report to the employer setting out:
 - i. That the selection procedures have been complied with.
 - ii. If there has been a disclosure of interest/integrity to the Interview Board and the outcome of such disclosure (see section 8).
 - iii. The name of highest ranked applicant(s) whom it considers most suitable for appointment, and
 - iv. Confirmation of the receipt of suitable references for the highest ranked applicant(s) nominated for appointment (not applicable in ETB schools as the ETB checks the references of the successful applicant(s) prior to any offer of employment).

- 1.36. In schools other than ETB schools the Chairperson of the Interview Board will retain:



- i. A record of the final marks and the ranking of applicants. This information shall be given to the Board of Management if requested as the employer.
- ii. The order of merit can be used if the highest ranked applicant nominated for appointment declines the position.

In ETB schools the Interview Boards returns documentation to the ETB.

- 1.37. References of the successful applicant(s) shall be checked prior to any offer of appointment being made.
- 1.38. Where specified in the advertisement that an internal panel may be created, the Chairperson of the Interview Board will retain or in the case of Voluntary secondary schools pass this information to the Principal or in the case of ETBs pass this information to the ETB. An internal panel of applicants in order of merit deemed suitable for appointment to any future post arising in the school valid for the duration of the school year subject to suitable reference and prior approval of the Patron/ETB/Trustees (approval not applicable in voluntary secondary school sector).
- 1.39. The employer shall offer the post(s) to the highest ranked applicant(s) nominated for appointment unless it has good and sufficient reason not to do so and such reason was not known to the Interview Board in which instance the matter shall be referred to the Patron/Trustees/ETB, whose decision in this matter shall be accepted by the employer. Failure to accept the vacancy offered in the requisite time period will result in withdrawal of offer.
- 1.40. In the Primary Sector the offer of employment should not be made to the prospective employee until the prior approval of the Patron has been obtained by the Chairperson of the Board of Management/prior approval of CE in the Community National Schools.
- 1.41. Employers shall follow best practice in relation to the following.
 - i. Verification of documentation: Qualifications must be verified for the highest ranked applicant(s) nominated for appointment.
 - ii. Medical Fitness: All successful candidates being appointed for the first time to an SNA position in Ireland or Special Needs Assistants returning from leave of absence or other break in service in excess of two full school years will be screened by pre-employment medical questionnaire and fitness confirmed before the SNA takes up or resumes an SNA post. For further details, see the [Occupational Health Service for Teachers and Special Needs Assistants, Standard Operating Procedures Manual](#).
- 1.42. All appointments are subject to compliance with the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016 and with relevant Department's circulars in relation to Garda vetting.
- 1.43. The notification letter of offer to the successful applicant(s) should state that the offer of employment is subject to the sanction of the Minister, confirmation of

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qualifications and compliance with Garda vetting requirements (see 10.8) and pre-employment medical screening prior to commencement of the employment.

1.44. As soon as the employer has received written notification of the successful applicant's acceptance of the post, all unsuccessful interviewees should be notified.

1.45. A separate Process Verification Document (attached to the relevant supplementary assignment arrangements for SNAs circular) should be completed by employers in respect of every person appointed to a standard SNA vacancy, including the filling of additional hours (i.e. where an existing part-time SNA receives additional hours). There is no requirement to complete a PVD Form in respect of substitute or "cover" vacancies.

11 CONTRACTS OF EMPLOYMENT

1.46. A contract of employment shall be prepared in duplicate and signed by both parties (i.e. the employer and the successful candidate) within the first five days of appointment (see Circulars [12/05](#) and [15/05](#)), and comply with the terms of the Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2018.

12 NOTIFICATION OF THE APPOINTMENT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

12.1. On completion of the appointments procedure as outlined above, both the successful candidate and the Boards of Management/ETBs (only in the case of Community National Schools) shall complete and submit the form "Notification of Appointment – SNA", for the relevant school year and forward it to the Paymaster at the earliest opportunity in order to ensure the newly appointed SNA is set up on Payroll as soon as possible. The Form is available on the Departments website, www.education.ie and return to:

Non Teaching Staff (NTS) Payroll,
Payroll Division,
Department of Education and Skills,
Cornamaddy,
Athlone,
Co. Westmeath.
N37 X659



13 COMPLIANCE

12.2. All employers and SNAs must adhere to the regulations and procedures set out in this circular. The Department shall not be liable for any costs, obligations or funding of contracts arising from failure to adhere to the terms of this circular.

12.3. Each employer will maintain effective procedures to ensure SNA appointments are made in accordance with the procedures outlined in this circular and other relevant Department circulars.

12.4. The Department may carry out examinations of SNA appointment records. All documentation relating to SNA appointments, listed in paragraph 14 below, must be retained by the employer with the relevant personnel records. Also, certified evidence of compliance with requirements must be retained on file by the employer for accounting and audit purposes. The employer will provide a copy of this information to the Department, if requested.

14 RECORD OF DOCUMENTS RETAINED BY SCHOOL/ETB AUTHORITIES

12.5. The following documents should be safely retained in the school/ETB for all SNA appointments:

1	A copy of the advertisement.
2	The applications for the post.
3	Criteria for assessment of applicants.
4	Valid certified copy of the Panel Form 1 (PF1) (if applicable).
5	Any documents and/or notes created by the Interview Board.
6	The Interview Board Report – including 7-14 below.
7	Confirmation of verification of references from previous employers.
8	A copy of the applicant's educational qualifications.
9	Confirmation of compliance with the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016 and with relevant Department's circulars in relation to Garda vetting.
10	A copy of the confirmation of medical fitness received from the Occupational Health Service.
11	Any other relevant documentation relating to an individual SNA's appointment.
12	Record of the Patron's/CE/BOM's approval of the appointment (not applicable in community and comprehensive sector).
13	Completed contract of employment i.e. signed by the employer and the SNA.
14	A copy of the appointment form completed by both parties that was submitted to the Paymaster.

12.6. All documents relating to the recruitment process of SNAs should be retained in accordance with the school/ETB's GDPR policy and should be available for audit.



15 SENIORITY OF SNAS

1.47. Importance of Seniority:

The sequence in which SNAs are appointed to Primary, Secondary, Community and Comprehensive schools and Education and Training Boards determines their seniority. Seniority is important in determining which SNA:

- Should be offered additional hours when additional hours are allocated to the school/ETB, or
- Should be offered reduced hours or have their employment terminated when the allocation of the school/ETB is reduced.
- Fills a vacancy by virtue of being the most senior SNA where a number of candidates obtain the same mark at interview.

The seniority listing will be used in determining last in first out for the purpose of redundancy.

1.48. Responsibility of Employer:

The employer determines the seniority, based on the SNA's date of commencement of duty in a standard SNA position in that particular school/scheme, whether full time or part time, in a school/ETB.

Each employer should ensure that the seniority listing of SNAs employed is made available to them.

1.49. Rules for Determining Seniority:

- i. An SNA's ranking for seniority purposes will only commence from the date that he/she commences duty in a standard SNA position in that particular school/scheme whether full time or part time, in the school/ETB.
- ii. If two or more SNAs commence duty in a standard SNA position in a particular school/scheme on the same day, the employer should establish the order of seniority based on the order that the SNAs were listed as a result of an interview process i.e. the SNA who was ranked highest following the interview process should be given the higher seniority rating.
- iii. In the event that the SNAs were appointed prior to the issue of Circular Letter SNA 03/03 in August, 2003 and there was no interview process, any qualifications held by the SNA which are deemed appropriate and relevant to the future needs of the school/ETB may be considered by the employer in determining seniority.



- iv. If an SNA leaves a post in a school/ETB either voluntarily or arising from the termination of his/her employment and is subsequently reappointed to the school/ETB following a break in service then his/her seniority will only commence from the date of the most recent appointment.
- v. Job sharing service is reckoned as full service for the purpose of seniority. Authorised absences e.g. maternity leave, adoptive leave, parental leave, paternity leave and paid sick leave do not affect the seniority of an SNA.
- vi. In accordance with Circular 0022/2012 time spent on career break does not reckon as service for seniority purposes. Service prior to and post career break will be treated as continuous for seniority purposes but the actual period of the career break will not be counted as reckonable service.
- vii. An SNA employed in a standard part time capacity shall not be treated less favourably in determining their seniority on account of their status as a part time employee. The seniority of an SNA employed for a regular number of hours each week commences on the day of commencement on a part time basis. If the status of the part time SNA changes to full time in the school/ETB without a break in service the date of commencement in the part time position will determine the seniority of the SNA.
- viii. Service given in any type of community employment scheme in which the person worked in a school prior to appointment as an SNA should not be reckoned in determining seniority.
- ix. In the case of an amalgamated school, where an SNA has given unbroken service continuously in one or more of the schools being amalgamated, the aggregate of that service will be reckoned in determining seniority.
- x. In the case of change of patronage of a school, where an SNA has given unbroken service continuously in the school concerned, that service will be included in determining seniority.