



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部教育局
Education Bureau

Government Secretariat, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

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26 June 2018

Clerk to Public Accounts Committee,
Legislative Council Complex,
1 Legislative Council Road,
Central, Hong Kong
(Attn.: Anthony CHU)

Dear Mr CHU,

Public Accounts Committee

**Consideration of Chapter 3 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 70
Integrated education**

Your letters to the Secretary of Education dated 13 and 14 June 2018 regarding the captioned were well received. Please find the requested information on items (a) to (y) and items (a) to (b) in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively.

For inquiries, please contact the undersigned (Tel.: 2892 6501) or Mr Martin MUI, Senior Specialist (Special Education Support 4) (Tel.: 2307 0459).

Yours sincerely,

(Godwin LAI)
for Secretary for Education

c.c. Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Fax no.: 2147 5239)
Director of Audit (Fax no.: 2583 9063)

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Public Accounts Committee

**Inquiries dated 13 June 2018 regarding Chapter 3 of
the Director of Audit's Report No. 70
(Integrated education)**

Responses by Education Bureau

- (a) The Education Bureau (EDB) attaches great importance to Integrated Education (IE) to ensure that students with special educational needs (SEN) could receive appropriate education. To help public sector ordinary schools cater for the individual differences of students with SEN, on top of regular subvention, the EDB has all along been providing schools with additional resources, professional support and teacher training. We have reviewed the implementation of IE and listened to the views of different stakeholders on an on-going basis so as to enhance the implementation of various measures and to make improvement where necessary and feasible.

The EDB has launched various enhancements in recent years to help schools support students with SEN, including:

- (i) regularising Enhanced Speech Therapy Grant (ESTG) provided for public sector ordinary primary schools;
- (ii) raising the grant rates and ceiling of Learning Support Grant (LSG);
- (iii) extending the school-based educational psychology service (SBEPS) to cover all public sector schools in the territory;
- (iv) starting from the 2017/18 school year, the EDB will, by phases in three years, provide each public sector school with an additional post in the teaching staff establishment to facilitate the assignment of a designated teacher in schools to take up the role of Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) to support IE; and
- (v) covering students with mental illness under LSG so that schools are provided with additional resources to cater for these needs.

In this school year, the EDB has launched a series of review on the implementation of IE and explored the feasibility of enhancing the support measures for IE along the following direction:

- (i) we would consider re-structuring the additional resources provided for all public sector schools under LSG, Intensive

Remedial Teaching Programme (IRTP) and IE Programme with a view to strengthening the stability of schools' teaching force and allow schools to deploy the resources flexibly in supporting students with SEN;

- (ii) we would revamp the mode of basic provision for tier-3 support under LSG to ensure that schools having more students identified to be with more challenging problems can receive the corresponding and appropriate support they need; and
- (iii) we would further enhance the provision of SBEPS.

From October last year to June this year, we have been soliciting views from school sponsoring bodies, schools councils, school heads associations, Task Force on Integrated Education in Mainstream Schools, public sector primary and secondary schools and SENCOs regarding the above issues. In April this year, we also met different parent groups to listen to their views on special education and IE. On the 2nd of March this year, we introduced the above review on the implementation of IE and the direction of proposed enhancement of the support measures, as well as the views of the stakeholders concerned to Legislative Council Panel on Education. We are currently compiling and analysing the views gathered and reviewing the feasibility of various proposals. As regards the implementation schedule, it would hinge on the proposals to be adopted finally and the arrangement of respective resources and complementary measures.

- (b) For students with SEN who are unable to adjust to learning in ordinary schools and in need of transferring to special schools, the EDB will, with consent from parents, place them in appropriate special schools according to the assessment results and recommendations of medical specialists / professionals. Likewise, special schools may, subject to parental consent, refer students who are being able to adjust to the environment and requirements in ordinary schools and found to have likelihood of better development to the educational psychologists (EP) for review. EPs will recommend suitable students to transfer to ordinary schools after the review, if appropriate. The numbers of students transferred from ordinary schools to special schools or from special schools to ordinary schools in the past 3 school years are tabulated below:

School Year	Number of students transferred from ordinary schools to special schools Note1	Number of students transferred from special schools to ordinary schools Note2
2014/15	136	20

School Year	Number of students transferred from ordinary schools to special schools Note1	Number of students transferred from special schools to ordinary schools Note2
2015/16	134	18
2016/17	137	26

Notes:

1. Students transferred from ordinary schools to schools for social development (SSD) or hospital schools (HS) are excluded.
2. Students returned from SSD or HS to ordinary schools are excluded.

For students in ordinary schools, they may change schools due to different reasons, such as moving house, for the ease of picking-up and dropping off at schools and individual family reasons, etc. At present, every ordinary school will provide support for students with SEN. Generally speaking, there should be no direct relationship between whether a student has SEN and the change of schools. Therefore, we have not compiled the figures of students with SEN in ordinary schools switching between ordinary schools.

Additional resources provided to public sector ordinary schools

- (c) Regarding the support for students of low academic achievement, since 1983, the former Education Department provided students of low academic achievement with a range of intensive remedial services, including Resource Class (RC) operated in public sector ordinary primary schools. From September 2000, RC was renamed as IRTP in Primary School, under which schools are encouraged to abolish the concept of “a separate class” and support students with SEN through the Whole School Approach. Target students of IRTP are still students of low academic achievement, including students with specific learning difficulties and students with intellectual disability. In the 2003/04 school year, the EDB implemented the “New Funding Mode” to provide public sector ordinary primary schools with LSG, continuing to include students of low academic achievement as targets, together with students with 8 other types of SEN.

As regards the secondary schools, starting from the 2006/07 school year, we have been providing public sector ordinary secondary schools with a large intake of Territory Band 3 and bottom 10% secondary students with additional teachers in Secondary 1 to Secondary 3, with a view to allowing schools to deploy their resources flexibly based on schools’ needs in supporting students of low academic achievement. Therefore, LSG provided to secondary schools starting from the

2008/09 school year does not cover students of low academic achievement as it does in primary schools. It is worth noting that a number of students of low academic achievement may also have SEN. If these students require tier-2 or tier-3 support, schools will as well be provided with LSG. Schools could holistically and flexibly deploy the above-mentioned additional teachers, LSG and other resources to render support to students of low academic achievement and students with SEN through the Whole School Approach.

- (d) (i) Since the 2003/04 school year, LSG has been provided for public sector ordinary primary schools to cater for the needs of students with SEN and students of low academic achievement. Specifically, when we set the grant rates of LSG, basically we took into account factors like the numbers of students with SEN at schools in general and the level of support they require, other resources schools can deploy to support students with SEN and the financial position of the Government. At that time, the LSG grant rates of \$10,000 per student requiring tier-2 support and \$20,000 per student requiring tier-3 support were assessed as appropriate. We also reminded schools to pool together and deploy flexibly various school resources according to the principle of ‘individual calculation and holistic deployment’ to cater for the needs of students with SEN. At the same time, the EDB encourages schools to adopt the Whole School Approach to provide students with SEN different levels of support taking into account their individual needs through the 3-Tier Intervention Model. For students with transient and mild learning or adjustment difficulties, teachers can provide them with tier-1 support through quality teaching in regular classrooms. For students with persistent learning or adjustment difficulties, schools should deploy additional resources to provide them with tier-2 support through small group learning or after class remedial support. Tier-3 support should be provided for students with severe and persistent learning or adjustment difficulties through individualized support. For the purpose of effective utilization and management of resources, the EDB has set a ceiling for the provision of LSG, and has been adjusting the grant rates and the ceiling of LSG according to actual needs with a view of enhancing the support for schools to cater for the needs of students with SEN. In the 2008/09 school year, the EDB has raised the ceiling of LSG from \$0.55 million to \$1 million for each school per annum, and further raised its ceiling to \$1.5 million in the 2013/14 school year. The grant rates have been increased by 30% in the 2014/15 school year. Starting from the 2015/16 school year, the grant rates and ceiling are adjusted

annually according to the changes in the Composite Consumer Price Index. In the 2017/18 school year, the ceiling of LSG for each school per annum is \$1,613,705.

- (ii) As mentioned in paragraph (a), the EDB is launching a series of review on the implementation of IE and exploring the feasibility of enhancing the support for IE, including considering to re-structure the additional resources provided for all public sector schools under LSG, IRTP and IE Programme, with a view to strengthening the stability of schools' teaching force and allowing schools to deploy resources flexibly in supporting students with SEN. The re-structuring of resources should help schools reaching the ceiling of LSG and with relatively more students with SEN to alleviate the difficulties they encounter. Furthermore, we will also consider whether the grant rates of LSG need to be adjusted.
- (e) To help public ordinary schools cater for the students with SEN, on top of the regular subventions, the EDB has been providing schools with additional resources with LSG being a major one. However, schools would not be limited to only using LSG to support students with SEN. On the contrary, schools will be provided with other additional resources to support students with SEN based on their situations. Other additional resources include ESTG, the additional teachers and grant provided under IRTP or IE Programme, the additional teachers provided for secondary schools in supporting academically low achievers, top-up fund for procurement of special furniture and equipment, intensive support grant for hardcore cases of students with SEN, etc. Schools are required to pool together and deploy flexibly various school resources to render appropriate support to students with SEN according to their needs. In addition, professional support is also provided for schools on an ongoing basis which include assessment and consultation services provided by EPs, speech therapists and audiologists; and under the School Partnership Scheme, ordinary schools which have proficient experience in implementing the Whole School Approach to IE are invited to serve as Resource Schools on Whole School Approach to share their good practice with other ordinary schools. We have also been promoting different teaching strategies to support students with SEN and publishing teaching resources for use by teachers. Starting from the 2016/17 school year, SBEPs has been further enhanced by progressively improving the ratio of EP to school to 1:4 for public sector schools with a large number of students with SEN. Furthermore, starting from the 2017/18 school year, the EDB will, by phases in 3 years, provide each public sector ordinary primary and secondary school with an additional graduate teacher post so that schools could assign a designated teacher as

SENCO to support IE. Basically, schools with comparatively more students with SEN would have SENCO provision in an earlier stage. In sum, schools reaching the ceiling of LSG having comparatively more students with SEN would receive more and be given priority in respect of the above-mentioned additional resources and professional support. In addition, the EDB has been providing structured special education teacher training and developing teaching resources for teachers and parents, to help them cater for the students with SEN.

- (f) Generally speaking, staff of the Special Education Division of EDB will conduct at least 3 regular school visits in a school year to advise schools on issues like the policies and measures on IE, teaching strategies, resources deployment and home-school cooperation. The number of school visits will increase as appropriate to ensure schools to provide appropriate support for students with SEN. For resources deployment, during the first visit at the beginning of the school term, we would understand the school year plan on the deployment of resources to support students with SEN. During the mid-year second school visit, we would follow up on the use of resources of schools. In the final school visit at the end of the school year, we would discuss the effectiveness on the use of resources with school personnel, including to understand the reasons why the LSG has not been fully utilised, and give advice for improvement.

- (g) The EDB encourages public sector ordinary schools to fully utilise, in the respective school year, the LSG provided every school year to cater for the needs of their students with SEN. For schools which have accumulated a surplus in excess of 30% of the 12 months' provision of LSG at the end of the respective school year (applicable to aided and caput schools) or financial year (applicable to government schools), the excess surplus will be clawed back. This arrangement was first implemented in government schools in the 2011-12 financial year. It came into effect in aided primary schools and aided/caput secondary schools starting from the 2011/12 and 2012/13 school years respectively. The number of schools with the LSG clawed back, and the total amount and percentage of the grant clawed back in the past 3 school years is as follows:

	2013/14 school year (aided and caput schools)/ 2013-14 financial year (government schools)	2014/15 school year (aided and caput schools)/ 2014-15 financial year (government schools)	2015/16 school year (aided and caput schools)/ 2015-16 financial year (government schools)
No. of schools with the LSG clawed back	99	86	33
Total amount of the LSG clawed back (\$ million)	3.5	3.9	1.4
Expenditure on LSG (\$ million)	330.9	450.1	500.1
Percentage clawed back relative to the total expenditure on LSG	1.06%	0.87%	0.28%

Based on the audited information as at March 2018, there were 33 schools with LSG clawed back at the end of the 2015/16 school year (aided and caput schools)/2015-16 financial year (government schools), and the amount of LSG clawed back was around \$1.4 million which was less than 1% of the total LSG expenditure of the respective school year. As the amount to be clawed back from aided and caput schools for the 2016/17 school year will be confirmed only after the schools' submission of audited accounts by end of February 2018 and verification by the EDB, we are unable to provide information on claw-back for the 2016/17 school year and beyond.

The above figures for the 2015/16 school year (aided and caput schools) /2015-16 financial year (government schools) differ from those in Table 7 of paragraph 3.15 of the audit report. The reason is that the LSG claw-back information that the Audit Commission obtained from the School Audit Section of the EDB during the investigation denoted the position as at December 2017 whereas the figures reported to the Finance Committee by the EDB denoted the position as of March 2018. To our understanding, individual schools having underspending leading to claw back at the end of a specific year were generally due to some unexpected circumstances, e.g. inviting bids took time or early resignation of staff, failing to hire the desirable professional services, the actual expenditure lowered than the estimated expenditure upon the completion of the bidding process, etc. The EDB adopts various

measures to alleviate the claw-back situation from schools which include providing schools with guidelines on the deployment of LSG and claw-back mechanism, conducting regular school visits to advise on the deployment of resources for supporting students with SEN, organising experience sharing activities among schools, incorporating contents related to utilisation of additional resources and evaluation of effectiveness, issuing reminders to individual schools concerned for making improvement should undesirable situation be detected, etc. With our claw-back mechanism and stepped-up efforts to monitor the utilisation of LSG by schools, the surplus situation of LSG in schools has been improved in recent years.

- (h) (i) According to our communications with schools and analyses, the schools in general acknowledge the benefits of using LSG. These benefits include the provision of respective resources according to the number of students with SEN and the level of support they need, and the flexibility for schools to deploy this grant for employing contract teachers and / or teaching assistants and hiring professional services to render appropriate support services for students with SEN. However, there have also been concerns over the stability of teaching force as the employment of the contract teachers by LSG should be reviewed every school year and there is a possibility of contract termination. Continuation of support services for individual students with SEN and the skills and experiences transfer among teachers in the schools may also be affected. While for schools under IRTP, there is relatively greater stability in the teaching force as they are provided with a regular teacher in the staff establishment. Hence, despite the fact that these schools would be provided with more resources under LSG, they value more about the stability of teaching force and would not opt to change to the LSG mode.
- (ii) To encourage schools switching from IRTP to the full adoption of LSG, starting from the 2003/04 school year, we have introduced the Mixed Mode under which schools can have one IRTP and at the same time receive LSG capped at \$0.35 million. In view of the lukewarm response from schools, the Migration Mode was introduced in the 2009/10 school year, where schools could have one IRTP and receive LSG with a ceiling raised to \$0.6 million during a grace period of 6 school years to fully adopting LSG. Due to different school situations, apart from encouraging IRTP schools, through the issuance of respective circulars, to fully adopt LSG which enables them to enjoy greater flexibility in deploying resources to render appropriate support to students with all SEN types and students of low academic achievement, EDB staff,

through regular school visits every year, have all along been understanding and analysing individual school situations and giving advice to schools on the full adoption of LSG.

- (iii) Starting from the 2009/10 school year, schools requiring time for transition to the full adoption of LSG could apply to the EDB for changing to the Migration Mode based on their schools' situation. In the 2016/17 school year, 10 primary schools beginning their adoption of the Migration Mode in different school years (i.e. the 2014/15, 2015/16 or 2016/17 school year) will fully adopt LSG in the 2020/21, 2021/22 or 2022/23 school year. Two of these primary schools have informed the EDB of their early full adoption of LSG, where one has begun the full adoption of LSG in the 2017/18 school year and the other will begin in the 2018/19 school year.
- (i) Target students of IRTP are students of low academic achievement, including students with specific learning difficulties and students with intellectual disability. IRTP schools are provided with additional teachers in the establishment and a class grant. The EDB has been encouraging school to implement the Whole School Approach to IE, holistically and flexibly deploy additional resources and manpower to render appropriate support to, apart from the target students of IRTP, other students with the SEN types stipulated in Table 9 of the Audit Report, regardless of whether they are the target students of IRTP. As mentioned in paragraph (e) above, to help public sector ordinary schools cater for the students with SEN, on top of the regular subventions, the EDB provides schools with additional resources, professional support and teacher training. Schools operating IRTP should pool together and deploy flexibly various school resources to render appropriate support to students according to their SEN.
- (j) The year-end self-evaluation form at school level is for schools' self-evaluation on IE. The first part is about schools' self-evaluation of their inclusive culture, inclusive policies and inclusive practices. As regards the second part, schools assess the overall performance of students with SEN premised upon the data collected from the year-end evaluation form for individual student in social adjustment, learning performance and learning attitude / motivation. This perception is often based on the school personnel's comparison between the progress of students with SEN and that of typically developing students, or between the performance of students with SEN and the progress indicators they have in mind. Students with SEN have different starting points in various learning domains. The pace of their progress will also vary according to their SEN and degree of difficulty. Even if

individual students have made relatively good progress in comparison with themselves, their performance is not up to the level of the average students. Therefore, it may be hard to reflect the progress of individual students through a global evaluation of their performance.

Apart from the above-mentioned broadly general system level self-evaluation, when a school implements different support plans for students with SEN (such as the JC A-Connect: Jockey Club Autism Support Network for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders), the objectives will usually be more concrete and specific, and the evaluation items will also be more differentiated and focused so as to measure student performance and progress more accurately. Actually, schools will not rely solely on the year-end evaluation form on individual student to assess his performance and progress. Schools will also refer to students' internal academic results, and pre-test and post-test data of school-based support programmes to obtain a more detailed understanding of the learning progress of students with SEN.

Based on the audit recommendations, the EDB will review the existing mechanism for analysing the school year-end self-evaluation results to better understand the effectiveness of the support measures. We shall also explore the possibility of enhancing the functions of SEMIS so as to systematically analyse the data provided by schools (e.g., comparison of the performance of individual schools over the past few years, the support needs of schools in different districts, etc.), which will in turn provide useful references for professional staff of the EDB to render focused advice and support to schools.

In addition, the EDB staff will discuss the results of self-evaluation on the support measures for students with SEN with schools and give their advice when necessary during school visits. We will also enrich the relevant chapters of the "Operation Guide on the Whole School Approach to IE" and continue to conduct sharing sessions and on-site consultation meetings to emphasize that schools should systematically collect students' specific performance or data before and after additional group training in order to objectively evaluate the effectiveness of tier-2 support. Schools should also set the success criteria of different support domains for the individual education plan (IEP) of students receiving tier-3 support and examine the effectiveness of the plan regularly so that support strategies and methods can be revised in a timely manner to ensure that the plan can effectively enhance students' performance.

- (k) (i) Regarding supporting the Whole School Approach to IE, the responsibilities of SENCO include: coordinating school matters relating to the support of students with SEN; assisting the school management (i.e. the principal and the vice-principal(s)) in planning the development

of the Whole School Approach to IE; leading the student support team in the promotion of the Whole School Approach to IE and the cultivation of inclusive school culture; and implementing promotional and developmental tasks and other work at a system level such as teacher training. SENCO is required to lead the student support team in performing the following duties:

- according to the five basic principles of the promotion of IE, strategically plan, implement, monitor, review and evaluate various support measures for students with SEN and the resource deployment which would include the appropriate use of LSG and the flexible deployment of the school's manpower resources, etc.;
- promote early identification and early intervention for students with SEN through a multi-disciplinary team approach;
- collaborate with other teachers / functional teams in the school through the Whole School Approach to devise support programmes, curriculum and teaching adaptations, and special examination and assessment arrangements for students with SEN;
- guide fellow teachers in the school to make use of effective support strategies to enhance the learning effectiveness of students with SEN through arrangements such as collaborative lesson planning and co-teaching;
- collaborate with the guidance team in the school to cater for the learning needs of students with mental illness by giving input from the perspectives of teaching and learning as well as resource deployment, and to strengthen mental health education;
- enhance home-school co-operation and work with parents to support students with SEN;
- review the special education training needs and profiles of teachers in the school, arrange teachers to receive relevant training in a systematic manner, and plan and organise school-based professional development activities to enhance the capacity of the teaching team; and
- strengthen external liaison with parties such as professionals, community resources providers and parents to better coordinate various parties and resources for supporting students with SEN in the school.

Apart from the above duties, SENCO should take up a certain amount of teaching duties to help himself / herself continue to enrich his / her experience in supporting students with SEN in class and putting various support measures into practice.

(ii), (iii) and (iv)

The EDB requires the teacher assuming the SENCO role to have at

least three years of experience in teaching and in promoting IE. He/she should have received training in special education, such as having completed the Basic, Advanced and Thematic (BAT) Courses on supporting students with SEN commissioned by the EDB and offered by tertiary institutions, or holding equivalent qualifications. At present, teachers assuming the SENCO role have at least three years of experience in teaching and in promoting IE. They have been serving as the coordinator or a member of the student support team in school and have good knowledge and experience about SEN-related work. SENCOs who have not yet completed the BAT Courses are required to complete the remaining courses within the first year of assuming the SENCO role.

To help SENCOs discharge their roles effectively, the EDB provides them a two-year professional training course (the training course under the pilot project lasted for three years, but the contents and training hours were similar), focusing on leadership, planning and management, support strategies based on student-centered approach, etc. The EDB also organises professional development activities for SENCOs to promote professional exchanges in order to enhance their professional competence. It is apparent that the training of SENCOs requires long period of immersion and cannot be accomplished overnight. The provision of SENCO in each public sector ordinary primary and secondary school the soonest possible is the demand and consensus of the education sector for years. As such, while allowing SENCOs to carry out their work to support IE at school, we request them to complete the remaining courses within the first year of service, which is a flexible practice that could meet the sector's expectation.

To enhance teachers' professional competence in catering students with SEN, the EDB has been monitoring the progress of teachers in receiving SEN-related training. The EDB will continue to send letters to the public sector ordinary schools annually to inform them of the latest training position of the school to facilitate their strategic planning on teacher professional development. The EDB staff also pay regular visits to schools to jointly review their progress of arranging teachers to receive SEN-related training; and encourage schools to plan for the SEN-related training for the SENCOs as appropriate, and take immediate follow-up actions on SENCOs yet to complete the SEN-related training.

- (1) The SENCO provision is an IE enhancement measure. With due consideration of a basket of factors (such as the number of students with SEN and their support needs, teachers' professional training in special education of schools, further enhancement that may be made by schools in promoting the Whole School Approach to IE, etc.), the EDB

subsequently arranges for schools, by phases in three years, to assign an appropriate teacher to take up the role of SENCO. Schools should uphold the principle of Whole School Approach to IE irrespective of the year they are provided with the SENCO. All stakeholders (including school staff, parents and students) should clearly understand that the support for students with SEN is not to be taken up solely by the SENCO and all school staff are responsible for supporting students with SEN under the leadership of the SENCO. The EDB also requests the school principals to encourage all school staff to actively cooperate with the SENCO and the student support team that he / she leads in supporting students with SEN. In this regard, the number of students with SEN in school should not be used to reckon the workload of the SENCO.

Regarding the effectiveness of SENCO in schools with a great disparity in the number of students with SEN, the EDB will examine the consultative evaluation report on the pilot project on SENCOs to be released at the end of 2018 to consider the arrangement of SENCO provision for implementing Whole School Approach to IE in schools with different number of students with SEN. The EDB will continue to explore the possibility of adjusting the teaching load of SENCO and consult the views of the education sector.

- (m) At present, supporting students' social, emotional and mental health is an important topic embedded in the training activities for SENCOs organized by the EDB. Some related foundation theories, various tools with person-centered approach, reference materials and assignment designed for SENCO to practice what they learnt, are included in the training content for enhancing their understanding and skills in supporting students with mental illness. In addition, the EDB has also arranged network activities "How to Support Students with Mental Illness in Schools" for exchange of professional views by invitation of professionals, schools and SENCOs with successful experience to explore the way to support students with mental illness through whole school approach. From the 2017/18 school year onwards, the EDB conducts the "Professional Development Programme for Mental Health" for primary and secondary school teachers to raise their awareness of mental health and enhance their professional knowledge and capacity to identify and support students with mental health needs. The programme includes Elementary course for teachers at large and In-depth course for designated teachers. Moreover, in each school year, the EDB also organises seminars, workshops, experience sharing sessions, etc., on supporting students with mental health needs for teachers and SENCOs to equip them with the knowledge and capacity to support students with mental health needs.

The EDB will continue to strengthen the elements of supporting students with mental illness in the training courses and network activities for SENCOs.

Teacher training and professional support

- (n) Starting from the 2007/08 school year, the EDB has been providing serving teachers with structured training courses on supporting students with SEN pitched at Basic, Advanced and Thematic levels (BAT Courses). Some modules of the BAT Courses cover mental illness. The teachers who studied these courses could have more understanding of supporting students with mental health needs. The “Professional Development Programme for Mental Health” is mainly designed for the teachers who are tasked with the related responsibilities, such as teachers of Guidance Team, to enhance their professional knowledge and capacity to identify and support students with mental health needs. The BAT Courses and “Professional Development Programme for Mental Health” can create synergies so that schools could arrange their teachers to attend suitable training courses according to the needs of teacher development.
- (o) For schools arranging teachers to attend the BAT Courses, the EDB understands that schools are different in terms of their needs and development; as well as their work and training priority. Hence, the pace of special education teacher training amongst schools is also different. However, with the growing public awareness of equal opportunity and stakeholders’ more knowledge about students with SEN, the public uphold high expectation on schools to provide quality education for the students with SEN, and attach great importance to enhance teachers’ professional capacity in catering for these students. Hence, we actively encourage schools to put high priority on teacher professional development in catering for students with SEN and make a plan to arrange their teachers to receive suitable training. Based on our understanding, schools are in general supportive for their teachers to receive continuous professional development on catering for students with SEN. However, some schools may not be able to meet the training targets because of the following reasons:
- Teachers in general are engaging in teaching and other duties, schools have more difficulty in arranging teachers to attend full-time special education training courses, especially for the courses with longer duration.
 - The teachers responsible for teaching students of senior forms to prepare students for promotion to secondary level and for coping

with public examination. They may have more difficulty to attend training course.

- Schools experience difficulty to employ suitable supply teachers for substitution of subject-trained teachers or subject teachers of senior secondary level.
- Apart from special education training, schools also need to arrange teachers to attend other training.
- There is wastage of special education trained teachers, such as retirement, changing profession or school.

We set the training targets of special education for ordinary schools with a view to facilitating schools in arranging their teachers to receive suitable training in systematic manner. It is hoped that each school will aggregate a critical mass of teachers with relevant training to guide their counterparts in school to implement integrated education through the Whole School Approach to IE. In this connection, the EDB will inform public sector ordinary schools of their teacher training situation on an annual basis to facilitate their school-based planning and review through a notification letter. EDB's staff conduct regular visits to schools to understand their progress in target attainment of special education training and provide advice. When necessary, we will render appropriate support and intervention measures, including scrutinizing the school-based teacher professional development plan with schools so as to help them make timely improvement and follow up.

- (p) The expenditure of the School-based Educational Psychology Service (SBEPS) includes the remuneration for EPs and the recurrent grant for base schools for operation of the service (the SBEPS Grant). \$146.4 million was the then estimated expenditure in the 2016/17 school year, with breakdown as below:

Item	Expenditure (\$ million)
Remuneration for EPs in the EDB	64.7
Remuneration for EPs in school sponsoring bodies (SSBs)	74.4
SBEPS Grant	7.3
	146.4

- (q) For full implementation of the Enhanced SBEPS to all public sector primary and secondary schools at the EP to school ratio of 1:4, there needs to be a total of 211 EPs as projected from the number of schools in the 2017/18 school year, i.e. 454 public sector primary schools and 389 public sector secondary schools. However, the number of EPs has not included the manpower necessary for the monitoring of service

quality, coordination and development of the SBEPS and professional development of EPs themselves, as well as the development of effective models and resources for supporting students with various SEN. As the number of EPs required will vary according to various factors including the number of schools and the service model, the above figure could only be used as a reference.

In relation to paragraph 4.19 of the Audit Report on EDB's liaison with the local tertiary institutions to increase the EP training places in order to increase the supply of EPs, the EDB has communicated with the University Grants Committee the expectation to increase the number of EP training places in the 2019/20 to 2021/22 triennium.

Expansion of Enhanced SBEPS would not only hinge on the supply of EPs (including increasing the training places), but also to a large extent be affected by the great increase of demand for EPs by other service providers in implementing various programmes (such as the Pilot Scheme on On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services in kindergartens). In the 2017/18 school year, Enhanced SBEPS has covered 80 primary and secondary schools as scheduled. The EDB has planned to expand Enhanced SBEPS to about 120 primary and secondary schools in the 2018/19 school year. For the time being, the EDB does not have a detailed timetable regarding the pace of expansion of Enhanced SBEPS in the years beyond the 2018/19 school year.

- (r) The SBEPS adopts a comprehensive and integrated service model that aims at enhancing schools' professional capacity to cater for students' diverse educational needs. In accordance with the needs of the schools and their students, EPs provide support at the school system, teacher and student levels, including remedial, preventive and developmental work. Therefore, in assessing schools' needs for the Enhanced SBEPS, the EDB would make reference to the number of students with SEN and the unique needs of schools, such as the ratio of students with SEN and the student population as well as the overall development needs of the schools. Since schools face greater challenges in meeting the needs of students requiring Tier-3 support, we have paid extra attention to this factor when selecting the schools. On the other hand, students with SEN requiring tier-1 or tier-2 support have been considered as a whole. In selecting the schools for Enhanced SBEPS in the 2016/17 and 2017/18 school years, we have made reference to the number of students with SEN in the 2015/16 school year and other factors as stated above. The distribution of the number of students with SEN, and the number of students requiring Tier-3

support in the 80 schools at the time of selection are listed in the tables below:

Number of students with SEN	Number of schools
40 or less	2
41 to 80	24
81 to 120	33
121 to 160	15
161 to 200	3
201 or more	3

Number of students requiring Tier-3 support	Number of schools
0 to 5	56
6 to 10	14
11 to 15	3
16 to 20	2
21 or more	5

- (s) As stated in paragraph (r), the EDB has considered various factors in selecting schools for the Enhanced SBEPS, including the number of students with SEN, the ratio of these students to the student population, the number of students requiring individual support, as well as the individual conditions of schools. The EDB has planned to extend the service to about 120 primary and secondary schools in the 2018/19 school year. As for the 2019/20 school year and beyond, as stated in paragraph (q), we will make consideration according to the supply of EPs and the demand from other service organisations of EPs.
- (t) The SBEPS provided by the EDB and SSBs is basically the same. The EP to school ratio is also calculated on the same basis. In the 2016/17 school year, the number of EPs employed by the SSBs ranged from 3 to 12. Therefore, in comparison to the EDB, the SBEPS provided by SSBs is more easily affected by the temporary shortage of manpower. Since the effectiveness of the service rests with the collaboration between school personnel and EP, and as the development of the service is continuous, in order to ensure the stability of the service to individual schools and to avoid frequent change of service providers, the SBEPS provided by SSBs has been set at a minimum of 14 days per school year for flexibility in arrangement of manpower where necessary. The EDB will keep in view the service needs of schools as a whole and the supply of EPs, as well as the recommendations in the Audit Report, in reviewing and rationalizing the school visit day arrangements for the SBEPS provided by the EDB

and SSBs. Revisions in the SBEPS Guide will be made as appropriate.

- (u) In the 2016/17 school year, the number of school visit days by EP in 42 schools was less than the general requirements as stipulated in the SBEPS Guides. The reasons are listed below:

Number of schools	Reasons for school visit days being less than the general requirements stipulated in the Guide
14	EPs took maternity leave
11	EPs took leave due to sickness
9	Upon one SSB being unable to fill the newly awarded EP posts, the EDB provided service to some schools on an interim basis. The number of school visit days for these 9 schools met the general requirement for service provided by SSBs
3	Schools requested for specific number of school visit days and scope of service, EPs explained the service to the schools and appropriate service was provided to the schools according to their requests
2	Schools requested to re-schedule visit days, but the EP was not able to re-schedule due to clash with other duties
1	EP took paternity leave
1	EP's other duties clashed with visit days to the school, EP was unable to re-schedule the visits with the school
1	Reasons as in (v)

The EDB will review the existing mechanism in monitoring EPs' school visit days. If the reduction of school visit days is unavoidable due to EPs taking leave of sickness or taking maternity / paternity leave, EDB will require the EPs to set the priority of work with the affected schools.

- (v) In Table 15 of paragraph 4.14 of the Audit Report, one school received a total of 4 days' visit by the EP in the 2016/17 school year. The reason was that the school was in transition to a Direct Subsidy School. Since the SBEPS covers only public sector ordinary schools, EP's service was focused on the students in one class level of the school who were in need of support during that school year.
- (w) As stated in paragraph (a) above, the EDB has started a series of work to review the implementation of IE, in order to explore the feasibility of enhancing the IE practices, including enhancing the SBEPS. In

relation to the recommendations in paragraph 4.18(d) and the responses given by the EDB in paragraph 4.19 of the Audit Report, we will also review the mode of supervision of the SBEPs, discuss with the relevant stakeholders, require SSBs to submit the qualifications of EP supervisors and the effectiveness data of the supervision service, as well as review the employment terms and requirements of part-time EPs.

- (x) The SBEPs adopt a comprehensive and integrated service model that aims at enhancing schools' professional capacity to cater for students' diverse educational needs. EPs provide support at the school system, teacher and student levels. We have all along listed out the indicators of service effectiveness in the SBEPs Guide for reference by schools and EPs. Since the effective implementation of the SBEPs depends upon the collaboration and coordination between school personnel and EPs, the implementation of the service is different in different schools, it is not appropriate or feasible to use one set of criteria to evaluate the service effectiveness. Therefore currently the EDB reviews the service effectiveness through various ways.

At present, the EDB conducts an annual review through a questionnaire survey to schools and EPs at the end of each school year to gauge feedback from different stakeholders. The content of the survey is mainly on the implementation and effectiveness of service at the three support levels. The EDB also collects from EPs annual progress reports, in order to review the contents of work of EPs at different schools and the ratio of different nature of work. The EDB conducts visits to some of the schools each year to hold meetings with school personnel and EPs to discuss and review the implementation and effectiveness of the service. In addition, the EDB holds meetings with SSBs each year to review service planning and coordination. The above practices have facilitated the EDB to review the effectiveness of service provided by school-based EPs.

- (y) The Special Education Management Information System (SEMIS) operating for more than a decade ago, was originally designed to have a main function to collect and manage information of students in aided special schools and students with SEN in public sector ordinary schools. In the aspect of IE, the information in SEMIS could help the EDB and public sector ordinary schools understand the profile of students with SEN, and also facilitate the EDB to plan the provision of additional resources for the public sector ordinary schools to provide support for the students with SEN. We will review how SEMIS can be further enhanced to respond to the suggestions in the Audit Report so that the EDB and schools can process and analyze the data collected in SEMIS efficiently and systematically, which will in turn provide

information for the EDB and schools to provide more specified support for students with SEN. We will work in consultation with information technology professionals about the feasibility and priorities of the functions, and then make a plan for enhancement during this summer period. We are going to implement the enhancement of SEMIS in the 2018/19 school year subject to the availability of resources.

Education Bureau
26 June 2018

Public Accounts Committee

**Inquiries dated 14 June 2018 regarding Chapter 3 of
the Director of Audit's Report No. 70
(Integrated education)**

Responses by Education Bureau

- (a) Under the School Development and Accountability Framework, schools are required to assess the effectiveness of their school policies, measures and deployment of resources (including the support for students with special educational needs (SEN)) through self-evaluation every year which is validated through the External School Review by the Education Bureau (EDB). To further enhance transparency, schools are required to set out the inclusive policy, support measures and how resources are deployed to provide support services for students with SEN in their annual school reports. In addition, schools must complete the Year-end Evaluation Form at School Level on Whole School Approach to catering for students with SEN and the Year-end Evaluation Form for Individual Student on the basis of their support to students with SEN, and return the former to the EDB before the end of each school year so that the EDB can have a general understanding of the effectiveness of schools' work. EDB's professional staff will discuss the result of schools' self-evaluation of the support measures provided to students with SEN and offer opinions whenever necessary in school visits so that the schools could adjust the support measures to better cater for students with SEN.

In response to the recommendations of the Audit Report, we will review and update the "Operation Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integration Education" to provide more specific guidelines to help school personnel and relevant professionals (such as educational psychologists) work out the required tier of support for students and record students' progress. We will also review the current mechanism for analysing school data of self-evaluation, including exploring how to enhance the Special Education Management Information System (SEMIS) so that the EDB and schools can grasp the implementation of integrated education aptly and take appropriate follow-up action. Furthermore, we will continue to organise sharing sessions and consultation sessions for

schools to help them understand how to collect specific data on student performance more systematically in order to assess the effectiveness of support services objectively, and how to formulate, adjust and review students' performance criteria in different domains in order to ensure that the support services provided by the school can effectively help students' learning.

- (b) Currently, the University of Hong Kong (HKU) and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) each provides a two-year Master's degree in educational psychology (professional practice) training course. The EDB does not have the accurate information of the number of applications for each course of the two universities. The number of training places of the two courses in the recent six years is listed below:

Year	2013-15	2014-16	2015-17	2016-18	2017-19	2018-20
Tertiary institution	PolyU	HKU	PolyU	HKU	PolyU	HKU
Training places	15	25	15	25	15	25

Education Bureau
26 June 2018