

**For information
on 18 February 2014**

**Legislative Council Panel on Education
Subcommittee on Integrated Education**

**Issues Related to the Articulation of Students with Special Educational Needs from
Special Schools to Mainstream Schools and Vice Versa**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the prevailing arrangements for transferring students with special educational needs (SEN) from special schools to mainstream schools and vice versa.

Special Education Policy

2. In accordance with the Disability Discrimination Ordinance and the Code of Practice on Education, all educational establishments have the obligation to provide equal education opportunities to eligible students, including students with SEN. Currently, the Government is adopting a dual-track mode in implementing special education. The Education Bureau (EDB) will, subject to the assessment and recommendation of specialists and with parents' consent, refer students with more severe or multiple disabilities to special schools for intensive support services. Other students with SEN may attend ordinary schools.

Mechanism for Placing Students with SEN in Mainstream Schools

3. Under the existing school places allocation mechanism, all eligible children (including those with SEN who opt for admission to ordinary primary schools) are allocated primary one (P1) places in government or aided schools through the Primary One Admission (POA) System. On completion of primary education, students (including those with SEN) participate in the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System through their primary schools and are allocated subsidised secondary one (S1) places. Parents may choose schools based on the learning needs of their children. We encourage parents to take the initiative to provide the EDB and schools with information about their children's SEN when participating in the school places allocation so that schools can arrange appropriate support for the students accordingly. For details of the POA and SSPA Systems as well as parent information provided by the EDB, please refer to paragraphs 3 to 5 of the paper on the Current Arrangements for Placing Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Primary

and Secondary Schools and the New Funding Mode for Integrated Education (LC Paper No. CB(4)232/13-14(01)) for meeting on 13 December 2013.

4. On admission arrangements for students with SEN, The EDB and relevant non-governmental organisations jointly arrange talks entitled Admission of Students with SEN to Primary One every year for parents of pre-school children with SEN who are suitable for admission to ordinary schools. These talks brief parents on the support services ordinary primary schools may provide to facilitate parents in making a suitable choice for their children and making the necessary preparation before admission. For parents of pre-school children who prefer to send their children to special schools, the EDB organises briefing sessions every year to inform them, among others, of the school placement procedures, and features and support services of the various types of special schools.

Placement Services of Special Schools

5. At present, there are 60 special schools in Hong Kong, including schools for children with visual impairment, schools for children with hearing impairment, schools for children with physical disability, schools for children with mild, moderate and severe intellectual disabilities, hospital schools and schools for social development which provide intensive support for students with moderate to severe emotional and behavioral difficulties. With the exception of hospital schools and schools for social development which have their specific admission procedures¹, placement of children with more severe or multiple disabilities in appropriate special schools is arranged by the EDB with regard to the assessment/recommendation of professionals and subject to parental consent. The referral procedures are set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

6. In general, pre-school children are assessed by the Child Assessment Centres (CAC) under the Department of Health or the Hospital Authority. With parental consent, CAC will send the reports of the children who are recommended to study in special schools to the EDB² within the school year before they are age appropriate for admission to P1. Upon receipt of the referrals, the EDB will examine the assessment reports to confirm the type of special

¹ Schools for social development serve mainly students with emotional and behavioral difficulties. With parental consent, ordinary schools may refer their cases to the Central Co-ordinating Referral Mechanism, which is jointly managed by the EDB and the Social Welfare Department, for vetting if the students concerned should be admitted to schools for social development. Hospital schools provide schooling to school-age children who are referred directly by general practitioners and psychiatrists at 18 public hospitals.

² To facilitate necessary placement arrangements, if the children are assessed by other qualified professionals arranged by their parents, their assessment reports should also reach the EDB within the school year before they are age appropriate for admission to P1.

schools suitable for the children, discuss with the parents about the children's educational needs and arrange school placements based on the principle of vicinity.

7. As for school-age children who are assessed to be suitable for placement in special schools, the EDB will refer the children to appropriate special schools in accordance with the specialist's recommendation and subject to parental consent. School-age children can apply for special school placement at any time throughout the school year. The EDB will provide the necessary assistance to parents so that the children can be admitted to school as quickly as possible.

Arrangements to Transfer Students from Special Schools to Mainstream Schools and Vice Versa

From Mainstream Schools to Special Schools

8. As mentioned above, under the prevailing arrangements, students with more severe or multiple disabilities are referred to special schools. However, some parents may choose to send their children to ordinary schools for various reasons. If these students are unable to cope with learning in ordinary schools and in need of transfer to special schools, the EDB will, with consent from parents, place them in appropriate special schools according to the assessment results and recommendation of medical specialists/professionals. Where necessary, educational psychologists (EPs) will hold consultation meetings with the school personnel (including teachers, members of the student support teams, student guidance personnel and social workers etc.) and parents.

9. It is noteworthy that schools for children with intellectual disability are designed for students assessed with intellectual disability by professionals. Students with limited intelligence can normally attend ordinary schools at which they can benefit in respect of language development, social skills and adaptive functioning through interactions with their able-bodied peers. To provide additional support for these students, the EDB renders ordinary schools with additional resources, including the Learning Support Grant, the Enhanced Speech Therapy Grant and additional teachers to cater for academically low achievers in secondary schools. Schools may pool and flexibly deploy such resources to employ additional teachers or teaching assistants and procure professional services so as to enhance the learning effectiveness of students with limited intelligence. Under educational psychology service provided by EDB, teachers are offered with professional advice, such as advice on adjusting school-based curriculum for the students with limited intelligence. Individual students with limited intelligence who have difficulties in adjusting to schooling in ordinary schools may have other SEN, such as Autism Spectrum Disorders or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. If these students have not shown improvements despite

receiving strengthened and additional support services, the professionals will further review their educational needs with their parents and teachers so as to determine whether the students concerned should continue their studies in ordinary schools. On the recommendation of professionals and subject to parental consent, the EDB may refer individual students in need to special schools.

From Special Schools to Mainstream Schools

10. Subject to parental consent, special schools may refer students found to be more capable in learning as compared to other students to their EPs for assessment. The EPs will, apart from conducting assessment on the students, also hold consultation meetings with the school personnel (including teachers and school social workers) and parents. For students who are considered suitable for an attempt to study in ordinary schools as revealed in the assessment results, social workers of the special schools will provide parents with advice on school choices. Parents may also approach EDB's Regional Education Office of their place of residence for school placement assistance.

11. Special schools will normally maintain contact with the ordinary schools to which the students are transferred and provide on-site support to help them adapt to the new environment as necessary. If individual students cannot adapt to the learning routines in ordinary schools after an extended period of time, they can apply for transfer back to the special schools according to the procedures set out in paragraphs 8 and 9 above.

12. According to the EDB's records, the numbers of students transferred from ordinary schools to special schools and vice versa in the past two years are at Appendix.

Views Sought

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

Education Bureau
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Table 1: Number of Students Transferred from Ordinary Schools to Special Schools*

School Year	2011/12	2012/13
Number of Students*	151	148

* Most of them were students with intellectual disability while the rest were students with more severe or multiple disabilities. As these students were in need of intensive support service, they opted for transfer to special schools. The numbers do not include students transferring from ordinary schools to schools for social development or hospital schools.

Table 2: Number of Students Transferred from Special Schools to Ordinary Schools**

School Year	2011/12	2012/13
Number of Students**	32	28

** Most of them were students with intellectual disability or visual impairment. The numbers do not include students transferring back from schools for social development or hospital schools to ordinary schools.