



**To:** Management Bodies

**Date:** 11 November 2020

**Re:** Uses of 72 Hours by SNAs

**Reference:** Department of Education Circular 71/2011

Dear Management Body,

The following letter seeks to remind schools and ETBs to take the necessary steps to ensure the optimum usage of the 72 hours that form part of the SNA contract, and to clarify the appropriate uses of the contracted 72 hours for standard SNA posts (and part-time SNAs). These matters are set out in greater detail in Department of Education Circular 71/2011 which should be read in conjunction with this letter.

### **Background**

As part of the SNA contract (Department of Education circulars 12/2005 Post Primary and 15/2005 Primary) all SNAs were required to be available for a number of days at the start and finish of each school term not exceeding 12 in total. Under the Croke Park Agreement it was agreed to introduce greater flexibility to the use of these contracted 12 days. Accordingly, these 12 days now equate to 72 hours (pro-rata for part-time SNAs).

Both the SNA contract and Department of Education circular 71/2011 were negotiated and agreed nationally between management and trade unions.

### **Requirement to use 72 hours**

These hours form part of the standard SNA contract and are required to be undertaken by those who hold employment as an SNA. These hours are to be used by schools as an additional bank of hours to be utilised and delivered outside of normal school opening hours and/or the normal school year.

### **Planning and management of the 72 hours**

The management and scheduling of these hours is at the sole discretion of school management, and reasonable notice should be given to SNAs regarding the utilisation of this time. Accordingly, scheduling of the 72 hours or days should be considered in order to give effect to the requirement for schools to plan for the use of the hours available and to give reasonable notice to SNAs. Accurate records of the 72 hours worked by each SNA employed by schools or ETBs must be retained, and may be required to be furnished on inspection.



The 72 hours can be used in one of the following two ways (or a combination of both):

1. 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;
2. 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.

#### **Appropriate Uses of the 72 Hours**

School Management must identify appropriate need(s) to ensure the maximum utilisation of hours, and no existing agreements or arrangements can be incorporated into the utilisation of this time requirement. For example, the bank of 72 hours cannot be used for duties which SNA's must already perform before and after school i.e. the preparation and tidying of classrooms.

Appendix 1 of circular 71/2011 sets out a non-exhaustive list of duties. Items on this 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 Appendix 1, are appropriate to be carried out in post-primary schools when pupils with special needs are not present in the month of June. 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.

Allegations of inappropriate uses of the 72 hours should be raised by SNAs using the normal grievance procedures available (Circular 72/2011). Disciplinary procedures are available to employers under the same circular in the event of a failure of an SNA to perform contractual obligations.

Please ensure this letter is distributed to all schools under your aegis.

Yours sincerely,

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**Tara Carton**  
**Principal Officer**  
**External Staff Relations**



## APPENDIX 1

*Please see the following 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.