

For discussion on
09 February 2015

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Class-to-Teacher Ratio and Staff Establishment in Primary Schools

PURPOSE

This paper gives a brief account on the class-to-teacher ratio and staff establishment in public sector primary schools.

BACKGROUND

2. Following the Education Panel meetings on 10 and 22 June 2013, the Education Bureau (EDB) had provided, as requested, information on teaching vacancies, wastage rate and years of services of regular teachers for Members' reference on 4 July 2013. EDB's response to the motions passed on 22 June 2013 had also been submitted to the Education Panel on 2 August 2013.

CLASS TO TEACHER RATIO AND STAFF ESTABLISHMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

3. Currently, teaching staff resources in public sector primary schools are based on (a) the approved staff establishment computed according to the number of operating classes and the class-to-teacher ratio, (b) the additional teachers provided under specific initiatives, and (c) the cash grants with the relevant ambit for appointment of staff for meeting specific policy objectives. As for administrative staff, the resources are provided through (a) the related entitlement calculated according to the number of operating classes and (b) the cash grants for specific purposes.

Class-to-teacher ratio

4. Prior to the 2007/08 school year, the teacher-to-class ratio in public sector primary schools was 1.3 and 1.4 teachers per bi-sessional and

whole-day class respectively. The teacher-to-class ratio was enhanced by 0.1 upon the complete phasing-in of the additional provision to support specialised teaching in the 2007/08 school year.

Additional teachers under specific initiatives

5. On top of the teacher-to-class ratio, the EDB has also been providing public sector primary schools with additional regular teachers under specific education initiatives. These include:

- (a) the additional post for Teacher-Librarian since the 2001/02 school year;
- (b) regularisation of the additional Primary School Curriculum Leader post since the 2007/08 school year;
- (c) the additional teachers to enhance school's guidance services and support to students with learning needs, that is Student Guidance Teachers and teachers under Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme and Integrated Education Programme; and
- (d) the native-speaking English Teacher post to allow students to have more exposure to English.

6. Details of the additional teaching posts provided are at **Annex**. For illustration, a 24-class whole-day primary school with 2 Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme classes will have 43 teaching staff and three administrative staff (1 Assistant Clerical Officer and 2 Clerical Assistants) in its approved staff establishment.

Cash grants

7. To enable schools to optimise the flexibility in deployment of resources to cater for school-based needs, the EDB has also been providing cash grants on a recurrent basis to schools for appointment of staff or procurement of services to meet operational and quality service requirements. The cash grants mainly for employment of teachers and/or teaching related staff include:

- (a) Capacity Enhancement Grant (CEG): It aims at enhancing school's capacity in school development planning and implementing school-based initiatives. A 24-class primary school receives about \$0.7 million in the 2014/15 school year;
- (b) Learning Support Grant (LSG): The grant is disbursed according to the number of students with special educational needs and their level of support. With effect from the 2014/15 school year, the rates of the grant for each student requiring tier-2 and tier-3 support have been enhanced from \$10,000 and \$20,000 to \$13,000 and \$26,000 respectively. The ceiling of the grant has also been raised to \$1.5 million per school per annum; and
- (c) Top-up Student Guidance Service Grant: Introduced with effect from the 2012/13 school year, the Grant aims at enhancing the capacity of schools in student guidance services. A 24-class primary school receives about \$0.11 million in the 2014/15 school year.

8. The cash grants mainly for employment of additional administrative staff include:

- (a) The Supplementary Grant aims at supporting school's administrative work for the implementation of school-based management. A 24-class primary school receives about \$0.14 million in the 2014/15 school year; and
- (b) The Administration Grant for Additional Clerical Assistant introduced in the 2014 Policy Address aims at relieving teachers' administrative workload in implementing various initiatives, in particular those relating to poverty alleviation. Each school receives about \$0.17 million in the 2014/15 school year.

ENHANCEMENT TO THE TEACHING STAFF ENTITLEMENT

9. Over the years, the EDB has enhanced the teaching staff entitlement in recognition of the complexity of school administration and demand on quality education through various measures which include:

- (a) Headship and Deputy Headship posts – In recognition of the increasing demand on professional and managerial leadership in primary schools, starting from the 2000/01 school year, new recruits of school heads and deputy heads have been confined to candidates holding a recognised first degree with relevant teacher training, or equivalent qualifications only.
- (b) Upgrading a Basic Rank Post to Senior Teacher Post – To provide curriculum leadership in the teaching of English, schools have been allowed to upgrade an eligible teacher at basic rank to a senior rank since the 2001/02 school year.
- (c) Formalising the Deputy Head Rank – To cope with the challenge of implementing education initiatives and the complicated work environment in schools, a Senior Primary School Master/Mistress (SPSM) rank was created for deputy head(s) in the 2008/09 school year. The creation of SPSM rank has attracted more teachers to serve as curriculum developers and leaders for the sustainable development of primary schools.
- (d) Additional Assistant Primary School Masters/Mistresses – Upon implementation of small class teaching in the 2009/10 school year, schools maintaining 30 students per class are provided with additional Assistant Primary Master/Mistress (APSM) posts by phases based on the total number of approved classes to facilitate the implementation of school-based measures that would enhance the quality of learning and teaching.
- (e) Graduate Teacher Posts – the EDB had increased the ratio of graduate teacher posts from the original 35% to 45% in the 2008/09 school year and 50% in the 2009/10 school year. To attract more talents to join the teaching force of primary education and to enhance the quality of teaching, the Government has proposed to further increase the ratio of graduate teacher posts starting from the 2015/16 school year by phases in three years, from the current 50% to 65% in the 2017/18 school year.

WAY FORWARD

10. The Government is committed to enhancing the quality of education services in Hong Kong. Substantial resources have been injected by the Government to support schools in taking forward enhancement initiatives in primary education. The overall student-to-teacher ratio in public sector primary schools has improved progressively from 18.4:1 in the 2005/06 school year to 14.2:1 in the 2013/14 school year whereas the unit cost for a subsidized primary school place has significantly increased by 92% from \$24,640 in the 2005-06 financial year to \$47,320 in the 2013-14 financial year as a result of enhancement initiatives, including those mentioned above.

11. Apart from the enhancement to the LSG mentioned in paragraph 7(b) above, additional funding has been provided by the Government since the 2014/15 school year to strengthen the support for non-Chinese speaking students and for the newly arrived children.

12. There have been regular requests to enhance the teacher-to-class ratio and staff establishment in primary schools to meet the increasing demand on quality education. In fact, effective use and management of resources are of equal and vital importance as resources are not unlimited. Based on the audited accounts of aided primary schools in the 2012/13 school year, nearly 200, representing about 47% of aided primary schools had a cumulative surplus amounting to 5 or more months of their average monthly expenditure in the Operating Expenses Block Grant (OEBG)/Expanded Operating Expenses Block Grant (EOEBG)¹ accounts. Some (5%) even had over 10 months of their average monthly expenditure and the maximum cumulative surplus was over \$5.8 million, which was about 20 months of the school's average monthly expenditure. There is further scope for these schools to deploy their existing resources effectively to meet the increasing demand on quality education.

13. We will continue to keep in view all relevant factors and provide professional support and training for schools to enhance their capacity in managing their resources. The EDB will consider appropriate level of support to primary schools and seek additional resources through the

¹ In the 2014/15 school year, a primary school with 24-class received about \$5.2 million OEBG/EOEBG. Under the existing funding arrangement, schools may deploy their surplus in OEBG/EOEBG to employ additional teachers or teaching-related staff.

established channel and procedures, where justifiable.

Education Bureau
February 2015

Annex

Additional Teaching Posts Provided to Aided Primary Schools under Specific Initiatives

School Year	Additional Teachers	Provision
1997/98	Additional Teacher for Integrated Education Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One additional teacher is provided to school to support integrated education.
2000/01	Additional Teacher for the Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme (IRTP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One additional teacher per IRTP class is provided to school to enhance the learning efficiency of the academic low achievers.
2001/02	Teacher Librarian	<p>One additional teacher is provided to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each whole-day school with ≥ 3 approved ordinary classes; • each bi-sessional school with ≥ 12 approved ordinary classes; and • two bi-sessional schools housed in the same premises with a total of ≥ 12 approved ordinary classes.
2002/03	Native-speaking English Teacher (NET)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools with ≥ 6 approved classes are allocated with a NET post at the APSM rank.
2006/07	Student Guidance Teacher (SGT)	<p>Enhancing the provision of SGT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For a school with ≥ 18 classes, 1 additional senior teacher is provided; • For a school with 5 to 17 classes, 0.5 additional senior teacher is provided; and • For a school with <5 classes, the service is provided by Student Guidance Officer of EDB.
2007/08	Primary School Curriculum Leader	<p>Regularising the additional Primary School Curriculum Leader post:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For a school with ≥ 12 approved classes: a permanent post at PSM rank is provided; • For a school with 6 to 11 classes: a permanent post at APSM rank is provided; and • For a school with <6 classes, Curriculum Leadership Grant (CLG) is provided.
2009/10	Additional teaching post(s) for schools maintaining 30 students per class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional teaching post(s) at APSM rank is/are provided for eligible primary schools by phases so that schools may adopt measures to enhance teaching and learning while maintaining 30 students per class.