

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

**Supplementary Information Note  
on the Review on the Provision of Boarding Service  
for Students with Physical Disability**

**Purpose**

This paper aims to update Members of the Administration's consultation with the school sponsors and parent representatives on the proposal to set up two new boarding sections in the schools for children with physical disability (PD), one in each of the New Territories East (NTE) and New Territories West (NTW) regions. It also sets out the Administration's responses to the related concerns raised during the meeting of the Subcommittee on 16 December 2005.

**New Boarding Sections**

2. Boarding service for special schools is planned and provided on a territory-wide basis without geographic constraints. The objective of the boarding service is to cater for the long-term boarding needs of students with disabilities and to facilitate them to receive school education during school days. Our proposal to set up two boarding sections with 60 places each is already a balance of the needs of PD students arising from the geographical distribution of their residential areas. Upon completion of the new boarding sections, there will be a total of four boarding sections, one in each of Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, NTE and NTW. This is an optimal proposal taking all factors into consideration.

3. We have approached all three sponsoring bodies of the existing seven PD schools. They raised no objection to the proposed building of two boarding sections with 60 places each, one in the NTE region and the other in the NTW region. A sponsoring body has clearly stated that to maintain an acceptable level of services and to ensure safety and care for the holistic development of boarders, a boarding section should be built with a reasonable size and manned by sufficient professional staff so as to address the needs of students.

4. We have further collected views from parent representatives of the PD schools and the concern groups on the proposed establishment of the two boarding sections. All of them raised no objection to the proposal after taking all factors into consideration. In addition, the Hong Kong Special Schools Council also supported the proposal of setting up two boarding

sections, one each in the NTE and NTW regions.

5. As regards the proposal to provide 25-place boarding sections, we are of the view that such services are of low service efficacy and they fail to reap the benefit of the economy of scale with entitlement for a full range of boarding staff. In addition, such small-scale boarding services require high maintenance costs.

6. Some parents proposed to make use of vacant flats in the public-housing estates to set up small boarding sections. We have studied the suggestion and consider it not practicable as there are other constraints and limitations such as physical location, availability of access facilities, area for boarders' activities, management issues, etc. In addition, quality of service and cost-effectiveness are also factors that we have to consider.

### **Respite Service**

7. At present, Social Welfare Department (SWD) is providing a range of community services for children with special educational needs such as holiday care and family-based respite services for temporary care after school or during public holidays and long holidays; and residential respite services for short-term care. As a supplement, we have no objection for special schools with boarding sections to operate self-financed boarding places to meet such short-term boarding needs. When consulted, all these schools responded positively and agreed to explore the proposal of using the unfilled boarding vacancies to cater for students' temporary boarding needs during school days, week-ends and / or long school holidays.

8. Such respite service, not being a core service of EMB, would be operated in self-financed mode. Schools will consult their staff and parents on the detailed arrangement and the scale of fee charges to cover additional costs thus incurred such as food and miscellaneous expenses and staff cost, if any. Reference will also be made to the fees charged by Non-governmental Organizations subvented by SWD.

9. As a matter of fact, some schools have also extended their school activities using boarding facilities in the form of a summer programme for their students. In response to our request, all special schools with boarding sections agreed to explore means to make fuller use of their boarding facilities and staffing to cater for the needs of their students. For schools with new boarding sections to be set up, they may be required to operate similar self-financed respite service.

### **Way Forward**

10. To better support students with long-term boarding needs, we consider it appropriate to set up two 60-place boarding sections, one in the NTE region and another in the NTW region, having regard to the demand of such places in different regions as well as considerations of cost-effectiveness and service efficacy. We will continue to work on the site acquisition and

feasibility study so that the project can proceed as soon as possible. In the meantime, we will liaise with PD schools without boarding sections on the transition arrangements for students to meet their boarding needs.

11. To make more cost-effective use of the boarding places, we will review the boarding needs of the existing boarders at regular time interval. If their family situation has improved, the respective boarding places should be made available for other students with more urgent needs. We will continue to collaborate with the SWD that provides service for families with PD children in times of urgency.

### **Advice Sought**

12. Members are requested to note the contents of this paper.

Education and Manpower Bureau  
February 2006