

**For information
on 13 December 2013**

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

**Current Arrangements for Placing Students with Special Educational Needs in
Mainstream Primary and Secondary Schools and the New Funding Mode for Integrated
Education**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the current mechanism for placing students with special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream primary and secondary schools and the new funding mode for integrated education (IE).

Special Education Policy

2. In accordance with the Disability Discrimination Ordinance and the Code of Practice on Education, all educational establishments have to provide equal education opportunity to eligible students, including those with SEN. Currently, the Government is adopting a dual-track mode in implementing special education. The Education Bureau 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 Primary and Secondary Schools and Service for Transfer of Schools

3. In Hong Kong, nine-year free and universal education has been implemented for years. Free education has been extended to 12 years since the 2008/09 school year. 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. The POA System is divided into two stages: the Discretionary Places Admission stage and Central Allocation stage. At the Discretionary Places Admission stage, parents can apply to one government or aided primary school which they prefer. The schools concerned may determine whether they will admit the children in accordance with the criteria laid down by the EDB. At the Central Allocation stage, the EDB will centrally allocate P1 places according to parents' choice of schools and the applicants' random numbers. 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. The SSPA system is divided into the Discretionary Places and Central Allocation stages. At the Discretionary Places stage, secondary schools may admit students in accordance with their admission criteria. At the Central Allocation stage, S1 places are allocated according to individual student's allocation band, parental choice of schools and random number.

4. Generally speaking, when selecting a school for their children, parents would take into account a number of factors, including the school's educational philosophy and the curriculum offered, and the needs and abilities of their children. To enhance parents' understanding of the school places allocation arrangements, the EDB holds seminars for them, and distributes leaflets and CDs featuring detailed allocation arrangements to them every year. For information of individual schools, parents may refer to the Primary/Secondary School Profiles which are uploaded on the website of the Committee on the Home-School Co-operation.

5. To enable schools to provide appropriate support for students with SEN, we encourage parents to take the initiative to provide the EDB and schools with information about their children's SEN at the school places allocation stage. Subject to parents' consent, the EDB will collect and send the information to the schools which have admitted the students for reference and follow-up actions. If students need to transfer to another ordinary school for various reasons, such as removal or adaptation problems, their parents can approach the Regional Education Office nearby for school placement assistance. Alternatively, they can approach the schools concerned direct for admission. For students who have been assessed as suitable for enrolling in special schools but have chosen to study in ordinary schools, and subsequently wish to transfer back to a special school, their parents can, after considering the assessment results and recommendations of the professionals, submit the particulars of their children to the EDB for processing through school social workers/student counselling personnel.

New Funding Model (Learning Support Grant (LSG) for Schools)

6. The Government has been actively helping students with SEN integrate into ordinary schools so that they can receive education alongside with their peers and develop their potential. The EDB launched a pilot scheme on a new funding mode in some primary schools in the 2003/04 school year. Under the new funding mode, the EDB offers schools with a cash grant, i.e. the Learning Support Grant (LSG), so that schools may pool and deploy their resources flexibly to promote cross sector collaboration and, take forward the Whole School Approach (WSA) in implementing IE with a view to rendering more appropriate support to students with SEN and academically low achievers.

7. Schools adopting the new funding mode are required to adopt the WSA in providing school-based support for students with SEN and academically low achievers. They are also required to set up student support teams, formulate school-based IE policy, and plan and arrange support services for students with SEN.

8. The EDB encourages schools to cater for student diversity through the 3-tier intervention model, which consists of:

- Tier-1 support: quality teaching in the regular classroom for supporting students with transient or mild learning difficulties;
- Tier-2 support: “add-on” intervention for students assessed to have persistent learning difficulties, including those with SEN. This may involve small group learning, pull-out programmes, etc; and
- Tier-3 support: Intensive individualised support for students with severe learning difficulties and SEN, including drawing up of an Individual Education Plan

9. Provision of the LSG is based on the number of students with SEN enrolled in the school and the tier of support required¹. The LSG should be used for supporting students with SEN and academically low achievers. Schools should flexibly and strategically deploy the LSG, and also pool together various school resources (such as the Capacity Enhancement Grant and Student Guidance Grant, etc.) to support these students. According to the information we have collected, schools in general use the LSG for employing additional teachers and/or teaching assistants as well as procuring services to cater for the needs of the students with SEN. Information on the use of LSG is detailed at Appendix I.

10. To help public sector schools enhance their support for students with SEN, continuous improvements to the new funding mode have been made since its introduction, having regard to the actual needs of the schools and students with SEN. The improvements made include:

¹ The amount of LSG for students requiring tier-2 and tier-3 support is \$10,000 and \$20,000 per student per annum respectively.

- Since the 2008/09 school year, schools have been provided with a basic provision of \$120,000 per school per annum² for the first one to six student(s) requiring tier-3 support, with the ceiling raised from \$550,000 to \$1 million per school per annum. The LSG was provided to secondary schools starting from the same year;
- With effect from the 2013/14 school year, the ceiling of the LSG has been further raised from \$1 million to \$1.5 million per school per annum to further strengthen support for schools having admitted a larger number of students with SEN.

11. In fact, LSG is not the only resources available for supporting students with SEN in schools. Other additional resources provided for schools include the Enhanced Speech Therapy Grant, the Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme, the IE Programme, additional teachers for supporting academically low achievers in secondary schools, and the Top-up Fund for procuring special furniture and equipment or carrying out minor conversion works at schools for students with disabilities. Details of the additional resources are set out at Appendix II. As mentioned above, schools should pool and deploy flexibly the LSG, the afore-mentioned resources and other resources available to plan and arrange services or programmes for students with SEN so that students can receive comprehensive and diversified supporting services.

12. In addition, for students with severe emotional and behavioural problems, the EDB provides additional funding where appropriate for schools to employ teaching assistants to assist teachers in providing students with intensive individualised support. Should problems of the students concerned persist despite the provision of school-based remedial support, the EDB may, subject to parents' consent, refer the students to the Adjustment Unit run by the EDB or short-term attachment programmes run by the Special Schools cum Resource Centres for pull-out remedial support.

13. Apart from the additional funding for ordinary schools as mentioned above, the EDB also provides professional support and teacher training for schools to assist them in catering for students with SEN. For the 2013/14 school year, the estimated additional expenditure on IE is about \$1,076 million. To ensure optimum use of resources by the schools, the EDB has required schools to submit a self-evaluation report on the implementation of the WSA to IE at the end of each school year. To further enhance

² A grant of \$20,000 per student per annum for the seventh and each of the other students requiring tier-3 support.

transparency, schools are also required to set out in their reports how resources are deployed to provide support services for students with SEN. The EDB will continue to monitor the implementation of IE, including how the LSG is disbursed and used, and will arrange for its professional staff to conduct regular school visits and annual reviews, and organise training and sharing sessions for schools to ensure effective deployment of resources for supporting students with SEN.

Views Sought

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

Education Bureau

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Use of the LSG

1. The LSG should be used for supporting students with SEN and academically low achievers (ALAs). Schools should flexibly and strategically deploy the LSG, and also pool together various school resources (such as the Capacity Enhancement Grant, the Enhanced Speech Therapy Grant and the Student Guidance Grant, etc) to support students with SEN and ALAs. Specifically, schools can:

- Employ additional teaching staff, on a full-time and/or part-time basis, to facilitate small group or individual remedial support;
- Employ additional teaching assistants to assist teachers in designing learning activities and materials, supporting students in classroom learning activities, providing individual support on homework, training students with SEN on the use of assistive aids, helping students with writing problems to take notes, collecting data and records of student progress and liaising with parents, etc;
- Collaborate with other professionals through hire of services (e.g. school-based remedial support programmes, behaviour guidance, speech therapy, etc.);
- Purchase teaching resources and aids (e.g. graded readers or audio-visual software for strengthening the reading and writing abilities of students with Specific Learning Difficulties or Speech and Language Impairment (SLI)) to facilitate the learning of students with SEN;
- Organise programmes on learning or inclusive culture so as to promote peer acceptance and support for students with SEN;
- Conduct school-based teacher training programmes to enhance teachers' understanding of IE and support measures so as to strengthen teachers' professionalism in catering for student diversity; and
- Strengthen home-school co-operation through organising groups of parent volunteers for instance, to provide paired-reading programmes for students.

2. Schools can also tap resources available in the community to provide more comprehensive services.

Other Resources for Schools to Support Students with SEN

Enhanced Speech Therapy Grant: The Grant has become a recurrent subvention since the 2009/10 school year. This is a cash grant provided for eligible public sector primary schools for employing their own speech therapists or procuring school-based speech therapy services to support their students with SLI. Eligible schools are provided with a basic grant according to the number of approved classes each year and a top-up grant based on the number of students with moderate or severe SLI. The rates are subject to adjustment in accordance with the annual movement of the Composite Consumer Price Index. For the 2012/13 school year, the basic grant rate is \$3,378 per approved class per annum and the minimum basic grant provision for schools operating 6-10 classes is \$33,780 per school per annum, whereas the top-up grant rate is \$3,378 per moderate or severe SLI pupil per annum. The top-up grant is capped at \$67,560 per school per annum.

Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme/IE Programme: Schools participating in these programmes are provided with additional teachers/teaching assistants for supporting students with SEN or ALAs under the WSA. We also encourage participating schools to migrate to the funding mode of LSG to enjoy flexibility in deploying and consolidating resources for the provision of a variety of support services. Under the IE Programme, schools admitting five or more target students are provided with an additional Certificated Master/Mistress, while schools admitting eight or more target students are provided with an additional learning support assistant.

Additional Teachers to Cater for ALAs in Secondary Schools: The EDB provides additional resources for secondary schools to support their ALAs. Based on information on the enrollment of S1 to S3 students in public sector ordinary secondary schools, we provide an additional 0.7 Graduate Master/Mistress (GM) for each class of territory bottom 10% students enrolled in those schools and an additional 0.3 GM for each class of territory Band 3 students enrolled not within the bottom 10% students. The provision was offered at S1 level in the 2006/07 school year and was extended at one level per year up to S3 in the 2008/09 school year. In the 2012/13 school year, eligible public sector ordinary secondary schools are provided with a maximum of around 7 additional graduate teachers.

Top-up Fund: If necessary, schools may apply for an additional cash grant to purchase special furniture and equipment (such as Braille, CCTV magnifier and FM system) or carry out minor conversion works (such as building ramps and converting toilets) for students with disabilities to cater for their learning needs.