

**School Leaving Arrangements for Students
Studying in Schools for Children with Intellectual Disability**

**Special meeting of Legislative Council
Panel on Education on 27 June 2009**

– Submission from the Equal Opportunities Commission –

Purpose

This paper presents Equal Opportunities Commission's (EOC) view on the school leaving arrangements for students studying in schools for children with intellectual disability (ID schools) taking into account key changes and developments to date since the discussion on the New Senior Secondary (NSS) Academic Structure which began in late 2004.

Background

2. It was the Education Bureau's (EDB) position at the beginning of the discussion to offer students of mainstream schools or special schools following mainstream curriculum with three-year junior secondary education plus three-year senior secondary education. Whereas for mentally handicapped (currently referred to as intellectually disabled) students following a non-mainstream curriculum, they would be provided with six-year secondary education instead (i.e. the proposed new senior secondary education did not appear to apply to them).

3. As the discussion progressed and after having listened to views expressed by all relevant stakeholders concerned, EDB has finally agreed to provide six-year primary, three-year junior secondary and **three-year senior secondary** education to students with intellectual disability (ID) under the NSS academic structure. This is one of the key changes referred to in the first paragraph above.

Existing arrangements

4. According to the Administration's information paper provided to the Panel on Education on 8 June 2009, ID schools offered six-year primary and four-year junior secondary education for ID students in the past. In the 2002/03 school year, the EDB launched a two-year Extension of Years of Education (EYE) Programme for these students after their junior secondary education. In other words, ID students could have a total of six years to complete their junior secondary education. Students with ID are generally admitted to ID schools at the age of six, and based on that structure, these students will leave school at the age of 18.

Arrangements under the New Senior Secondary Academic Structure

5. According to the same information paper, EDB will provide 12 years of education, including six-year primary, three-year junior secondary and three-year senior secondary education to ID students under the New Senior Secondary (NSS) academic structure to be implemented in the coming school year.

Concerns of disparity

6. Under the new arrangement all non-ID students will enjoy an additional three years of new senior secondary education starting 2009/10 school year. As for ID students, it is EDB's position that they would also be provided with three-year senior secondary education under the NSS academic structure in the coming school year. This appears to indicate that the proposed NSS education for ID students is intended to place ID students **on par** with their non-ID counterparts. However, whether the proposed three-year senior secondary education is actually available to ID students on par with non-ID students is unclear.

7. It is assumed, for discussion purpose, that the respective education needs regarding junior secondary education of all non-ID and ID students have been provided for under the existing arrangements. This would mean that a three-year period is sufficient time to cater for non-ID students' needs of junior secondary education while it takes six years to satisfy the same for ID students. If ID students are to be provided with NSS education on par with the three-year NSS education for non-ID, it would be

logical to conclude that they should be provided with another three (or six) years on top of the existing six years spent in junior secondary education. In this sense, there is no chance they could finish their secondary education before the age of 18.

8. Under the circumstances and with the setting of an exit age or time limits, it would give rise to concerns as to whether, under the NSS Academic Structure, ID students are really treated in the same way as their non-ID counterparts with the provision of three additional years of senior secondary education. There is a need to explain this disparity in treatment and the EOC would wish to assess the legal implications in the light of additional information.

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