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Panel on Education

Meeting on 12 June 2017

Background brief on issues related to the Pilot Project on Special Educational Needs Coordinators

Purpose

This paper summarizes the major views and concerns of the Panel on Education ("the Panel") on issues related to the Pilot Project on Special Educational Needs Coordinators ("the Pilot Project").

Background

2. In September 2014, the Subcommittee on Integrated Education under the Panel recommended in its report that the Education Bureau ("EDB") should implement a pilot project by creating a Special Educational Needs Coordinator ("SENCO") post in schools to steer and coordinate services and support for students with special education needs ("SEN").

3. In his 2015 Policy Address, the Chief Executive announced that the Community Care Fund ("CCF") would be invited to provide a cash grant¹ to ordinary schools with relatively more students with SEN and financial needs to designate a teacher for coordinating the support measures relating to SEN.

4. Starting from the 2015-2016 school year, CCF launched a three-year Pilot Project with a funding provision of about \$220 million. To ensure that the funding is spent on the most needy students, the number of financially-needy students should account for at least 55% of the total number of students of the participating schools in the 2014-2015 school year, and the schools should have at least 50 SEN students in need

¹ The cash grant is adjusted annually with regard to the mid-point salary of Graduate Masters/Mistresses of secondary schools and Assistant Primary School Masters/Mistresses.

of Tier-2 and Tier-3 support under the 3-Tier Intervention Model² in the school year concerned. As at March 2016, a total of 124 eligible schools (including 65 secondary schools and 59 primary schools) have participated in the Pilot Project. These schools were required to, inter alia, assign a suitable teacher to serve as SENCO. The duties of SENCOs are set out in **Appendix I**.

Major views and concerns

5. The Administration briefed the Panel on the details of the Pilot Project at the meeting on 22 March 2016. The major concerns raised by members are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

Duties and training of SENCO

6. Some members took the view that a SENCO should be a full-time professional without teaching duties in order to provide targeted support to SEN students. Others considered that a SENCO should be an experienced teacher who was familiar with the needs of SEN students and his work should be underpinned by the services of other professionals such as educational psychologists. The Administration explained that at present, no conclusion had yet been reached on whether the SENCO post should best be taken up by a teacher of the school or a professional from an external agency. Under the Pilot Project, participating schools were required to ensure that the teaching load of a SENCO should be equivalent to about 30% but not more than 50% of the average teaching load of other teachers in the school. This arrangement would enable the continued enrichment of the SENCO's experience in supporting SEN students in classroom teaching while providing adequate capacity for SENCOs to perform duties in leading, planning and coordinating the implementation of various support measures.

7. Members considered it important to strengthen the professional capability of SENCOs in providing support to SEN students. In this regard, participation of local and overseas experts should be enlisted in the Pilot Project and training covering the wide range of needs of SEN students should be offered to SENCOs. The Administration informed members that EDB had commissioned an expert from the United Kingdom to provide professional training for SENCOs. Meanwhile,

² Schools currently adopt the 3-Tier Intervention Model to cater for student diversity. Tier-1 support refers to quality teaching in regular classrooms for supporting students with transient or mild learning difficulties. Tier-2 support refers to "add-on" intervention, such as small group learning and pull-out programmes, for students with persistent learning difficulties, including those with SEN. Tier-3 support refers to intensive individualized support for students with severe learning difficulties and SEN, including drawing up of an Individual Education Plan.

EDB would maintain communication with local experts and teacher training institutions to ensure that the training needs of SENCOs would be met. Officers of EDB responsible for the Pilot Project would arrange sharing of good practices with SENCOs.

Review of the Pilot Project

8. For effective implementation of the Pilot Project/integrated education, members recommended the provision of support services to all SEN students regardless of their financial background, the conversion of the SENCO post into a regular one upon completion of the Pilot Project, and the provision of an interim review report. The Administration advised that through the implementation of the Pilot Project, EDB would examine the duties and qualifications of SENCOs and how the provision of SENCOs could tie in with the existing Whole School Approach to integrated education. A review would be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the Pilot Project. On the views that EDB should establish regular SENCO post in schools, the Administration would consider the way forward in the light of the said review.

Latest position

9. At the meeting on 12 June 2017, the Administration will update the Panel on the progress of the Pilot Project.

Relevant papers

10. A list of relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in **Appendix II**.

Requirements and Duties of SENCOs

SENCOs should play a leading role in coordinating the formulation, implementation and review of Integrated Education ("IE") support measures in schools for strengthening the effectiveness of IE to benefit the students concerned. SENCOs should lead the student support team to perform the following duties:

- Strategically formulate, implement and monitor, review and evaluate various support measures and resource deployment of the school, including optimal use of the Learning Support Grant and deployment of manpower resources, according to the basic principles for promotion of IE¹;
- Promote early identification and early intervention for students with SEN through a multi-disciplinary team approach;
- Collaborate with other teachers/functional teams in the school through a Whole School Approach ("WSA") to devise support programmes, adapt the curriculum and teaching strategies and make special arrangements in examination and assessment for students with SEN;
- Enhance home-school co-operation and work together with parents to support students with SEN;
- Review the special education training needs taking into account profiles of teachers in the school, arrange teachers to receive relevant training in a systematic manner, and plan and organize school-based professional development activities to enhance the capacity of the teaching force;
- Strengthen external liaison with relevant parties such as professionals, community resource providers and parents to muster support for students with SEN; and
- Guide fellow teachers in the school to adopt effective support strategies for enhancing the learning effectiveness of students with SEN through collaborative lesson planning and co-teaching.

¹ The EDB promotes IE in accordance with five basic principles, namely early identification, early intervention, WSA, home-school co-operation and cross-sector collaboration.

Appendix II

List of relevant papers

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Subcommittee on Integrated Education	30.9.2014*	Report
Panel on Education	22.3.2016	Agenda Minutes

*Issue date

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