



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

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10 July 2017

Clerk to Subcommittee on Children's Rights  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central  
Hong Kong

(Attn : Ms Angel WONG)

Dear Ms WONG,

**Subcommittee on Children's Rights**  
**Follow-up to meeting on 20 June 2017**

We write to respond to your letter dated 22 June 2017 regarding the captioned. The response of the Administration to the two motions under the agenda item of "Support measures for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing children" passed by the Subcommittee at the meeting on 20 June 2017, in both English and Chinese, is enclosed in the Annex.

Yours sincerely,

(Godwin LAI)  
for Secretary for Education

Encl.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS**

**Response to motions of the Meeting on 20 June 2017**

**Support for Students with Hearing Impairment (Including using sign language to assist teaching)**

The Government is adopting a “dual-track” approach in implementing special education. For students with hearing impairment (HI), the Education Bureau (EDB) would, subject to the assessment and recommendation of specialists and the consent of parents, refer students with severe or profound HI or those who cannot construct knowledge because of inadequate speech abilities, that is, those students who may need to use sign language in communication and learning, to special schools for children with HI (HI schools)<sup>1</sup> to receive intensive support services. Those students with less degree of HI would attend ordinary schools.

Special Schools

2. The EDB has all along been encouraging teachers to adopt the appropriate mode to teach and to communicate with students with HI having regard to their abilities and needs. Teaching staff of HI schools would take into account the abilities, learning and communication needs of students, adopt the most appropriate communication modes (including oral language, sign language and total communication, etc.) in teaching. Teachers would also train students to use their residual hearing for listening in order to help them mastering the skills in communicating with other people with HI and with normal hearing.

3. The school has employed both hearing and deaf teachers and deaf teaching assistants. Hearing teachers use both oral language and sign language in daily teaching, supplemented with other visual strategies (including written text, pictures, real objects and body language, etc.) to enhance the comprehension and learning effectiveness of students. When necessary, the deaf teaching assistants would use sign language during lessons to convey the teaching content to those students who are unable to benefit from oral communication, whereas

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<sup>1</sup> Chun Tok School was mainstreaming from September 2004. Starting from the 2018/19 school year, Lutheran School for the Deaf will be the only aided special school for children with HI in Hong Kong to provide primary one to secondary six curriculum.

deaf teachers would conduct lessons through sign language. Besides, the school will arrange sign interpretation for those in need in morning assemblies, seminars, teachers' meetings, extra-curricular activities, parent or teacher training activities where necessary. To promote the use of sign language in the school, it also organizes training for students, parents and staff on a regular basis.

4. Lutheran School for the Deaf (LSD) has all along been developing sign language to assist teachers in teaching. Since 2012, the school was supported by the Quality Education Fund to implement various projects of "Sign-assisted Instruction", including "Development of New Vocabulary of Sign Language for New Senior Secondary Curriculum" programme and "Removing Communication Barriers in Sign Language and Oral Language Holistic support for Students with Hearing Impairment" programme to continuously integrate and develop new sign vocabularies needed in teaching for the teachers to cope with the curriculum requirements. The Visual Sign Language Dictionary website of LSD has already compiled approximately 6 200 daily and subject-based sign vocabularies. Students and teachers of the school, professionals in the field and the public could browse at any time. LSD has also arranged systematic training on sign language for the teachers. All teachers have attained intermediate level of sign language use and some even attained advanced level. Benefit from the above measures, teaching staff and students could use more enriched sign vocabularies and more consistent signing in enhancing the effectiveness of sign-assisted teaching.

5. Furthermore, the LSD has set up a Sign Language Teaching Resources Centre to provide consultation services for students, parents and teachers in need to enhance their understanding of sign language. The school has also been able to enhance the understanding of sign language of ordinary schools and the public through different activities such as "The Inter-school Sign-a-Song Contest", "Deaf Awareness Week" and "Sign Language and Deaf Culture Day", sign language workshops and talks, etc. The EDB would continue to work with the school to promote sign language, enhance the understanding of HI and sign language of students, parents and teaching staff.

#### Ordinary Schools

6. For students with HI suitable to attend ordinary schools, after fitted with assistive hearing devices, could learn and communicate with other people in

oral language. Teachers and school-based speech therapists, etc. would facilitate students with HI to use residual hearing to enhance their listening and oral communication ability to enhance the skills in communicating with other people with HI and normal hearing. At the same time, with regard to the abilities and needs of students with HI, teachers will use oral language with the support of visual strategies, contextual cues, body language, written text and gestures, etc. in communicating with the students and in teaching.

7. To help ordinary schools cater for students with special educational needs (SEN) (including HI), on top of the recurrent subvention for ordinary schools, the EDB has been providing schools with additional resources (including Learning Support Grant (LSG) and Enhanced Speech Therapy Grant, etc.), professional support and teacher training. Schools should deploy these school-based resources flexibly, through the Whole School Approach (WSA) and the 3-Tier Intervention Model<sup>2</sup> to provide appropriate support to students according to their needs. Schools should arrange support in various modes and various levels according to the needs of students. No matter which mode or level of support is adopted, schools need to have comprehensive plans and arrangements, such as resources allocation and utilization, teacher training, curriculum accommodation, etc.

8. Should the learning and communication problems of students with HI in ordinary schools persist after school-based support, the EDB will refer the students to receive the Enhanced Support Service for Students with HI (ESS). ESS is provided by HI Schools as commissioned by the EDB. Experienced resource teachers (RTs) of HI schools will provide after-school support to students with HI to help them master learning strategies, improve language skills and enhance communication skills. RTs will also pay school visits to provide guidance to the students and to exchange their experience in teaching students with HI, and to share different teaching strategies (including how to use sign language in assisting teaching) with teachers of the schools of these students to enhance the learning effectiveness of the students with HI and to facilitate their integration into the schools. The speech therapists of the HI school will also further enhance the speech and language training of the students, improve their oral proficiency and facilitate the development of their literacy skills.

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<sup>2</sup> Tier-1 support is quality teaching in the regular classroom to help students with mild or transient learning difficulties. Students with persistent learning difficulties are provided with Tier-2 support, including “add-on” intervention. Under Tier-3 support, IEPs are developed for students with persistent and severe learning difficulties.

9. If ordinary schools opt to use sign language in providing support for students with HI in need, schools should have appropriate arrangements, such as formulating the criteria for using sign language by students with HI, arranging subject teachers and teaching assistants to learn sign language, training students to utilize residual hearing for listening, assisting students with HI to acquire skills in communicating with other people with HI and with normal hearing, reviewing regularly the abilities in using sign and oral language of students with HI, keeping in view the development in using sign language in education and sign language itself, etc. Schools could also utilize the LSG and other school resources to employ teaching assistants who know sign language to assist students with HI in learning. At the same time, schools should also enhance the understanding of other students with normal hearing and their parents on HI and sign language, for example, arranging related inclusive activities, extra-curricular activities and interest groups on sign language, etc.

10. At present, teachers of ordinary schools generally have not equipped with knowledge, ability and experience in sign language and using sign language in education. Also, the number of sign language vocabularies in Hong Kong are rather limited, particularly for subject-specialized vocabularies. The inconsistency of sign language used locally has affected the communication among signers. In addition, sign language is rather different from Cantonese and written Chinese in vocabularies, sentence structures and grammars, which largely increases the difficulties in using sign language in education in ordinary schools. In fact, regardless of using which mode to support students with HI, schools should have comprehensive planning and arrangements. Educators of students with HI have also unanimously agreed that using the appropriate teaching strategies (such as proper use of technology-assisted reading, emphasizing the improvement of phonemic / phonological awareness, proper use of visual organizers, pre-teaching subject-specific vocabularies, etc.) could effectively enhance the learning effectiveness of students with HI.

11. The EDB had been communicating with ordinary primary and secondary schools which opt to use sign language in assisting education so as to support the students with HI to discuss together regarding support arrangements and effectiveness, such as the understanding of schools and their teachers about the use of sign language in education, the understanding and mastery of sign language of teachers, the arrangement of lessons with the use of sign language, the selection and application of teaching strategies, the arrangements of

collaboration in the classroom, the deployment and use of resources, the support tiers of students, the training of teachers, the staff recruitment, etc. The EDB will further enhance the communication and support for these schools, and continue to promote home-school co-operation in order to ensure that ordinary schools opt to use sign language in assisting teaching can provide appropriate support for students with HI.

### Post-secondary Education

12. Post-secondary education institutions provide special arrangements and support services according to the needs of students with SEN. The University Grants Committee (UGC) funded universities arrange support services for students with HI according to their individual needs. Sign language service is one of the support services. Other support services provided by the universities include the provision of hearing aids and live captioning. To further promote the inclusive culture, UGC has provided a one-off special grant of \$20 million in total for the eight UGC-funded universities starting from 2015. The grant has been allocated on a pro-rata basis according to the number of students with SEN admitted to individual universities in the 2013/14 academic year, so that universities may implement additional measures to enhance their support services for the students. The funding scheme, which aims to foster an inclusive culture in the campus, will last for two years. The objectives of the grants are to assist the study and learning of students with SEN and enhance the capacity building of the universities, including the purchase of necessary aids and equipment to facilitate the study of students with SEN. Upon conclusion of the scheme, universities are required to deploy resources from the Block Grant to continue with the provision of such measures.

13. Vocational Training Council provides a range of support services to students with HI during their study: New student orientation activities are arranged for students and their parents in the commencement of the academic year to help them adjust to campus life and new study environment; initial assessment and provision of technical aids and equipment, such as hearing test service, hearing aids loan and fitting service (Behind The Ear (BTE) type), Frequency Modulated (FM) system loan service, loan service of other hearing assistive devices / accessories (except Cochlear Implant), etc. would be arranged for students to cope with their learning; student could apply for special assessment arrangement and module exemption while in need, which will be

benchmarked with the public examination rules and guidelines; the Departmental SEN Coordinator works closely with the Student Counsellors and class tutors on module exemption, special assessment arrangements, special technical aids and other areas of assistance as appropriate; provision of counselling services by student counsellors, and organization of student development activities to promote a positive and inclusive campus learning environment; provision of speech therapy service, including assessment sessions and individual therapy sessions; additional teaching support would be provided to assist the learning of students in form of tutorial classes, remedial classes, or mentorship programmes, etc. which help students better cope with their learning; staff training programmes to equip staff with knowledge and skills to better support students with SEN (including HI), such as sign language courses, workshop on understanding students with speech and language impairment, training on provision of career support services to students with SEN (including HI), etc.

### **Provision of Hearing Aids for Students with Hearing Impairment**

14. People diagnosed with persistent HI could be fitted with different hearing assistive devices such as cochlear implant, brainstem implant, middle ear implant, bone anchored hearing aid or other hearing aids, etc, according to their needs. These devices are generally classified as medical devices and are provided by the Hospital Authority (HA). For children with HI, owing to historical reasons, the EDB would provide them with free hearing aids. Students in need of hearing aid(s) will be referred to the outsourced service providers commissioned by the EDB for hearing aid fitting and follow-up services. Audiologists of the service providers will provide audiological reviews and hearing aid fitting as well as repair and maintenance services of hearing aid and earmould, etc. The EDB has monitoring mechanisms for the outsourced audiological services, including regular meetings with the service providers, evaluation of case information, arranging staff for on-site inspection of service delivery and random checking on hearing aids for compliance with specifications on performance and effectiveness etc., so as to ensure that the services meet the needs of the students, to monitor and review the quality and progress of the services. The EDB also provides consultation to parents and audiological reports to schools, so as to let the parents and schools understand the needs of students and provide them with appropriate support.

15. The EDB has arranged a number of enhancement measures on the provision of hearing aids in the past few years which include the provision of two hearing aids for students with HI in need of binaural hearing aids for bilateral listening since the 2010/11 school year, the enhancement of the specifications of hearing aids and the shortening of the replacement period from 5 years to 3 years. Since the 2014/15 school year, the EDB has also provided ultra-power hearing aids for students with more profound HI, increased the choices of types of hearing aids and further enhanced the speech processing quality of hearing aids, etc. For students who have limited improvement in perception and communication after wearing hearing aids, they would be recommended by specialist doctors for consideration of cochlear implant surgery and the service is provided by the HA.

16. The EDB has been collecting views from parents on the outsourced services through questionnaires. For the 2012-2016 tender contracts, out of the more than 1,000 questionnaires collected, more than 98% of the parents indicated the outsourced services arranged by the EDB were very satisfactory or satisfactory. There was only about 1.5% of the parents indicated that the services were acceptable and less than 0.2% of the parents indicated dissatisfaction with the outsourced services. The EDB will continue to review the specifications of the hearing aids and the demand for related audiological services, taking into account the needs of students, advance in technology, literature researches and views of consultants, etc., in order to ensure that hearing aids and related services meet the needs of students with HI.