



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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6 April, 2018

Clerk to Panel of Education
(Attn: Miss Angel WONG)
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Miss WONG,

Panel on Education
Student guidance teachers in primary schools

Your letter dated 3 April 2018 refers. Regarding the written request of some Legislative Council members for convening an urgent Panel on Education meeting to discuss the issue on student guidance teachers (SGTs) in primary schools, our response is as follows:

The Government has been attaching great importance to student guidance services. Apart from launching the Comprehensive Student Guidance Service, we have been making continuous efforts to enhance the manpower ratio and funding mode for student guidance services in primary schools. As announced in the 2018-19 Budget, the Government will enhance the current provision of student guidance services to primary schools by implementing the policy of “one school social worker for each school” in public sector ordinary primary schools starting from the 2018/19 school year, with a view to strengthening social work and guidance services in public sector primary schools so that each public sector primary school will be ultimately served by at least one school-based registered graduate social worker.

The new initiative announced in the Budget aims to respond to expectations of the society for immediate enhancement of social work service in primary schools. Schools currently receiving the Student Guidance Service Grant, under the enhanced funding mode, may opt to create a graduate social worker post or receive an equivalent subsidy for employing a school-based registered graduate social worker or hiring the service of a school-based registered graduate social worker from a social work service provider. These schools will also be provided with a consultation service grant for hiring consultation, supervision or other related services to support the school social worker. More resources are provided to schools under the enhanced funding mode for strengthening school social work and guidance services immediately. For schools currently choosing to employ an SGT, they are not required to replace the SGT with a social worker under the enhanced measure. Having regard to their own needs, these schools can continue with the current arrangements including the appointment of SGTs, the regrading of existing non-graduate SGTs and transfer of existing SGTs under the same sponsoring body. Therefore, the proposed new measure will not affect the existing SGTs.

We are of the view that student guidance and social work service are complementary to each other. As a matter of fact, the majority of schools are employing student guidance personnel (including social workers) or hiring social work service instead of employing SGTs. Under the Comprehensive Student Guidance Service, primary school teachers have been providing students with comprehensive and extensive guidance services in collaboration with guidance personnel, social workers or other professionals. At present, some small-sized schools may not have sufficient resources to employ one full-time social worker. However, with the implementation of the “one school social worker for each school” policy, these schools will be immediately provided with adequate resources for employing a full-time social worker with qualification upgraded to degree level. As such, we believe that with the concerted efforts of teachers and social workers as well as more sufficient resources under the Comprehensive Student Guidance Service, the quality of social work and guidance services in schools can be further enhanced.

To ensure that the implementation of the “one school social worker for each school” policy can cater for the needs of schools, we have sought the views of various councils/ associations/ bodies on the implementation details. They include the Subsidized Primary School Council, Hong Kong Aided Primary School Heads Association, Union of Government Primary School Headmasters and Headmistresses, Student Guidance Association (Primary School) and Hong Kong Association of Sponsoring Bodies of Schools. The primary school councils/ associations and Hong Kong Association of Sponsoring Bodies of Schools have all indicated support for the arrangements under the above policy. Recently, we have also arranged meetings with SGTs and the social work sector to explain the new arrangements.

To expedite the provision of new resources to schools for the implementation of the “one school social worker for each school” policy and enable schools’ early planning and preparation for their social work and student guidance services in the next school year (including recruitment of social workers, quotation/tender exercise, etc.), the Bureau is planning to issue a circular memorandum in mid-April to inform schools of the implementation details of the “one school social worker for each school”.

We are of the view that the existing mode of student guidance services has room for improvement and the Government needs to engage the sector in discussion on improvement measures which may include the proposal of “one social worker plus one guidance teacher”. The Government will explore with the education sector various feasible options so as to identify the best way to support students through the provision of social work and guidance services. Separately, as schools that have already appointed an SGT may continue with the existing funding mode, we do not see the need to have an urgent meeting to discuss the matter. Nevertheless, we are prepared to explain the relevant arrangements to members at the meeting of the Panel on Education on 13 April, if necessary.

For enquiries on the above, please call Ms Kitty HO on 2863 4681.

Yours sincerely,



(Ms SO Yuen-yi)
for Secretary for Education