



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

香港添馬添美道2號政府總部東翼5樓506室特殊教育及幼稚園教育分部

Special Education and Kindergarten Education Division, Room 506, 5/F., East Wing, Central Government Offices, 2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar, Hong Kong

本局檔號 Our Ref.: L/M(9) to EDB(SES1) 64/1075/92 pt.8(3)
來函檔號 Your Ref.: CB2/PS/1/123

電話 Telephone: 3509 8520
傳真 Fax Line: 2119 9061

28 November 2013

Mr Colin CHUI
Clerk to Joint Subcommittee on Long-term Care Policy
Panel on Welfare Services and Panel on Health Services
Legislative Council, Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Mr CHUI

**Panel on Welfare Services and Panel on Health Services
Joint Subcommittee on Long-term Care Policy
Follow-up to meeting on 25 October 2013**

Thank you for your letter dated 31 October 2013. Our response to the request raised in the letter is set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

Increase of boarding places of special schools

Special schools provide boarding service for their students with long-term boarding needs to facilitate them to receive school education during schools days. At present, boarding service is provided in 20 special schools of different disability types¹. Over the years, there has been a steady increase in demand for boarding service in special schools, which is in part attributable to the implementation of the new senior secondary academic structure and the improvement measures on extension of years of study for students in special schools. Owing to the constraints in physical capacity of the special schools, the Education Bureau was only able to increase the boarding provision by about 70 boarding places, representing an increase of about 7%, between the 2010/11 to 2013/14 school year to address the increasing demand.

At present, the overall supply of boarding places in the school for children with visual impairment, the school for children with hearing impairment and the schools for children with severe intellectual disability is sufficient to meet the demand. However, the rapidly increasing demand for boarding places in the schools for children with physical disability (PD schools) and the schools for children with moderate intellectual disability

¹ They are schools for children with visual impairment, school for children with hearing impairment, schools for children with physical disability, schools for children with moderate intellectual disability and schools for children with severe intellectual disability.

(MoID schools) has yet to be met. Thus, we have introduced a new boarding section with 60 places in a re-provisioning project for a PD school. We have also planned to conduct conversion, building and re-provisioning works to increase the boarding provision in schools admitting children with MoID. Upon completion of these projects, the supply of boarding places will increase by at least 240 in number.

As at September 2013, the fill-up rate of the boarding provision is over 90%. In other words, there are only a handful of vacant boarding places among the 20 special schools with boarding section. As special schools admit students throughout the school year, special schools, particularly those with the boarding facilities, need to stand ready to cater for the students' needs during the school year. As such, the vacancy situation in special schools is transient in nature.

Residential respite service

All along, if casually vacant boarding places are available, individual special schools have been trying their very best to provide residential respite service on a voluntary basis for their own students to meet their temporary or contingency needs. Yet, we wish to point out that the core business of special schools is to provide educational services for children with disabilities and the boarding provision in special schools is basically to facilitate the students in receiving the educational services. With their very limited physical capacity and manpower, the special schools cannot operate a systematic, structured and open mechanism to provide residential respite service for outsiders, which is by nature a social service and not their core business.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that apart from the need to meet the increase in demand for boarding service, special schools have been under great pressure to cater for their boarding students who require intensive health care and personal support. From our contact with the special schools, the majority have already had great difficulties in providing residential respite services for their own students. Hence, they have great reservation in providing residential respite service for outsiders as a matter of policy. They are gravely concerned not only about their physical capacity constraints, but also their inability to cope with the caring needs of those outsiders whose medical/psychological/emotional conditions and unique support needs are not known to the school. In addition, schools would have great difficulty in the appropriate deployment of manpower and specialist staff to meet such needs, not to mention that some special schools have already been faced with problem in recruiting sufficient paramedical staff to meet their operational needs. They also have great concerns about the potential responsibility for mistreatment and the potential discontent and anxiety of the parents of the existing boarders of the school over the impact on the safety of their children.

In view of the above, we consider it inappropriate for special schools to provide residential respite services for students with disabilities on a regular basis and as a matter of policy.

Yours sincerely



(Ms Hera CHUM)
for Secretary for Education

c.c. Ms Elizabeth MOK, Labour and Welfare Bureau
(Fax No. : 2523 1973)