

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

**Education and Manpower Bureau's Response to
Enquiries from Members at the Meeting of
26 February 2007**

I. The arrangement of boarding service in special schools

The objective of boarding service in special schools is to cater for the long-term residential needs of students with severe disabilities and to facilitate them to receive school education during school days.

2. We encourage students to live with their families as far as possible so that they can grow up in a normal family environment. We do not arrange boarding placement at special schools for students unless they have genuine needs. Some special schools operate 5-day boarding service per week, with some also operate 7-day boarding service per week. We encourage boarding students to stay with their family during weekends and public holidays as far as possible so as to maintain a close relationship with their parents.

Admission criteria for boarding placement in special schools

3. Children requiring boarding placement in special schools should first meet the admission criteria to special schools, and at least one of the following criteria :

- (a) Homelessness, e.g. orphans;
- (b) Serious lack of care and supervision;
- (c) Extremely poor relationship among family members;
- (d) Evidence of child abuse;
- (e) Residence being remote from the suitable day special school.

Processing procedure

4. Applications for boarding placement at special schools are made on a referral basis through relevant organizations, including child assessment centres, pre-school centres, Social Welfare Department, Hospital Authority or special schools. These organizations will provide professional reports on the special education needs and family conditions of the students. Upon receipt of the referrals, we would assess whether the students concerned should be placed in the boarding sections of special schools, based on the information in the professional reports and according to the admission criteria listed in paragraph 3 above.

5. For students who meet the admission criteria, we contact their parents and introduce the special schools they can choose from. Upon the parents' written consent, we shall refer the students to the special schools for boarding placement.

6. In case the information provided in the referral document is insufficient, we shall contact the referrers or parents for additional information. As the reasons for boarding placement differ among students, the required information thus varies. For instance, if a student's boarding need is due to his/her parents' health conditions such that they cannot take care of their child for a long period, we shall ask for the parents' medical reports; if it is due to the fact that the student lives in a remote area such that his/her family has great problems in escorting the him/her to and fro the special school, we shall ask for proof of his/her residential address; if the reason is due to the working hours of both parents such that they cannot take care of the student, we shall ask for proof from their employers. So long as the students meet the admission criteria, we shall arrange boarding placement for them in special schools.

EMB to centrally process boarding placement

7. With effect from March 2005, applications for boarding placement in special schools have been centrally processed by this Bureau so as to better utilize the boarding places and to ensure that:

- (a) students admitted to the boarding section all meet the boarding placement criteria;
- (b) the admission criteria are applied consistently; and
- (c) the actual supply and demand situation is timely updated for better co-ordination.

Waiting time for boarding placement

8. Under normal circumstances, the above-mentioned processing procedure for applications for boarding placement can be completed within 14 working days.

9. In case of insufficient information in the referral document to substantiate an applicant's boarding need, the procedure will take a longer time. Under such circumstances, we usually explain the admission criteria to the parents and advise them what specific documentary proof they should produce so as to speed up the process. These cases may generally take about one to two months' time to complete the procedure.

10. In the past three years, the number of cases in which sufficient information required can be provided at the time of application such that the processing procedure can be completed within 14 working days constitutes about 70% of all cases.

11. Upon receipt of the notification on boarding placement for a student, the school will arrange for admission of the student to the boarding section if there is a vacancy. Otherwise, the students will be put on the waiting list of the school. We adjust the boarding capacity of individual schools based on the demand annually. In general, students on the waiting list will be placed no later than the beginning of the following school year.

Number of applications for boarding placement

12. During the period from September 2004 to January 2007, we have received 305 referrals for boarding placement in special schools. Of which, 287 cases were approved and 18 cases were rejected for not meeting the admission criteria. The source of the latter referrals came from special

schools and child assessment centres, and the respective reasons for rejection include the applications being made on ground of poor economic conditions, insufficient evidence to substantiate parents' claims of being unable to take care of the students, insufficient evidence to substantiate parents' claim of suffering from pressure in taking care of the child to an extent that they could no longer provide adequate care and supervision, or parents' mistaken motive to use boarding service as a means to handle students' behavioural problems, etc.

II. Demand and provision of boarding places

The projected demand of boarding places for students with physical disability in the 2011/12 school year is approximately 220. The provision is estimated to increase up to 240.

Education and Manpower Bureau
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