

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)701/05-06
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/HS/2/04

**Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to the Provision of
Boarding Places, Senior Secondary Education and Employment
Opportunities for Children with Special Educational Needs**

**Minutes of meeting
held on Friday, 25 November 2005 at 10:45 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

- Members present** : Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung (Chairman)
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, GBS, JP
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
- Members absent** : Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP
- Public Officers attending** : Mrs Betty IP TSANG Chui-hing
Principal Assistant Secretary (School Administration &
Support), Education and Manpower Bureau
- Mrs Ruth LAU
Principal Education Officer (Kowloon), Education and
Manpower Bureau
- Mr Tony TANG Fat-yuen
Principal Education Officer (Curriculum Development),
Education and Manpower Bureau
- Mrs Mary MA LO To-wan
Commissioner for Rehabilitation, Health, Welfare and
Food Bureau

Miss Ophelia CHAN
Assistant Director (Rehabilitation and Medical Social
Services), Social Welfare Department

**Attendance by
invitation** : Item II

The Parents Association of Autistic Children in
Mainstream Education

Ms LAM Yuet-mei
Group Convenor

Mrs WONG
Group Member

The Parents' Association of Pre-school Handicapped
Children Group of Skill Training School

Ms LEUNG Chuen-king
Group Convenor

Ms SIH York-mui
Group Member

Parents Concerned Group – Integrated Education

Ms Connie LIO Sio-chu
Committee member

Hong Kong Association for Specific Learning Disabilities

Mrs LAU LEE Man-ying
Vice-Chairman

Miss CHIU Wai-ki
Development Executive

Suen Mei Speech & Hearing Centre

Mrs Bessie S M PANG
Director

Education Convergence

Mr PANG I-wah
Member of Special Education

Mr LAM Yat-fung
Committee Member

Hong Kong Special Schools Council

Dr Simon LEUNG
Chairman

Mr CHAN Kwok-kuen
Vice-Chairman

The Parents' Association of Pre-School Handicapped
Children

Mrs CHUNG NG Sui-fong
Convenor, Main-Stream Education Working Group

Mrs LEE LAU Chu-lai
Vice-Chairperson

Support Group on Integrated Education

Dr SIN Kuen-fung
Executive Member

Ms Heidi HUI Sim-kiu
Convenor

**Clerk in
attendance** : Miss Flora TAI
Chief Council Secretary (2)2

**Staff in
attendance** : Mr Stanley MA
Senior Council Secretary (2)6

Miss Sherman WOO
Legislative Assistant (2)2

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I. Confirmation of minutes
[LC Paper No. CB(2)444/05-06]

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2005 were confirmed.

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II. Follow-up discussion on implementation and effectiveness of the whole-school approach to integrated education

2. Principal Assistant Secretary (School Administration & Support) (PAS(SAS)) briefed members on the Administration's response to the views and concerns of members and deputations expressed at the last meeting on 1 November 2005 [LC Paper No. CB(2)443/05-06(01)].

Views presented by deputations

*The Parents Association of Autistic Children in Mainstream Education
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)186/05-06(02) and CB(2)501/05-06(01)]*

3. Mrs WONG pointed out that arising from the implementation of integrated education, students with special educational needs (SEN) had been ill-treated and bullied by peers in mainstream secondary schools. She used the experience of her son to illustrate the seriousness of the problem. She also expressed disappointment about the so-called whole-school approach to implementation of integrated education in mainstream schools.

The Parents' Association of Pre-school Handicapped Children Group of Skills Training School

4. Ms SIH York-mui described the experience of her son who had previously enrolled in a mainstream secondary school where he had been bullied by his peers in classes and subsequently transferred to a skills opportunity school. Ms SIH said that availability of skills opportunity schools was important to students with SEN. She also pointed out that some teachers in mainstream schools might not be able to understand the needs of students with SEN, particularly those who did not look obvious to have SEN.

*Parents Concerned Group – Integrated Education
[LC Paper No. CB(2)512/05-06(02)]*

5. Ms Connie LIO presented the views of the Parents Concerned Group – Integrated Education as detailed in the submission. She highlighted that the Concerned Group supported the provision of integrated education to students with SEN who were capable of receiving education with mainstream curriculum. For students with SEN who had difficulty in receiving education with mainstream curriculum but were able to learn in a curriculum which were adjusted in the light of their learning abilities, the Administration should provide them with alternative schooling such as skills opportunity schools to develop their potentials and to facilitate their integration into the community.

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Hong Kong Association for Specific Learning Disabilities
[LC Paper No. CB(2)267/05-06(01)]

6. Mrs LAU LEE Man-ying described the experience of her family members to explain the difficult situation of students with special learning disabilities in schools and their parents. She considered that the Administration so far had not given any support to students with specific learning disabilities in school education. She anticipated that the Administration would thoroughly plan the implementation of integrated education in secondary schools. She also pointed out that teachers in mainstream schools were now overloaded with teaching and administrative work. They simply would not have time to take care of the needs of students with SEN in classes of 40 students. She urged the Administration to allocate adequate resources to support students with specific learning disabilities in learning.

Suen Mei Speech & Hearing Centre
[LC Paper No. CB(2)512/05-06(01)]

7. Mrs Bessie PANG presented the views of the Suen Mei Speech and Hearing Centre as detailed in its submission. She highlighted that the Administration should review the current policies and schedule, reinforce public and parent education, select schools which were enthusiastic and capable, and establish independent steering committee and assessment mechanism for the implementation of integrated education in mainstream schools.

8. Mrs Bessie PANG further said that the Administration had recently dissolved the advisory committee on school placement for students with hearing impairment. As a member of the advisory committee for 10-odd years, she considered that the committee had provided useful advice to parents on school placement for children with hearing impairment. She requested the Administration to re-establish the committee to help children with hearing impairment and their parents.

Education Convergence
[LC Paper No. CB(2)512/05-06(03)]

9. Mr PANG I-wah presented the views of the Education Convergence as detailed in its submission. He highlighted that the Administration should review the policies and supports for schools and teachers to implement integrated education. In addition, the Administration should provide sufficient information to enhance parents' understanding of the needs of their children with SEN and their role and functions in the implementation of integrated education. He added that to facilitate provision of care and support, schools should be allowed to enrol students with specific types of SEN for implementation of integrated education.

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*Hong Kong Special Schools Council
[LC Paper No. CB(2)249/05-06(01)]*

10. Mr CHAN Kwok-ken said that the Hong Kong Special Schools Council was concerned about the formulation of appropriate policies, the provision of sufficient guidelines, and the establishment of effective monitoring and assessment mechanisms for the implementation of integrated education. He urged the Administration to review the role and functions of special schools in provision of professional support to the implementation of integrated education in mainstream schools in the long term.

11. Dr Simon LEUNG said that the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) would require schools to arrange at least one teacher to attend the 120-hour course and other theme-based training in the light of the needs of their students with different types of SEN. He considered that given the diversity of students with SEN in each mainstream school today, it was impractical for schools to arrange for teachers in mainstream schools to attend these training programmes. It was also infeasible for a school to cater for the needs of children with SEN if it only had a teacher who had received the relevant training.

*The Parents' Association of Pre-School Handicapped Children
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)186/05-06(02) and CB(2)501/05-06(01)]*

12. Mrs LEE LAU Chu-lai said that students with SEN were already the targets of bullying in mainstream schools. The Administration should consider the issue seriously and reinforce parent and public education with a view to establishing an inclusive culture in schools to facilitate implementation and effectiveness of the whole-school approach to integrated education.

13. Mrs CHUNG NG Sui-fong said that the Administration should endeavour to assist parents in selection of appropriate primary schools for their children with SEN at primary one (P1). She pointed out that correct school placement for students with SEN at P1 level could reduce the number of applications for transfer of schools at a later stage. She highlighted that the Association supported implementation of integrated education in mainstream schools, but considered that EMB should not be satisfied with the positive feedback from some schools and parents. She requested EMB to follow up the negative feedback from parents and deputations, and introduce appropriate measures to stop bullying against students with SEN in classes as soon as possible.

*Support Group on Integrated Education
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)186/05-06(03) and CB(2)443/05-06(02)]*

14. Dr SIN Kuen-fung presented the views of the Support Group on Integrated Education as detailed in its submission. He highlighted that the Support Group supported the implementation of integrated education in

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mainstream schools. The Support Group suggested that the Administration should formulate long-term policies and set aside sufficient resources for provision of professional development programmes to serving teachers in mainstream schools to facilitate implementation of integrated education.

Other submissions received

15. Members noted the submissions from the following schools and individual –

- (a) HKCWC Fung Yiu King Memorial Secondary School [LC Paper No. CB(2)443/05-06(03)];
- (b) Shatin Tsung Tsin Secondary School [LC Paper No. CB(2)443/05-06(04)]; and
- (c) Mr KWONG Sing-nam [LC Paper No. CB(2)512/05-06(04)].

Discussion

Resources allocated for provision of education to students with SEN

16. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that according to a newspaper article written by PAS(SAS), the Administration had allocated some \$5 billion for the provision of education for students with SEN in the past five years. He queried whether the \$5 billion had solely been used in the provision of education for students with SEN.

17. PAS(SAS) clarified that the \$5 billion comprised allocations for the provision of basic education for all students and specific allocations for students with SEN in schools. She only intended to point out in the article that apart from resources allocated for the provision of education to students with SEN such as the Intensive Remedial Teaching Scheme and the School-based Curriculum Tailoring Scheme, schools were advised to make flexible use of all existing resources to support implementation of integrated education. Schools were encouraged to formulate consistent policies and measures on the basis of the whole-school approach to cater for students' diverse learning needs. She pointed out that resources allocated to schools such as the Capacity Enhancement Grant were intended, among others, to serve students' diversity in learning. In addition, the provision of additional teachers/personnel for student guidance and curriculum development were also aimed at improving support to schools in catering for the diverse needs of their students.

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Additional resources for provision of integrated education

18. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that under the new funding mode, schools were provided with additional resources for enrolment of students with SEN at the rate of \$10,000 or \$20,000 per student per annum, depending on the degree of support required. However, schools in enrolment of five to eight students with SEN were provided with an additional resource teacher under the Integrated Education (IE) Programme. Since the additional resources for schools in enrolment of five to eight students with SEN under the new funding mode would not be sufficient for the employment of a resource teacher whose annual emolument was around \$200,000, he asked whether the Administration would rationalise the difference in the provision of additional resources for schools under the new funding mode and the IE Programme.

19. PAS(SAS) explained that in the past, no additional resources were provided to schools if the number of students with SEN enrolled was below the specified threshold for entitlement of a resource teacher under the Intensive Remedial Training Programme and IE Programme. The objective of the new funding model was to streamline existing resources to bridge the service gap. She, nevertheless, said that the Administration understood the concern of members about the inadequate provision under the new funding mode, and was reviewing the provision in the light of members' views and suggestions.

Provision of places in secondary schools for students with SEN

20. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that there were some 304 primary schools and 30 secondary schools adopting the whole-school approach to implement integrated education for students with SEN. He queried whether there were sufficient secondary school places for students with SEN.

21. PAS(SAS) responded that the Administration was aware of the smaller number of secondary schools adopting the whole-school approach to implement integrated education in the 2005-06 school year. The Administration was working on a new funding mode to promote the adoption of the whole-school approach to implement integrated education in secondary schools, having regard to the implementation experience in primary schools. She added that given the difference in the actual student enrolment in primary and secondary schools, the number of secondary schools required to implement whole-school approach to cater for students with SEN would be less than that of the primary schools.

22. The Chairman asked whether school placement of students with SEN would take into consideration their academic abilities, interests and needs.

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23. Principal Education Officer (Kowloon) (PEO(K)) explained that according to the advice of the Equal Opportunities Commission, enrolment of students with SEN in mainstream schools should be made on the basis of parental preference. Attempts to group students with similar types of SEN in selected mainstream schools might constitute discrimination against the students concerned.

24. The Chairman and Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung expressed dissatisfaction with the Administration's response. They stressed that the Administration had the responsibility to devise appropriate arrangements, which were consistent with the law, for the provision of education to students with SEN to suit their needs.

Bullying against students with SEN

25. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed grave concern that the problem of students with SEN being bullied in mainstream schools was very serious and common. He pointed out that the adverse effect of being bullied was much worse than being left unattended in classes for students with SEN. He stressed that he would not tolerate the problem to continue. Mr CHEUNG urged the Administration to take immediate action to address the problem and follow up any bullying against students with SEN.

Cross-sector transfer mechanism for students with SEN

26. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered that the Administration should provide timely and appropriate assistance to parents and students with SEN who found it difficult to continue their studies in mainstream schools, including those who had been repeatedly bullied by peers at school. He expressed reservations about the effectiveness of the current mechanism for students to transfer from mainstream schools to special schools or vice versa. He suggested that the Administration should establish a simple, transparent and effective mechanism to entertain parents' requests in this regard.

27. PAS(SAS) responded that a cross-sector school transfer mechanism was in place to handle parents' request for transfer of students with SEN from mainstream schools to special schools and vice versa. She pointed out that the SEN of individual students might not be apparent and observable during their studies in junior primary classes. The educational psychologists of EMB would coordinate with the Department of Health regarding the existing assessment process for students with SEN and recommendation for their school placement. The Administration would strengthen the cross-sector transfer mechanism in the light of the concerns of parents and the needs of students with SEN by distributing more information on the operation of the mechanism and collaborating with parent-teacher associations to enhance parents' awareness of the mechanism in place.

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28. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong reiterated that EMB should review the existing mechanism with a view to improving its transparency and effectiveness in assisting parents of students with SEN for arranging change of schools for their children. PAS(SAS) responded that parents could always approach the student guidance teachers in primary schools or the social workers in secondary schools for assistance in this regard. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong remarked that the social workers in secondary schools in general provided advice and assistance to parents in the light of the assessment and recommendations of the educational psychologists. They had no authority to arrange a transfer of school for individual students with SEN who wished to pursue their study in a skills opportunity school or special school.

29. The Chairman pointed out that most parents were not adequately informed or unaware of the types and locations of schools which provided a learning environment most suitable for their children with SEN who had difficulty to continue their studies in mainstream schools. He asked whether EMB had mechanisms in place to facilitate enrolment of students with SEN in the primary and secondary schools which provided the curriculum and learning environment appropriate to their needs.

30. PEO(K) responded that the main policy objective of special education was to enable children with SEN to fully develop their potential. For those who would benefit from mainstream setting, EMB encouraged them to receive education in mainstream schools. Under the existing school placement system, EMB would assist parents to make informed choices for placement to either mainstream or special schools that would benefit their children most. To facilitate parents' decision on the schools for their children with SEN, the visions and missions of schools as well as their major educational features and activities were made available on the Internet.

31. PEO(K) also explained that EMB would refer students with SEN who were found unsuitable for receiving integrated education in mainstream schools to educational psychologists and related professionals for assessment of their SEN. Based on their assessment and advice, students with SEN would be encouraged to continue their studies in mainstream schools or special schools as appropriate. In any circumstances, EMB would follow up with the schools concerned on the provision of appropriate care and education to students with SEN, including the provision of professional support and advice to the teachers involved in taking care of the students with SEN.

32. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong remarked that he had received many complaints from parents that their children with SEN were left unattended in classes and had considerable difficulty to learn under the mainstream curriculum or interact with peers in mainstream schools. He considered that parents would only request for a change of schools for their children with SEN when they found no other better alternatives. He reiterated that EMB should work out a transparent and effective mechanism to resolve the problem.

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33. Mrs CHUNG NG Sui-fong of the Parents' Association of Pre-School Handicapped Children said that students with SEN who were bullied by peers in schools or found themselves unable to follow the curriculum for integrated education were referred to educational psychologists for an assessment. However, most of them were assessed as suitable for integrated education, and were advised to continue their studies in mainstream schools. She added that in general, EMB would not recommend to parents specific schools for their children with SEN. She suggested that the Secondary School Places Allocation system should provide an opportunity for parents to indicate the SEN of their children to facilitate school placement for students with SEN.

34. PEO(K) acknowledged that some parents were disappointed with the existing arrangements for school placement and assessment of their children with SEN. She, nevertheless, said that EMB had investigated a number of complaints lodged by parents and found that the students in those cases would benefit from mainstream schooling. She pointed out that many students with SEN such as autism had the potential and abilities to follow the curriculum in mainstream schools, and should not be transferred to special schools without substantial justifications. The Administration had the mechanism in place to identify students who should be enrolled in or transferred to special schools and there were sufficient places in special schools to accommodate students with the appropriate level of intellectual or physical disabilities.

35. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung commented that as educational psychologists were not involved in the teaching and learning activities in classes, they would assess students' SEN on the basis of their intellectual ability and would not consider their difficulties in following the mainstream curriculum and interacting with peers in classes.

36. The Chairman and Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung expressed disappointment with the Administration's response. They remarked that the Administration seemed to have no empathy for students with SEN and their parents about the difficulties they faced in mainstream schools.

37. PAS(SAS) responded that EMB was well aware of the difficult situation of parents and their children with SEN studying in mainstream schools. She pointed out that EMB held the view that transfer of school was one of the means to help these students but not necessarily the only way out. She assured members that the Administration would consult parents and schools in its review of the support and improvement measures to enhance implementation of integrated education in mainstream schools.

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Support for teachers

38. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that deputations had pointed out the current and practical problems arising from the implementation of integrated education in mainstream schools. He considered that teachers, students with SEN and their parents were victims of implementing integrated education without the provision of sufficient resources and support to schools and teachers. He considered that the Administration should establish a mechanism to oversee the implementation progress. He pointed out that teachers were required to teach in classes with 35 to 40 students. Most of them had not received professional training on the provision of integration education. They simply did not have sufficient time, skills and knowledge to take care of the needs of students with SEN in classes.

39. PAS(SAS) responded that the Administration was reviewing the provision of professional development programmes for serving teachers in mainstream and special schools on the provision of integrated and special education for students with SEN. The Administration was also collaborating with tertiary institutions to provide appropriate development programmes for teachers, in particular teachers in special schools who needed more in-depth training on special issues of SEN. She added that EMB would consider providing schools with supply teachers to facilitate arrangements for their teachers to attend the SEN courses.

Review on implementation and support measures

40. The Chairman said that implementation of integrated education in mainstream schools had aroused controversies because there was a lack of sufficient resources and support measures to complement the implementation. He pointed out that while stakeholders in the education sector including parents in general supported the implementation of integrated education, some teachers and fellow students in mainstream schools might have a different view about admitting students with SEN to their schools. He considered that their perception might be changed if the Administration could redeploy sufficient resources to schools.

41. Mr LAM Yat-fung of Education Convergence said that the Government had allocated additional resources for the implementation of integrated education, but the results had not been encouraging so far. He considered that while schools and teachers were not provided with sufficient resources and support to implement integrated education, parents were not satisfied with the support for their children with SEN provided by schools and teachers. He suggested that officers of EMB should collaborate with teachers and parents to work out detailed plan for the implementation of integrated education, with special emphasis on the provision of career-oriented studies under the new senior secondary academic structure in the 2009-10 school year. He also

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suggested that a steering committee should be established to oversee the implementation of integrated education in mainstream schools. Ms Heidi HUI of the Support Group on Integrated Education echoed that a steering committee should be established as soon as possible to monitor the development of curriculum framework including career-oriented studies for the provision of integrated education, skills training and special education to students with different types of SEN under the new academic structure.

42. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered that apart from provision of adequate resources, there should be a range of comprehensive measures to support implementation of integrated education in mainstream schools, in particular the provision of sufficient training places for serving teachers and places in secondary schools for students with SEN. He considered that the current conflicts between parents and teachers had reflected that there was inadequate planning and support for implementing integrated education. He suggested that the Administration should examine the pre-conditions and provide the necessary support to enhance implementation of integrated education in mainstream schools. He also suggested that EMB should establish a division designated to coordinate and monitor the implementation progress of integrated education.

43. PAS(SAS) responded that EMB would review the implementation of integrated education in the 2005-06 school year with a view to improving support for implementation of integrated education in primary and secondary schools, having regard to the new senior secondary curriculum to be implemented in the 2009-10 school year. EMB was consulting the stakeholders and aimed to work out a support strategy for the implementation of integrated education by the end of the current school year. EMB would collaborate with stakeholders to resolve the various issues raised by members and deputations at the meeting. She added that reinforcement of parent education and the establishment of an inclusive and supporting culture in the community would also facilitate the implementation of integrated education in mainstream schools.

44. PEO(K) supplemented that the educational psychologists, inspectors, and school development officers of EMB would visit schools and observe the teaching and learning activities in mainstream schools in enrolment of students with SEN. They would work together with teachers in schools to support students with SEN in learning. She added that EMB had outsourced the support services provided by educational psychologists to support some 200 primary schools in implementing integrated education. So far, feedback from the schools concerned had been favourable. She suggested members to consider the implementation progress of integrated education from an overall perspective.

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Ex-Skills Opportunity Schools

45. Some deputations expressed the view that the continued operation of skills opportunity schools was essential for students with SEN who were unsuitable for learning in mainstream schools or special schools. They pointed out that skills opportunity schools had served the role of mid-way sanctuary for students with SEN who were tired of being bullied by peers during their primary school years, and might possibly return to mainstream secondary schools when the implementation of integrated education was smooth. They also requested the Administration to maintain the current funding mode and staffing establishment, in particular the number of social workers, for skills opportunity schools to continue their existing operations.

46. PAS(SAS) responded that the Administration acknowledged the need to continue the operation of the ex-skills opportunity schools to meet the needs of students with SEN who were not suitable to study in mainstream or special schools. She pointed out that EMB was liaising with these schools about their operations and developments in the long term, including the request for accommodation of students at the senior primary levels and the career-oriented studies under the new senior secondary curriculum.

47. The Chairman pointed out that skills opportunity schools were now included in the Secondary School Places Allocation system and required to operate larger classes of 30 students. He expressed concern that these schools had been forced to operate in a mode similar to mainstream schools. He requested the Administration to liaise with these schools on the arrangements for enrolment of target students. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung also expressed concern about the provision of sufficient places in these schools to meet the demand of students with SEN.

48. PAS(SAS) responded that EMB had no plan to force ex-skills opportunity schools to change their mode of operation and would further discuss with these schools their class structure, curriculum and admission mechanism. She assured members that the Administration would assist these schools to preserve their target students and mode of operation.

Follow-up

49. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong inquired if the Administration could complete the review on integrated education in three months. PAS(SAS) responded that as it was a comprehensive review covering a wide range of issues, the Administration might not be able to conclude the task within three months. Nevertheless, she agreed to revert to the Subcommittee on the progress of some of the issues covered in the review to improve the implementation of integrated education after three months. Members agreed that the Subcommittee would revisit the subject when the Administration's response was available.

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III. Any other business

50. Members agreed to discuss the review on the provision of boarding places for children with physical disabilities and the research report on special education in selected places prepared by the Research and Library Services Division of the Legislative Council Secretariat, if available, at the next meeting scheduled for Friday, 16 December 2005 at 10:45 am.

[Post-meeting note : The item on the research report on special education in selected places was subsequently replaced with the item “Follow-up discussion on the educational needs of students with specific learning disabilities”.]

51. There being on other business, the meeting ended at 1:16 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
15 December 2005