

Information Paper

Learning Environment and Facilities in special schools for physically handicapped children

Purpose

This paper provides information on the support services and facilities in special schools for physically handicapped children.

School Places and Curriculum

2. Special Schools for physically handicapped children (the schools) provide education for children suffering from more severe physical handicaps. At the moment, there are seven schools for physically handicapped children, two of which have boarding facilities. Altogether, they provide 780 school places and 166 boarding places. The details of provision in each school are set out at Appendix I.

3. The schools offer ordinary curriculum, with a maximum of 10 students per class. To enhance the effectiveness of learning, the schools will also tailor the curriculum to suit the abilities of individual students. Five of the schools operate classes from Primary One to Secondary 3 while the remaining two operate classes up to Secondary 5. Pre-school preparatory classes are also offered in three of the schools.

Staff Establishment

4. Other than a teaching ratio of 1.5 teachers per class, the schools are also provided with 0.5 physiotherapist/ occupational therapist posts for every 15 students, a speech therapist per school, one nurse for every 40 to 129 students, and 0.5 social worker for every 35 students, to provide professional support services for individual students.

5. The Education Department subsidizes at least two school bus drivers for each school. At present, the seven schools employ a total of 20 drivers.

Learning Environment and Facilities

6. In addition to classrooms and special rooms, the schools are equipped with rooms for physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and medical inspection to meet the special needs of the students.

7. With a view to improving the learning environment, the Education Department has included five of the schools in Phase III or later phases of the School Improvement Programme. Subject to site constraints, the schools will be provided as far as practicable with such facilities as staff room, staff common room, interview rooms, student activity centre, remedial teaching room, library, computer assisted learning room and other standard school facilities. Of the two remaining schools, one is undergoing extension work and the other is looking for suitable sites for reprovisioning.

8. To promote the use of information technology in education, the schools are provided with computers as in ordinary schools. On average, each

special school will be provided with resources to procure 30 computers and other peripheral facilities. For physically handicapped children, the computers serve not only as a tool for learning, but also as a means to enhance interpersonal communication and as a rehabilitation aid. To enable physically handicapped children to operate and use computer facilities, the Education Department has formed a working group comprising professionals from both schools and the computer education field to advise on how schools may flexibly deploy their resources to purchase computer adaptive devices and related softwares.

9. The Chief Executive has announced in his second Policy Address that, to improve the teaching and learning environment, air-conditioning will be provided for 17 special schools for the physically and severely mentally handicapped children.

Facilities provided for physically handicapped children in ordinary schools

10. All new schools completed from 1997 onwards are equipped with facilities required by physically handicapped children, including lifts, ramps and toilets for the disabled. The Education Department also incorporates such facilities in existing ordinary schools through the School Improvement Programme where technically feasible, so that physically handicapped children can also be admitted. For the reference of parents when selecting schools for their children, the Education Department will include such information in the Secondary School Places Allocation school selection documents. For Primary One Allocation, disabled children will be individually assessed and the Education Department will explain to parents concerned the most appropriate allocation.

Recommendations of the Hong Kong Special Schools Council and the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation Community Rehabilitation Network

11. In their respective submissions of 16 and 20 October to the LegCo Panel on Education, the Hong Kong Special Schools Council and the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation Community Rehabilitation Network have put forward a number of proposals for improving the support services and facilities in special schools for physically handicapped children. Our initial comments on these proposals are set out at Appendix II.

Conclusion

12. The existing accommodation and facilities of schools for physically handicapped children basically meet the educational needs of these children. To enhance the quality of special education, the Education Department is reviewing the schedule of accommodation of all special schools, including schools for physically handicapped children, to take stock of the existing provision and to identify shortfall. In addition, the Education Department will commission a study on the multiplicity of handicaps of special school students with the objective of examining the adequacy of existing provisions for students with multiple handicaps and making recommendations for improvements.

Education Department

October 1998

**School Places and Boarding Places of Schools for
the Physically Handicapped in the School Year 1998/99**

(as at 15.9.1998)

School	District		School Places	Enrolment	Boarding Places	No. of Boarders
1. John F Kennedy Centre	Southern	Preparatory Class: Primary: Junior Secondary: Senior Secondary(S4/5): Total:	10 60 50 <u>20</u> 140	10 66 36 <u>24</u> 136	80	50*
2. Margaret Trench Red Cross School	Southern	Primary: Junior Secondary: Total:	40 <u>20</u> 60	27 <u>19</u> 46	-	-
3. Princess Alexandra Red Cross Residential School	Kwun Tong	Preparatory Class: Primary: Junior Secondary: Senior Secondary(S4/5): Total:	20 110 30 <u>20</u> 180	21 116 30 <u>17</u> 184	86	71
4. BM Kotewall Memorial School, The Spastics Association of Hong Kong	Kwai Tsing	Preparatory Class: Primary: Junior Secondary: Total:	20 60 <u>40</u> 120	14 48 <u>38</u> 100	-	-
5. Ko Fook Iu Memorial School, The Spastic Association of Hong Kong	Shatin	Primary: Junior Secondary: Total:	70 <u>30</u> 100	62 <u>32</u> 94	-	-
6. Jockey Club Elaine Field School, The Spastics Association of Hong Kong	Tai Po	Primary: Junior Secondary: Total:	60 <u>30</u> 90	44 <u>21</u> 65	-	-
7. Hong Kong Christian Service Pui Oi School	Tuen Mun	Primary: Junior Secondary: Total:	60 <u>30</u> 90	43 <u>21</u> 64	-	-
Total:		Preparatory Class: Primary: Junior Secondary: Senior Secondary(S4/5): Total:	40 470 230 <u>40</u> 780	45 406 197 <u>41</u> 689	166	121

* As the dormitory is undergoing extension work, some of the boarding places have to be temporarily closed.

**Initial comments of the Administration on the Proposals of the
Hong Kong Special Schools Council and the Hong Kong Society for
Rehabilitation Community Rehabilitation Network**

1. Difficulties encountered in procuring suitable Furniture and Equipment (F&E) items
 - Schools can apply to ED for a non-recurrent subsidy for the replacement or procurement of F&E items. In 1998/99, an average of \$94,550 was approved for each PH school for the purchase of F&E items.
 - On full implementation of school-based management by 2000, schools will have greater flexibility to purchase any F&E items which they consider to be relevant and beneficial to their operation.
 - ED's proposal to provide a special recurrent F&E grant for all aided schools, including special schools, will shortly be submitted to the LegCo Panel on Education for discussion.

2. Air-conditioning
 - The Chief Executive has announced in his second Policy Address the provision of air-conditioning for the classrooms and special rooms of 17 special schools for physically and severely mentally handicapped children.
 - The Administration does not have any plans at the moment to air-condition the whole school. The question of providing air-conditioning

for other areas of the school will be examined in the context of the consultancy study to be commissioned by ED.

3. Meal Service

- There are a total of five day-PH schools. School staff supervise and assist students at lunch. For children requiring special meals, we consider that parents would know best the eating needs of their children and are best placed to prepare suitable meals. ED has no plans to make available kitchens and cooks in PH schools.

4. Physiotherapy in PH schools

- According to the latest statistics, the vacancy rates of PT and OT are 10% and 2% respectively, which are far lower than the rates of 43.6% and 30.7% respectively as at 31.3.1998.
- Many PH schools already adopt a whole school approach towards the provision of physiotherapy service. Under the direction and co-ordination of physiotherapists, some simple therapy such as standing and sitting positioning is being carried out in the classrooms, thereby relieving the physiotherapists to focus on the more serious cases.
- The adequacy of the existing ratio of 0.5 PT/OT for 15 students will be included in the consultancy study on multiplicity of handicaps of special school students.

5. School bus Service

- ED will consider the feasibility of subsidizing the replacement of existing school buses, including the provision of tail-lift and other supportive devices.
6. White boards
 - ED will examine further the feasibility of including white boards in the standard F&E list.
 7. Attached toilets for junior classes
 - Toilets are provided on every floor of a school. It would be a matter for schools to position the junior classes near to the toilets. The existing provision is considered adequate.
 8. Spacious environment
 9. Facilities for perceptual and sensory training
 10. Inter-com and two-way public address system
 11. Observation room for educational psychologist
 12. Hydrotherapy pool
 - ED will be commissioning a consultancy study on the multiplicity of handicaps of students in special schools with a view to improving various educational provisions and facilities to meet the special educational needs of students. We will also take into account the recommendations listed above in the consultancy study.
 13. Integration of PH students in ordinary schools-school facilities

- For secondary school place allocation (SSPA), ED will provide information on schools with facilities for disabled students in the school selection documents. For primary one allocation (POA), disabled children will be individually assessed and ED will explain to parents concerned the most appropriate allocation. The existing practice is considered satisfactory and there is no intention for the time being to include details on facilities for the disabled in primary schools in the school selection forms. ED will keep existing practices under review.

14. Integration of PH students in ordinary schools-school staff support

- Training on handling children with special educational needs is already incorporated in the core curriculum of teacher training courses. ED will consider enhancing the special education element in teacher training programmes.
- ED is planning for the setting up of a special education resource centre.
- Starting from the 1997/98 school year, ED has launched a two-year pilot project on the integration of children with special needs in ordinary schools. The aim is to foster the development of a supporting school environment for children with special educational needs through the whole-school approach and encouragement of home-school co- operation. We will review the outcome of the pilot project in 1999 and will, on the basis of the review, formulate a long-term strategy on helping students with special educational needs integrate into ordinary schools.