

**For information on
13 January 2018**

**Legislative Council House Committee
Subcommittee on Children's Rights**

**Operation of the Joint Office for Kindergartens
and Child Care Centres**

This note aims to brief Members on the operation of the Joint Office for Kindergartens and Child Care Centres (JOKC) set up under the Education Bureau (EDB).

Background

2. Care and education are complementary elements in the development of children at early ages. Taking into account developmental needs of children, and for avoiding over-education, kindergarten (KG) education starts at the age of 3. Premised on this rationale, KG education is provided for children generally aged 3 to 6, regulated by the Education Ordinance (EO) and monitored by EDB. On the other hand, child care services are provided for children generally aged 0 to below 3, regulated by the Child Care Services Ordinance (CCSO) and monitored by the Social Welfare Department (SWD).

3. To provide one-stop services to operators choosing to operate both a KG and a child care centre (CCC) in the same premises (generally referred as "KG-cum-CCCs"), JOKC was set up in 2005 under EDB, staffed by EDB officers and officers deployed from SWD. In tandem, there are various types of child care services, including CCCs with no KG portion, residential CCCs, special CCCs and ancillary services including Integrated Programme, Extended Hours Service and Occasional Child Care Service. As they carry distinctive features and purposes such as rehabilitation, catering parents' social needs, etc., they are under SWD's purview. CCCs, residential CCCs and special CCCs are regulated by CCSO.

One-stop Services

4. As children in different age-groups have their respective needs in care and education, there are different statutory and operational requirements for KGs and CCCs. To facilitate operators of KG-cum-CCCs in providing quality education and care services for children, the “Operation Manual for Pre-primary Institutions” has been jointly issued by EDB and SWD, with inputs from relevant Departments such as the Buildings Department, Fire Services Department, Department of Health, etc.. It provides a one-stop comprehensive guide to help operators understand the respective requirements in operating KGs and CCCs. Details about space requirements, furniture and equipment, safety measures, health, sanitation, curriculum and activities, etc. are set out.

5. In ensuring KG-cum-CCCs meeting the quality standards as required under respective ordinances and regulations, as well as circulars and guidelines issued by EDB and SWD, JOKC is responsible for the overall supervision, monitoring and support. At present, there are around 460 KG-cum-CCCs. Among them, around 315 KGs joined the Free Quality KG Education Scheme, including 246 long whole-day KGs¹. Officers from JOKC conduct regular inspections and advise on compliance and quality matters in respect of the overall delivery of services by the KG-cum-CCCs. Should any malpractices be identified, the KG-cum-CCCs concerned will be requested to take immediate actions to rectify. In 2016/17 school year, JOKC conducted around 620 school inspections including routine inspections and visits for school support, compliance, surprise headcounts, vetting of various applications, investigation of complaints, etc.. To help KG-cum-CCCs in striving for continuous development and improvement of their services, officers of JOKC also advise on useful strategies in enhancing the overall management and organisation, promoting professional development of their teaching staff, improving the school environment, enhancing communication with parents, etc.. They also offer support to parents as necessary such as handling enquiries, investigation into complaints, etc.. In addition, all KG-cum-CCCs joining the Free Quality KG Education Scheme will continue to be subject to Quality Assurance Framework comprising School Self-evaluation (SSE) and Quality Review (QR). They will be required to conduct ongoing SSE for school development and accountability purposes. They will also be assessed by EDB to

¹ The long whole-day KGs refer to those services provided by former aided child care centres (FACs) operated under the SWD before Harmonization of Pre-primary Services in the 2005/06 school year. The FACs usually operate longer service hours and generally with an average number of students around 110.

assess if they have met the prescribed standards. EDB will continue to make the QR reports available on the EDB website for public information.

6. On financial management, KG-cum-CCCs receiving government subsidy are subject to one set of monitoring mechanism in ensuring proper use of government subsidy and fees collected from parents. Specifically, they are required to submit to EDB one set of audited accounts covering both the KG and CCC portions. Similarly, KG-cum-CCCs, irrespective they are receiving government subsidy, are required to submit only one set of application covering both the KG and CCC portions in applying for fee revision. Besides, applications for registration of the CCC portions of KG-cum-CCCs, registration of child care workers and child care supervisors are processed by JOKC.

7. In gist, with JOKC staffed by both EDB and SWD officers, one-stop services have been provided to facilitate smooth operation of KG-cum-CCCs and streamlined the monitoring of their operation with regard to the respective ordinances.

8. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

Education Bureau
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