

For Information on 3 April 2008

**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 for Non-Chinese Speaking
Children with Special Educational Needs**

Purpose

This paper is to inform Members of the education services for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) children, including ethnic minorities, with special educational needs (SEN).

Education for NCS Students

2. Our established policy is to facilitate early integration of NCS students into the local education system. In Hong Kong, eligible children irrespective of ethnic origin and physical or intellectual ability have the right to enjoy basic education in public sector schools. NCS children including those with SEN are encouraged to study in public sector schools so that they can integrate into the local community as early as possible.

3. We provide not only support services that help NCS students adapt to the local education system but also other support and resources pertaining to students with SEN. NCS students with SEN are supported through both kinds of support services. We have published a bilingual (English and Chinese) parent information package entitled “Non-Chinese Speaking Parent Information Package: Your Guide to Education in Hong Kong” to introduce the local school system, major education policies and related education services, among which there is a chapter on education services for children with SEN. The Package is being translated into major ethnic minority languages and will be available by mid 2008.

Education for NCS Students with SEN

Identification and Assessment

4. The diagnosis of visual impairment, physical disability, Autism Spectrum Disorders and Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder is more clinical in nature. In assessing whether NCS students are with intellectual disability, specific learning difficulties, speech and language impairment, or hearing impairment, their different cultural and experiential background as well as their language ability will be taken into account and adjustments will be made as necessary.

5. For assessment of intellectual disability, non-verbal tests of intelligence are often used for NCS students who are not proficient in Chinese. When specialists interpret the test findings, NCS students' social adaptive behaviour and cultural and experiential exposure will also be considered. For assessment of specific learning difficulties, it is important to rule out that the learning difficulties of the NCS students is caused by a lack of appropriate learning opportunities. In this regard, teachers will identify those at risk by using a behaviour checklist and make referrals for professional assessment. When the test findings are interpreted, NCS students' learning history and other qualitative information will be considered. For assessment of speech and language impairment and hearing impairment, the assessments will be conducted in Chinese or English depending on the students' proficiency in either language, or in the students' mother tongue through the help of the students' parents or relatives.

Student Admission to Schools

6. NCS children are encouraged to attend local kindergartens using Chinese as the medium of instruction to facilitate their early immersion in the Chinese environment. Pre-schoolers with disabilities may attend special child care centres or join an Integrated Programme in Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centre under the Social Welfare Department, depending on their degree of disability.

7. NCS children are admitted to public sector schools through Primary One Admission (POA) or Secondary School Places Allocation systems. They may also seek placement assistance from the Education

Bureau. In POA, NCS children are provided an opportunity for cross-net allocation to schools that traditionally admit a significant portion of NCS children. Moreover, if parents indicate that their child has SEN in the application form for POA, we shall collect the relevant diagnosis/assessment report(s) and related information on the child to identify his educational needs, and discuss with the parents the appropriate educational provision for him/her. Students with SEN are encouraged to receive education in ordinary schools. Those who cannot benefit from ordinary school setting will be placed in special schools. In short, a child will be allocated to Primary One in a public sector school or placed in a special school subject to professional assessments and recommendations as well as parents' written consent.

Support for NCS Students with SEN

8. The following support measures help NCS students and those with SEN adapt to the local education system:

- A full-time 6-month Initiation Programme and a 60-hour Induction Programme for newly arrived NCS children;
- A School-based Support Scheme Grant for public sector schools to run school-based support programmes (e.g. supplementary language classes) for newly arrived NCS students;
- A 4-week Summer Bridging Programme at Primary One to Primary Four that familiarizes NCS students with education in Chinese and helps them consolidate their learning at Key Learning Stage I;
- School-based professional support in the learning and teaching of the Chinese Language and a cash grant provided for “designated schools”;
- A Chinese Language Learning Support Centre commissioned to the University of Hong Kong that supports NCS students, mostly in secondary schools, who have a late start in their learning of the Chinese Language;
- Training programmes commissioned to the Hong Kong Polytechnic University for Chinese Language teachers in primary schools with NCS students for the three years beginning in the 2006/07 school year;

- Learning and teaching resources developed by the Education Bureau in collaboration with the “designated schools” for teachers, and other resources by the Support Centre or generated through the training programmes; and
- A “Supplementary Guide to the Chinese Language Curriculum for NCS Students” that will be finalised in mid 2008 upon the consolidation of feedback from consultation.

9. With the implementation of integrated education, ordinary schools are encouraged to adopt a whole-school approach to cater for students with SEN. A three-tier intervention model is in place and schools are provided with different levels of resources and support according to the degree of severity and genuine needs of students with SEN including both local and NCS students. Schools are advised to deploy the resources flexibly to meet the specific needs of individual students.

10. At present, schools provide a variety of support for students with SEN, including those NCS students with SEN. The support embraces small group teaching, co-teaching, Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme, individualised educational programme, learning support by teaching assistant, speech therapy services, language learning support programmes for Chinese and English, after-school homework tutorial classes, peer tutoring, individual and group guidance, and accommodations in assignments, assessments and examinations. For schools with a larger cluster of NCS students, some adapt the Chinese curriculum for NCS students or provide alternative language subjects. Some schools also employ teaching assistants who can speak the native languages of the NCS students with SEN to provide in-class support for them. The Special Education Support Officers of Education Bureau conduct visits to ordinary primary schools and collaborate with teachers on the use of appropriate teaching strategies for students with SEN including those NCS ones.

11. Starting from the 2007/08 school year, we have introduced structured courses under the teacher professional development framework on special educational needs for five years, which are open to teachers in public sector schools including those which have admitted NCS students with SEN. We also organize tailor-made workshops on various types of SEN which are delivered by overseas professionals. We will continue to work closely with

schools to enhance teachers' capacity in supporting students with SEN. In the coming school years, we will also organize seminars and workshops for sharing experience and support strategies to cater for NCS students with SEN.

Alternative for NCS students with SEN

12. English Schools Foundation (ESF) Schools and other international schools provide an alternative in the Hong Kong education system for NCS students. There are 15 ESF schools and 38 international schools. They deliver the curricula of different countries and enjoy operational autonomy in setting their admission policy and in administering their admission exercises.

13. For students with SEN, ESF offers options for placement. Students whose SEN require minimal learning and teaching adjustment are normally placed in mainstream classes with support by specialist teachers or education assistants. Students whose SEN require more extensive learning and teaching adjustments may study in learning support classes. Students whose SEN call for the most extensive learning and teaching adjustments may study in a special school of ESF, which provides 60 places. To address its waiting list problem, we had approved the release of \$2 million en bloc provision to ESF to operate three new learning support classes with a total of 21 net places starting from the 2006/07 school year. We shall review the situation as appropriate in due course. Our enrolment survey in the 2007/08 school year also shows that 10 international schools are providing a total of 73 places for SEN on an integrated mode and one international school is providing 16 places for SEN students not suitable for integration.

Advice sought

14. The prevailing policies and measures for supporting NCS students and those with SEN are in general able to accommodate the needs of NCS students with SEN. We will keep in view the measures in the light of the needs of these students.

15. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

Education Bureau
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