



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

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13 June 2008

Ms Virginia Wilson
Chairperson
Growing Together
41 Mt. Kellett Road
The Peak
Hong Kong

Dear Ms Wilson,

Thank you for your letter dated 30 April 2008 to the Chief Executive, and your letters dated 8 May 2008 to the Secretary for Education, Permanent Secretary for Education, Deputy Secretary for Education 3, and Principal Assistant Secretary (School Administration and Support). I am explaining the Government's stance and providing further information with regard to your views and recommendations as follows:

Parity with Chinese Speaking students with SEN

In Hong Kong, eligible children irrespective of ethnic origin and physical or intellectual ability have the same right to enjoy basic education. It is Government's prevailing policy to accommodate the needs of non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students with special educational needs (SEN) in the public school sector through various measures, with a view to helping them develop their potentials and integrate into the local education system. As Chinese and English are the two official languages of Hong Kong, all public sector schools are required to teach English and Chinese as a subject. As for the medium of instruction (MOI), although most schools use Chinese as the MOI, there are quite a number of public sector schools that adopt English as the teaching medium. We have pledged to help all eligible students, including NCS

students with SEN, find a place in a public sector school using either Chinese or English as the MOI, and we will ensure that they will be provided with support measures to cater for their needs.

The English Schools Foundation (ESF) schools and international schools provide alternatives for NCS students who have their own language and/or curriculum preference. These schools provide choices in an open market, with minimum intervention from the Government. Nevertheless, to better enable the ESF to address the demand of students with SEN, we have exceptionally provided ESF with additional resources starting from the 2006/07 school year, which have enabled ESF to operate three additional learning support classes with 21 places for SEN students. We are exploring with the ESF the possibility of further enhancing the provision of school places and support for NCS students with SEN in the ESF system.

For international schools, although they are operated on a self-financing basis in the commercial market, they, like the ESF schools, should provide equal opportunities for all students in terms of student admission, teaching curriculum and assessment, etc.

Establish a foundation or Independent Grants Committee for international schools

As mentioned above, the Government's prevailing policy is to exercise minimum intervention in the operation of international schools. Notwithstanding this, international schools should, in formulating their school policies, observe the principle of equal opportunities and avoid any form of discrimination apart from compliance with the three anti-discrimination ordinances (namely the Sex Discrimination Ordinance, Disability Discrimination Ordinance and Family Status Discrimination Ordinance). The Government does not see the need to establish an independent authority to oversee relevant educational matters in international schools. Above all, the overall policy and provision of education for all students in Hong Kong, including NCS students with SEN, are overseen by EDB. Nevertheless, the Government welcomes voluntary organizations and different sectors in the community to collaborate with each other for the betterment of the younger generation.

Education Continuum

To ensure that people with disabilities (PWDs) have an equal chance to participate in productive and gainful employment in the open market or in a sheltered

environment, thereby to further their integration into the community, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and Non-Governmental Organizations have been providing a range of vocational rehabilitation services for the PWDs. They include sheltered workshop and integrated vocational rehabilitation services, integrated vocational training centres, supported employment service and on-the-job training programme for people with disabilities, sunnyway on-the-job training programme for young people with disabilities and 'Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities through Small Enterprise'. PWDs who have reached the age of 15 or above, including NCS PWDs, can apply for the services that best meets their rehabilitation needs.

The overall direction of rehabilitation services is to encourage PWDs to live in the community with their families and friends, but for those who cannot live independently or be adequately cared for by their families, SWD has been providing a range of residential services with different levels of support and care with a view to improving their quality of life and helping them develop independent living skills. These residential services include hostels for moderately mentally handicapped/ severely mentally handicapped/ severely physically handicapped persons, care and attention home for severely disabled persons and supported hostel. Same as other types of rehabilitation services, there is no language criteria set for admission to residential care services.

Thank you very much for your views and comments on the provision for NCS children with SEN. We hope the foregoing information will help clarify the Government's position and you will continue to cooperate with us in supporting those in need.

Yours sincerely,


(Miss Hera CHUM)

for Secretary for Education

cc Secretary for Labour and Welfare
bcc Miss Odelia Leung, Clerk to Panel