

For discussion
on 14 December 2015

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Teaching and Non-Teaching Manpower in Aided Special Schools

Purpose

This paper gives a brief account on the provision of teaching and non-teaching staff in aided special schools.

Background

2. The Government adopts a dual-track mode in implementing special education. The Education Bureau (EDB) will, subject to the assessment and recommendation of specialists/medical practitioners and with parents' consent, refer students with more severe or multiple disabilities to special schools for intensive support services. Other students with special educational needs (SEN) may attend ordinary schools.

3. In the 2014/15 school year, there are about 7 650 students studying at 60 aided special schools (including a hospital school operating classes at 18 public hospitals), of which 21 schools also operate a boarding section. The various types of special schools and their enrolment are at Annex.

4. The estimated expenditure on special schools in the 2014-15 financial year is \$2,000 million.

Provision of manpower in aided special schools

5. In view of the intensive support needs of the students, special schools operate smaller classes, ranging from 8 to 15 students per class. Different types of special schools are also provided with specialist and non-specialist staff, in addition to teachers, to cater for the specific needs of the students.

Teaching Staff

6. Upon the implementation of the New Senior Secondary (NSS) academic structure from the 2009/10 school year, the staffing ratio for primary classes and junior secondary classes are 1.7 teachers per class. As for senior secondary classes, the staffing ratio is 1.9 teachers per class for children with intellectual disability (ID) and 2.0 teachers for special schools offering the ordinary curriculum. The aforesaid teacher-to-class ratios have embedded the provisions of additional teachers to all special schools including Resource Teacher for Supportive Educational Programmes, Teacher Librarian and teachers for split-class teaching. Additional teachers including Primary School Curriculum Leader and Native-speaking English Teacher are also provided as appropriate. In addition, depending on the SEN type of the students served, special schools are provided with resources teachers for children with visual impairment (VI), mobility instructors, low-vision training teachers, teacher assisting in speech therapy and resource teachers for autistic children.

Non-teaching Staff

7. Various specialists are also provided for different types of special schools to cater for the disabilities and learning difficulties of their students. They include occupational therapist (OT), physiotherapist (PT), speech therapist (ST), occupational therapist assistant, registered nurse, educational psychologist, social worker and braille staff.

8. Moreover, non-specialist staff are provided to equip special schools with necessary manpower to cater for the diverse needs of the students. They include teacher assistant (TA), laboratory technician, clerical staff, motor driver, artisan, workshop attendant and janitor staff.

Boarding Staff

9. As for the boarding section, specialist staff including nurse, warden, assistant warden, houseparent-in-charge, houseparent and programme worker are provided. Supporting staff such as clerical assistant, janitor staff, cook and watchman are also available.

10. The teacher-to-student ratio and the teacher and specialist staff-to-student ratio for different types of special schools in the 2014/15 school year are set out below:

School Type	Standard Class Size	Teacher-to-Student Ratio	Teacher and Specialist Staff-to-Student Ratio
Visual Impairment	Reducing from 15 to 12 (for VI); 10 (for VI cum ID)	1 : 3.4	1 : 2.5
Hearing Impairment	10	1 : 3.0	1 : 2.6
Physical Disability	10	1 : 4.7	1 : 2.7
Mild Intellectual Disability	15	1 : 5.9	1 : 4.9
Moderate Intellectual Disability	10	1 : 4.1	1 : 3.3
Severe Intellectual Disability	8	1 : 3.8	1 : 2.3
School for Social Development	Reducing from 15 to 12	1 : 4.1	1 : 3.6
Hospital School*	Psychiatric class: 8 Non-psychiatric class: 15 (primary section) 10 (secondary section)	1 : 4.2	1 : 4.2

* Specialist services are provided by the respective hospital.

Other Resources

11. In addition to teaching and non-teaching staff provided in accordance with the Codes of Aid, aided special schools are also provided with different grants, which they may deploy flexibly to employ additional staff or to hire professional services to meet the operational needs of individual schools. These grants include Career and Life Planning Grant, Capacity Enhancement Grant, Diversity Learning Grant, Teacher Relief Grant, Additional Funding for Enhanced Chinese learning and Teaching for Non-Chinese Speaking Students, etc.

Professional Development

12. Apart from the provision of manpower and resources for special schools, we consider it important to enhance the professional capacity of the staff in catering for their students with severe or multiple disabilities. In this connection, EDB has been offering professional development programmes for teaching and non-teaching staff of special schools. To name just a few, we have been running a 240-hour training course specifically for special school teachers. We have also been conducting a 2-day workshop for the TA. Moreover, EDB has commissioned tertiary institutions and medical organisations to conduct training for special school personnel to equip them with more hands-on knowledge and skills in handling children with medical complexity (MC).

13. Furthermore, EDB has been providing school-based support for special schools with a view to enhancing the learning effectiveness of their students. A Tripartite Support Model has been adopted, under which EDB collaborates with tertiary institutions to provide network support for special schools in the form of learning circles. EDB professional officers also conduct theme-based visits to all special schools every year to identify good practices for dissemination to other special schools. We have also been providing more intensive support for individual special schools through specific projects. In addition, various professional development programmes and Collaborative Research and Development (“Seed”) Projects are organized to support special schools to better cater for the intensive support needs of their students. Through participating in “Seed” projects, schools would, based on their school contexts and practical needs, work closely together with the Curriculum Development Institute of EDB and expert consultants to develop the adapted curriculum and relevant learning and teaching resources for students with ID.

Improvement measures

14. Over the past few years, EDB has introduced a number of improvement measures in special schools with a view to enhancing their capacity for supporting students with SEN.

Reduction of class size

15. To enhance the learning and teaching support for aided special schools for children with mild intellectual disability (MiID schools), the class size of these schools has been reduced from 20 to 15 students per class progressively from the 2009/10 school year. The initiative was fully implemented in the 2014/15 school year.

16. With effect from the 2014/15 school year, the class size of the school for children with VI and schools for social development is reduced from 15 to 12 students per class progressively starting from the lowest grade level of both the primary and secondary sections. It is anticipated that the reduced class size would be fully implemented in these schools by the 2019/20 school year.

Additional manpower and resources

17. Starting from the 2014/15 school year, additional TA has been provided for MiID schools and schools for children with moderate intellectual disability at the ratio of one TA per two resource teachers for autistic children. For schools for severe intellectual disability, school for children with VI cum ID, schools for children with physical disability as well as the psychiatric classes of the hospital school, the provision of TA is also improved from 0.5 TA per class to one TA per class.

18. The staff establishment of the boarding section of special schools has also been improved with effect from the 2014/15 school year. To further enhance the support for boarders with MC, an additional support grant has been provided to schools in accordance with the number of boarders with MC and the tier of support they require. Schools may use the grant to employ additional staff (such as janitor staff, health care workers), procure health care service, and/or arrange for staff training. For the 2014/15 school year, the grant rates are at \$15,000 or \$30,000 per annum per 5-day boarder and 7-day boarder respectively for those in need of Tier 1 support, and \$25,000 or \$50,000 per annum per 5-day boarder or 7-day boarder respectively for those in need of Tier 2 support. A minimum provision of \$160,000 is provided for the eligible schools. The grant rates will be adjusted annually in accordance with the movement of the Composite Consumer Price Index.

Increase in ratios of graduate teacher posts

19. With a view to raising the status and professional standards of teachers for enhancement of the overall quality of education and to attracting more talents to join the teaching force, the ratio of graduate teacher posts in public sector schools, including special schools, have been enhanced. For special schools with a secondary section, the ratio of graduate teacher posts has been increased to 85% from the 2009/10 school year onwards. For the primary section of special schools, the ratio of graduate teacher posts will be enhanced by phases to 65% in the 2017/18 school year.

Way Forward

20. We will continue to keep in view the implementation of special education and propose improvement measures as necessary. We will also continue to communicate with various stakeholders and collect feedback from them with an aim to further improve the services in special schools. In this connection, we hold regular meetings with the Hong Kong Special Schools Council¹ and Task Force on Provision of Education in Special Schools². We also meet with various parents groups from time to time to discuss specific issues such as student placement.

Views Sought

21. Members are requested to note the content of this paper.

Education Bureau December 2015

¹ In the 2014/15 school year, the Hong Kong Special Schools Council encompass 59 member schools. The Council acts as a liaison channel between EDB and the special schools.

² The Task Force on Provision of Education in Special Schools serves as a communication channel between the EDB and the sector on matters relating to the provision of education services in special schools. It consists of representatives from EDB, Social Welfare Department, Hong Kong Special Schools Council, Hong Kong Subsidized Secondary Schools Council, Subsidized Primary Schools Council, School Sponsoring Body of special schools, non-governmental organizations, and local expert in the field of teacher training/special education as well as parent representatives from parents groups of special school students and the Committee on Home-school Co-operation.

**Different Types of Special Schools and Actual Enrolment
in the 2014/15 school year (as at 15 September)**

School Type	Number of schools	Enrolment
Visual Impairment [#]	2	126
Hearing Impairment	2	102
Physical Disability	7	921
Mild Intellectual Disability ^{##}	17	3 051
Moderate Intellectual Disability ^{##}	21	1 865
Severe Intellectual Disability	10	691
Schools for Social Development	7	632
Hospital School	1	255

The schools for children with visual impairment include a school for children with visual impairment and a school for children with visual impairment cum intellectual disability.

The schools for children with mild intellectual disability (MiID) and schools for children with moderate intellectual disability (MoID) include the respective sections of 7 schools for children with MiID and children with MoID.