

For discussion
on 3 May 2019

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Enhancement Measures for Schools to Support Students with Special Educational Needs

Purpose

This paper aims to brief Members on the enhancement measures for helping public sector schools (including special schools) to cater for students with special educational needs¹ (SEN).

Background

2. The Government adopts a dual-track mode in providing special education (SE). The Education Bureau (EDB) will, subject to the assessment and recommendation of specialists and the consent of parents, refer students with more severe or multiple disabilities to special schools for intensive support services. Other students with SEN will attend ordinary schools. In the 2018/19 school year, about 7 950 students are enrolled in 60 aided special schools and about 49 080 students with SEN are studying in 456 public sector ordinary primary schools and 389 public sector ordinary secondary schools. Please refer to Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 for the numbers of students in various types of special schools and the numbers of students with various types of SEN in ordinary schools.

Enhancement Measures Implemented in Special Schools

3. The EDB has been reviewing the development of SE and allocating resources from the perspective of the education profession and the learning needs of students for enhancing the quality of education. Over the past few years, the EDB has introduced various improvement measures in special schools to enhance their capabilities of providing more effective support for students with severe or multiple disabilities. The related expenditure on SE

¹ Types of SEN include Specific Learning Difficulties, Intellectual Disability, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Physical Disability, Visual Impairment, Hearing Impairment, Speech and Language Impairment and Mental Illness.

has increased from about \$2,000 million in the 2014-15 financial year to about \$2,700 million in the 2018-19 financial year, representing an increase by around 35%.

Teacher-to-student ratio and class size

4. In view of the intensive support needs of the students in special schools, they hence operate smaller classes than ordinary schools, ranging from 8 to 15 students per class. Upon the implementation of the New Senior Secondary academic structure from the 2009/10 school year, the staffing ratio for primary and junior secondary classes has been increased to 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 per class for special schools offering the ordinary curriculum. Starting from the 2017/18 school year, the teacher-to-class ratio for public sector primary and secondary schools (including special schools) has been further increased by 0.1 across-the-board. In addition, to cater for the diverse needs of students, the EDB has provided respective types of special schools with additional teachers on establishment, such as resource teachers for children with autism spectrum disorders (RT(A)), as well as mobility instructors and low-vision training teachers teaching students with visual impairment (VI). The actual teacher-to-student ratio for special schools is between 1:2.5 and 1:5.4.

5. In addition to teachers, various specialist staff are provided for different types of special schools to cater for the disabilities or learning difficulties of their students. They include occupational therapists (OT), physiotherapists, speech therapists (ST), occupational therapist assistants (OTA), registered nurses, educational psychologists, social workers and braillists. The schools will optimise the use of their own manpower resources to facilitate multi-disciplinary collaboration, with a view to catering for the different learning needs of the students.

6. The teacher-to-student ratio and the teacher/specialist staff-to-student ratio for different types of special schools in the 2018/19 school year are tabulated at Appendix 3.

7. The reduction of class size of the schools for children with mild intellectual disability (MiID schools) to 15 students per class has been fully implemented in the 2014/15 school year. From the same school year, the class size of the school for children with visual impairment (VI school) and

schools for social development (SSDs) has been reducing from 15 to 12 students per class. The initiative will be fully implemented in these two types of schools by the 2019/20 school year.

8. The EDB will continue to review the class size of different types of special schools, taking into account factors such as the curriculum, the learning and teaching as well as the support needs of students. In addition, we will consider factors such as the support services already provided to schools and the priorities of resource deployment. In view of the relatively small class size of special schools, to ensure effective learning and interaction between teachers and students and among students, currently we have no plans to adjust the class size of other types of special schools.

Manpower and resources of school sections

9. Apart from having a better teacher-to-student ratio and various specialist staff, the EDB has been continuously providing special schools with additional manpower and resources based on the actual needs of the schools and students. The major initiatives implemented in the last 5 years are set out below:

- (a) Starting from the 2014/15 school year, additional teacher assistants (TAs) have been provided for MiID schools and schools for children with moderate intellectual disability (MoID schools) at the ratio of one TA per two RT(A). For schools for children with severe intellectual disability (SID schools), the school for children with VI cum ID (VI cum ID school), schools for children with physical disability (PD schools) as well as the psychiatric classes of the Hospital School, the provision of TAs has also been increased from 0.5 TA per class to one TA per class to provide schools with more manpower resources to cater for the learning needs of the students.
- (b) Special schools offering the ordinary curriculum and operating a required number of classes, i.e. special schools running a primary section with six or more classes or running a secondary section, are provided with a Native-speaking English Teacher (NET). Since the second term of the 2016/17 school year, the NET Scheme has also covered schools for children with intellectual disability (ID schools) running a secondary section that offers an appropriate school-based English Language

curriculum and ID schools running a primary section that operates six or more classes and offers an appropriate school-based English Language curriculum. The EDB also provides school-based support and professional development programmes for ID schools that hire a NET.

- (c) An additional grant was provided to SID schools, PD schools and the VI cum ID school for employing additional nurses and related staff to strengthen the support for 24-hour ventilator-dependent students in the 2016/17 school year. The coverage of the “Additional Support Grant for Enhancing the Support for Boarders with Medical Complexity in Aided Special Schools” was also extended to day students and day students cum boarders with medical complexity in the 2017/18 school year.
- (d) To enable special schools to assign a designated teacher to take charge of related tasks so that there will be a more coherent and consistent curriculum for the primary and secondary sections, an Assistant Primary School Master/Mistress (Curriculum Development) has been provided for special schools with less than six approved primary classes to replace the provision of the Curriculum Leadership Grant from the 2017/18 school year.
- (e) The staffing ratio of the Remedial Teaching Programme for Autistic Children in Special Schools (RTP) implemented in MiID schools and MoID schools has been improved to 0.5 RT(A) for every 6 students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) since the 2017/18 school year so that the schools can enhance their support for students with ASD. Starting from the 2019/20 school year, the EDB will extend the RTP to SID schools, PD schools, the school for children with hearing impairment (HI school) and VI schools.
- (f) Starting from the 2017/18 school year, one OT II and one OTA have been provided for each MiID school, MoID school, VI school and HI school with six or more approved classes so that they can provide the necessary support to students displaying weaknesses in their fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination.

- (g) Starting from the 2017/18 school year, one ST has been provided for the VI school and each SSD to better cater for the special educational needs of students with speech and language impairment and help develop their social communication skills.
- (h) Starting from the 2018/19 school year, one additional school nurse has been provided for each ID school, PD school and the VI cum ID school. In addition, a school nurse has been newly provided for the VI school and the HI school to strengthen their support for students with care needs.
- (i) Since the 2018/19 school year, special schools with a total of 60 or fewer approved capacity has been provided with one school social worker (SSW), and subsequently 0.5 SSW for every 30 students. Moreover, based on the manpower provision of SSW, special schools have been provided with the Consultation Service Grant to purchase consultation, supervision or other support services for the SSW. This measure has not only further improved the ratio of social workers to students in special schools, but has also ensured that special schools with fewer students can be provided with at least one SSW.

10. Moreover, with a view to enhancing the status and professional standard of teachers for enhancement of the overall quality of education and attracting more talent to join the teaching force, the Government will implement in one go the all-graduate teaching force policy in public sector schools in the 2019/20 school year. Schools may, taking into account their school-based circumstances, achieve full implementation in two years. The Government also plans to improve the manpower at the middle management level in public sector primary schools (including the primary section of special schools) from that school year. Starting from the 2019/20 school year, the EDB will also provide all public sector schools with resources for hiring additional administrative manpower, enabling schools to review their school-based administrative arrangements and requirements, streamline administrative procedures, strengthen school administrative support and at the same time reduce the administrative work of teachers and principals, thereby creating room for them to focus more on core education tasks and to take care of the development of students. Special schools will benefit from the above measures as well.

Manpower and resources of boarding sections

11. Presently, the EDB sets up boarding section in 21 special schools whereas the Social Welfare Department also manages the residential services for 7 SSDs. Currently, other than MoID schools, the overall supply of boarding places in different types of special schools is sufficient to meet the demand. In this connection, the EDB has made optimal use of the space available in the boarding sections of MoID schools, where relevant ordinances and regulations permit, for provision of additional boarding places. In addition, we have explored new measures with a view to increasing the provision of boarding places. For instance, from the 2017/18 school year, we have piloted the operation of two MoID classes with 20 boarding places in a SID school. Also, some new school projects are in the pipeline. Subject to the funding approval and the timely completion of the works, the number of boarding places for students with MoID will be increased by about 150 around the 2021/22 school year and further increased by about 80 in the 2024/25 school year.

12. The boarding service of special schools is provided to facilitate students' access to school education. In terms of manpower and resources, the manning ratio of nurses, houseparents, programme workers, janitors and cooks in the boarding section of special schools has been improved since the 2014/15 school year to provide more manpower to take care of students during weekends and on Sundays. The EDB has been holding regular meetings with the Hong Kong Special Schools Council to collect its views on various issues, including the operation, manpower and resource deployment of the boarding section of special schools. We will continue to introduce improvement measures for the boarding section of special schools, where practicable, to meet their genuine needs.

Enhancement Measures Implemented in Public Sector Ordinary Schools

13. The EDB has all along been promoting integrated education (IE) in accordance with five basic principles, namely early identification, early intervention, Whole School Approach (WSA), home-school co-operation and cross-sector collaboration. To help schools promote WSA to IE in order to cater for students with SEN, the EDB provides public sector ordinary schools with additional resources on top of the regular subvention, professional support and teacher training. Resources provided by the Government for public sector ordinary schools to implement IE has increased from about

\$1,222 million in the 2014/15 school year to about \$2,012 million in the 2018/19 school year, representing an increase by around 65%. We review the effectiveness of the implementation of IE policy on an on-going basis. In the 2017/18 school year, we conducted a series of consultation meetings with targets including the Task Force on IE in Mainstream Schools, school sponsoring bodies, school councils, principals of primary and secondary schools, Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) and parents, etc. The Audit Commission published the “Report No. 70 of the Director of Audit” in April 2018, which included contents on IE, and the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) also held hearings and presented the “Report No. 70 of the PAC” in July of the same year. Having reviewed the implementation of various support measures, scrutinized the suggestions proposed by the aforesaid reports and considered the mainstream views of different stakeholders, starting from the 2019/20 school year, the EDB will implement a series of enhancement measures on IE to provide schools with a stable teaching force, resources that can be deployed flexibly and enhanced professional support to cater for students with SEN. The additional expenditure involved is around \$820 million each year.

Learning Support Grant

14. From the 2019/20 school year, the EDB will restructure the Learning Support Grant (LSG), Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme and Integrated Education Programme. Under the new measure, the LSG will replace the aforementioned two programmes and be extended to all public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools. Schools with comparatively large number of students with SEN will be provided with regular teaching posts. The LSG unit grant rate for tier-3 support will be increased multifold. Schools will have a more stable teaching force and additional resources for flexible deployment to support students with various types of SEN and academic low achievers (ALAs)² (applicable to primary schools). Specifically, from the 2019/20 school year, the LSG unit grant rate for tier-3 support will increase from the current two times to four times³ the rate for tier-2 support. The grant rates will be adjusted annually according to the change in the Composite Consumer Price Index. Under the enhanced measure, apart from having the LSG, schools would have additional regular teaching post(s) (through conversion or provision) when LSG reaching the

² For secondary schools to support ALAs, the EDB provides an additional 0.7 Graduate Master for each class of territory bottom 10% students and an additional 0.3 Graduate Master for each class of territory Band 3 students not within the bottom 10%.

³ For the 2019/20 school year, the unit grant rate for tier-2 is \$15,000 where that for tier-3 is \$60,000.

threshold(s)⁴. These teaching posts are titled as Special Educational Needs Support Teacher (SENST). Should the total amount of the LSG of schools reach threshold 1, these schools will convert part of the LSG for a graduate teaching post⁵ in the establishment, and have the remaining LSG for employing additional teacher(s) and teaching assistant(s), as well as hiring support services. To support schools with comparatively large number of students with SEN, should their total amount of LSG reach threshold 2, apart from the manpower and resources under threshold 1 mentioned above, they would be provided with an additional regular graduate teaching post. Should schools' total amount of LSG reach threshold 3, they would be provided with one more additional regular teaching post, that is, a total of two additional regular teaching posts. With teaching post(s) converted/provided, schools should make arrangement for a corresponding number of graduate teacher(s) within the approved teaching staff establishment to take up the SENST post(s). The SENSTs should join the student support team (SST). Together with the SENCOs, they should collaborate with other teachers to implement the WSA to IE.

Grant for Supporting Non-Chinese Speaking Students with SEN

15. Starting from the 2019/20 school year, the EDB will provide the Grant for Supporting Non-Chinese Speaking (NCS) Students with SEN under a three-tier structure to public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools based on the number of NCS students with SEN enrolled. The grant rates⁶ will be. \$100,000 for 1 to 9 NCS students with SEN, \$200,000 for 10 to 25 NCS students with SEN, and \$300,000 for 26 or more NCS students with SEN. Schools could utilise the grant flexibly to employ teaching assistants who can speak the languages of ethnic minorities, procure translation services, or provide the students concerned with emotional, communication and social training to further support them to adjust to school life and make transition through different learning stages.

16. Schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) will also benefit from the two enhancement measures mentioned in paragraphs 14 and 15 above. To ensure DSS schools with comparatively large number of students

⁴ For the 2019/20 school year, threshold 1 of the LSG is \$600,000, threshold 2 is \$1,600,000 and threshold 3 is \$2,200,000.

⁵ Graduate Master/Mistress in secondary schools; Assistant Primary School Master/Mistress in primary schools.

⁶ The grant rates will be adjusted annually according to the change in the Composite Consumer Price Index.

with SEN be provided with the corresponding additional resources, starting from the 2019/20 school year, DSS schools will be provided with the LSG based on the number of students with SEN and ALAs (applicable to primary schools) enrolled. They will also be provided with the Grant for Supporting NCS Students with SEN based on the number of NCS students with SEN enrolled. Other IE measures will continue to be included in calculation of the DSS unit subsidy. To facilitate DSS schools to provide appropriate support for students with SEN, the professional staff of the EDB will pay school visits on need basis to discuss and render professional advice on their support measures.

Special Educational Needs Coordinator

17. Starting from the 2017/18 school year, the EDB provides each public sector ordinary primary and secondary school with an additional teaching post in the staff establishment, by phases in three years, to facilitate school's assignment of a designated teacher to take up the role of SENCO to support IE. In the 2018/19 school year, 544 (about 65%) public sector ordinary schools have the provision of SENCO, and the remaining schools will have the provision in the 2019/20 school year. We all along consider the views of the sector at different platforms and take into account the professional recommendations from the experts on the Pilot Project on SENCOs. From the 2019/20 school year, the EDB will upgrade the SENCO post to a promotion rank (i.e. Primary School Master/Mistress in primary schools and Senior Graduate Master/Mistress in secondary schools) in public sector ordinary schools (i.e. the amount of LSG reaches threshold 1) with comparatively large number of students with SEN, thus the SENCOs could further deliver their leadership, management and coordination roles, lead the SST (SENSTs being members of the aforesaid team), dedicatedly assist the principal and the vice-principal(s) in planning the development of the WSA to IE. In the 2019/20 school year, about 80% of SENCOs of public sector ordinary schools will be upgraded to a promotion rank.

School-based Educational Psychology Service

18. Starting from the 2016/17 school year, all public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools have been provided with the School-based Educational Psychology Service (SBEPS). The SBEPS covers remedial, preventive and developmental work at the school system, teacher support and student support levels to cater for students' diverse educational needs. In

that school year, the EDB has also progressively implemented the Enhanced SBEPS in public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools with comparatively large number of students with SEN, i.e. with educational psychologist (EP) to school ratio at 1:4. Through more frequent visits to the schools concerned, EPs deliver comprehensive and regular follow-up and intervention service to cases according to the needs of schools and students, and support schools in strengthening the preventive and developmental work. In the 2018/19 school year, the Enhanced SBEPS covers 119 primary and secondary schools. The Government will further extend the Enhanced SBEPS with the target of enhancing the EP to school ratio from 1:6 to 10 to 1:4, while the ratio will be enhanced to 1:6 for the remaining 40% of schools.

School-based Speech Therapy Service

19. Starting from the 2019/20 school year, the EDB will create school-based speech therapist (SBST) posts in the public sector ordinary schools by phases in three years to allow schools to form clusters to employ SBSTs to enhance the supports for schools, teachers and parents in the domains of prevention, remediation and development to support students with Speech and Language Impairment (SLI) and students with other SEN to develop their communication, speech and language abilities. About 220 schools will implement the Enhanced School-based Speech Therapy Service (SBSTS) in the 2019/20 school year. Most of them will form clusters of two schools. One of the schools in each school cluster will be the base school. Base schools are responsible to coordinate the administrative matters for the school clusters such as, recruitment of SBST, arrangement of service of SBST of the cluster, coordination of personnel and management of related administrative matters of the SBST posts. It is estimated that more than 100 SBSTs will be required in the 2019/20 school year.

20. Regarding the calculation of recognised experience and salary for SBSTs in aided schools, the circular issued by the EDB to schools specified that when recruiting SBSTs, if the SBSTs provide valid proofing documents showing that the work experience of the applicant obtained from providing SBSTS, according to the arrangement of private companies, for public sector schools or DSS schools using grants (for example Enhanced Speech Therapy Grant and LSG) to procure relevant services from the private companies, may be considered for counting for incremental credits upon verification. We believe that the above arrangement will not only attract appropriate professionals to provide school services, but also ensure proper use of public

funds.

Enhancement of Transition from Pre-school to Primary Schooling

21. To support pre-school children with special needs or at risk of developmental delay, the Government has been providing different services through the collaborative efforts of various bureaux/departments. The Food and Health Bureau (FHB) and the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) are responsible for assessment and rehabilitation services respectively for the students in need of such services. The EDB arranges teacher training to enhance teachers' professional capacity to support children with developmental needs.

22. The LWB launched a two-year Pilot Scheme on On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services (the OPRS Pilot Scheme) since the 2015/16 school year, providing about 3 000 training places covering more than 480 kindergartens (KGs) or kindergarten-cum-child care centres (KG-cum-CCCs) through 16 participating non-governmental organisations (NGOs), under which on-site services are provided by multi-disciplinary service teams from NGOs to participating KGs/KG-cum-CCCs. Under the Pilot Scheme, multi-disciplinary service teams of NGOs, which are composed of social workers, speech therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, clinical psychologists/EPs and special child care workers, will offer on-site rehabilitation services and training to children with special needs, supplemented by training at centres with rehabilitation facilities. The service teams will also give professional advice to KG teachers to assist them in taking care of children with special needs. They will also provide support for parents in fostering positive attitude and developing effective skills in nurturing their children with special needs. The LWB has fully implemented and regularised the Scheme in the 2018/19 school year. The number of service places has increased from about 3 000 under the OPRS Pilot Scheme to about 5 000 at present, which will be further increased to 7 000 in October 2019.

23. To further enhance the effectiveness of transition mechanism from pre-school to primary schooling, the EDB and the Social Welfare Department, together with Child Assessment Centres under the Department of Health and the Hospital Authority (HA) have strengthened collaboration since the 2017/18 school year to ensure that when children with special needs proceed to primary schools from pre-school centres/KGs, primary schools can timely

understand the needs of and provide support to the children by referring to their assessment information and progress reports transferred to them, so as to foster their smooth integration into primary school learning. Upon receipt of the assessment information and progress reports, the SST in schools needs to scrutinise the assessment information and progress reports of the students concerned and discuss with their parents about the daily performance of the students. After understanding the conditions of the students, the SST needs to enter their names into the student support register for provision of appropriate support to them according to their needs starting from September or October. Schools need to inform parents about the support provided to their children. The EDB staff will understand from schools their planning and implementation of support services for the respective students and offer professional advice. To enhance the efficiency of information transfer and follow up the support services by schools, the EDB is strengthening the functions of the Special Education Management Information System so as, from the 2019/20 school year, to let NGOs process and transfer the progress reports for children with special needs who are going to proceed to Primary One in September to their designated public sector or DSS primary schools. The EDB will also understand the support arranged by schools for the students concerned through the enhanced new functions.

24. Meanwhile, the EDB has been implementing the Early Identification and Intervention (EII) Programme for Primary One (P1) Students in primary schools, to ensure that those students not yet identified in preschool stage can be identified and provided with appropriate support. Under the EII Programme, teachers complete the Observation Checklist for Teachers (OCT) for students suspected to have learning difficulties during the period from December to January each school year. Then the SST will have meetings with related teachers and the school-based educational psychologist in January to February. With reference to the results of OCT and their learning performance, students with learning difficulties will be identified, and intervention plans will be formulated and implemented for them. To ensure that the students who have received preschool rehabilitation services will receive further assessment and timely support where necessary, starting from the 2018/19 school year, teachers have been advised to scrutinise their assessment results and performance, and complete the OCT for them as needed. To further broaden the coverage of the EII Programme in the 2019/20 school year, teachers will be asked to complete the OCT for all these students to understand and monitor their progress.

Provision of Hearing Aids Fitting and Related Services

25. The EDB has been providing Hearing Aids Fitting and Related Services (the Services) for children with HI. From 2005 onwards, the Services were implemented through outsourced mode of services. Since no service providers could fully comply with the tender requirements earlier, the Services could not be continued this new school year such that services to newly referred children were delayed. We have taken a series of contingent measures, including collaboration with the HA in which, our audiologists provide hearing aid fitting service for children at the Audiology Centre of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. We started to handle the backlogs and new cases from mid-January by providing them with related services gradually. Up to end March, the majority of the children of the delayed cases have been provided with hearing aids. Also, we are discussing with the FHB and the HA on long-term collaborative measures for providing the Services in order to provide early and timely hearing aid fitting for children with HI, and cater for the needs of those who have to use cochlear implant or other implantable hearing devices and hearing aids at the same time.

Teacher Training

26. Starting from the 2007/08 school year, the EDB has been providing serving teachers with structured training courses pitched at Basic, Advanced and Thematic levels (BAT Courses) and training targets are set to equip teachers with professional capacity in catering for students with SEN and thus enhance the effectiveness of the implementation of IE. In the 2015/16 school year, the training targets of BAT Courses were revised. By the end of the 2019/20 school year, each of the public sector ordinary schools should have (i) at least 15% to 25% of teachers with completion of the Basic Course; (ii) at least six to nine teachers with completion the Advanced Course; and (iii) at least six to nine teachers with completion of the Thematic Courses. Starting from the 2017/18 school year, the EDB has been also providing serving teachers with “Professional Development Programme (PDP) for Mental Health” including elementary training for teachers at large and in-depth training for designated teachers with a view to raising their awareness of mental health and enhancing their professional knowledge and capacity to identify and support students with mental health needs.

27. In addition, the EDB organises different theme-based training

activities including seminars, workshops and sharing sessions to share good practices and update teachers on the current trend and approach in catering for students with SEN. To better prepare and equip prospective teachers with the knowledge and skills in catering for students with SEN, local teacher education universities have also included a module related to special education or catering for students with SEN in their pre-service teacher training courses so as to let them have professional capacity in taking care of the students with SEN in the schools they will serve as teacher.

28. As at the end of the 2017/18 school year, about 42% teachers in public sector ordinary primary schools and 30% in public sector ordinary secondary schools have received 30 hours or above structured SE training. As the training cycle is coming to an end in the 2019/20 school year, we will conduct a review on the experiences gained by the tertiary institutions which were commissioned to organise the teacher training courses in SE and collect views from stakeholders regarding SE teacher training, including the curriculum content, operation mode, duration and training targets of BAT Courses, so as to facilitate the planning of arrangement for the next training cycle. We will also explore the feasibility of developing e-Learning courses.

29. As for special schools, starting from the 2012/13 school year, the EDB offers a training course for special school teachers on “Education of Students with Severe or Multiple Disabilities”, which includes 240-hour theory-based lectures and a 6-month practicum. In view of the higher expectation from the general public on the professional qualification of special school teachers, after consulting with Hong Kong Special School Councils and principals and teachers of special schools in the 2017/18 school year, the EDB has set a teacher training target for special schools to achieve. Within 5 school years starting from the 2018/19, each special school should gradually raise the percentage of teachers possessing special education qualification to 100%. The EDB is also planning to organise a “Leadership Development Programme for Middle Leaders of Special Schools” especially for vice principals or senior teachers of special schools. In response to the views collected from special schools, the proposed course will be conducted in part-time mode, with the course content mainly covering the management, planning and coordination in special schools, as well as the transdisciplinary professional collaboration among different sections, e.g. Therapy Sections and Boarding Section, to enhance their professional leadership in special schools.

Safeguarding Students with SEN

30. With the implementation of the Disability Discrimination Ordinance and the Code of Practice on Education issued under the Ordinance, educational establishments should not discriminate against students with disabilities and have the obligation to provide reasonable accommodation for students with SEN, including adaptations to teaching, communication and assessment methods. As such, all educational establishments are obliged to provide equal educational opportunities for eligible students, including those with SEN. In other words, students with SEN are well protected from disability discrimination.

31. We recognise some parents and stakeholders expect that with legislation, schools will formulate an individual education plan (IEP) for every student with SEN, hence ensuring them to receive appropriate support. As a matter of fact, an IEP is only one of the many strategies for supporting students with SEN. Other evidence-based and effective teaching strategies, such as differentiated teaching, collaborative learning and assistive technologies, are also used by teachers to support students with SEN in the 3-tier Intervention Model. Besides, the 3-tier Intervention Model is underpinned by the 'Response to Intervention' (RTI) approach. The tier of support for students is adjusted according to their RTI, hence timely and structured intervention will be arranged for them. This arrangement is so designed to ensure the most appropriate resources and services can be made available to students with diverse support needs, and is widely practiced in the U.K., U.S.A. and other countries. Therefore, we are of the view that the need to develop IEP should be subject to students' needs for support based on professional judgment and decision of schools. Furthermore, school heads and teachers generally hold an opinion that stipulating formulation of IEP for every student may not consider the real-life situation at every school. It is also not regarded as the most appropriate measure to support all students with SEN.

32. Indeed, for safeguarding students with SEN through legislation, different countries or regions have different arrangements. In view of the difference in education systems, contexts and culture, different systems and practices also give rise to different problems. Some countries established legislation for schools to develop IEP for all students with SEN. However, their experience suggests that legislation has caused a series of problems.

Legislation can ensure that students are provided with a written document. It cannot guarantee that students are given the support services most appropriate to their actual needs. On the contrary, the need to handle the massive paperwork has strained teachers at the expense of teaching time and quality. Therefore, should legislation for SEN be established, it may have far-reaching impact on the Government's prevailing IE policy which has been gradually taking roots.

33. We consider it more appropriate to focus, at this stage, on exploring how support measures for implementing IE can be further strengthened and the aforesaid enhancement measures can be effectively implemented so as to intensify the effectiveness of IE. The EDB will continue to encourage schools to implement IE through the WSA under which an inclusive culture, policy and practices are further developed for enhancing the efficacy of support for students with SEN. Indeed, this is the imminent task.

Support from Post-secondary and Continuing Education

34. Students with SEN in secondary schools may make choices of further studies and employment at different learning stages according to their abilities, aptitude and interests. To ensure these students can receive timely and suitable support no matter they choose to pursue further studies, receive vocational training or take other courses after leaving secondary schools, the EDB all along advises schools to discuss post-school arrangements with these students and their parents as early as possible. With the consent of both parents and students, schools will pass the relevant student information to the student guidance section of the institutions/training organisations when students are offered places by these institutions/training organisations, so that they can plan and provide appropriate support services earlier according to the students' special needs. To facilitate information transfer, the EDB has compiled a list of "Contact Details of Local Post-secondary Institutions/Educational Organisations for Transfer of Information of Secondary Students with Special Educational Needs", which has been uploaded to the EDB website for schools' and parents' reference.

35. Students with SEN in secondary schools may also provide their SEN information via a sub-system under the Joint University Programmes Admissions System (JUPAS) that enables the institutions to understand the special needs of the students and to arrange at an early date appropriate admission assistance and assistive facilities. Furthermore, when applying

for courses at Vocational Training Council (VTC), students can provide their SEN information on the application forms so that VTC can offer advice on course selection as well as appropriate remedial and support services for the students at the earliest upon admission.

36. To facilitate students with SEN to pursue University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded programmes and adapt to campus life, as well as further promoting an inclusive culture, UGC provided a one-off special grant of \$20 million in total for the eight UGC-funded universities in 2015 to enhance these universities' support for students with SEN, such as purchasing necessary aids and equipment, strengthening training among academic and administrative staff, and supporting student bodies to organize events and activities to encourage the integration of students with SEN into campus life. In July 2018, UGC launched phase two of the funding scheme which would last for two years and under which the UGC-funded universities are provided with an additional grant of \$20 million in total to further enhance the support in this area.

Conclusion

37. The Government has all along been reviewing the implementation of SE and IE and listen to the views of the sector and different stakeholders on an on-going basis, and introduce improvement measures where necessary and practicable. The aforesaid enhancement measures are to respond to the major views of the different stakeholders including the sector and parents put up in recent years. We believe that with the full implementation of the measures, the effectiveness of SE and IE will be further enhanced.

Advice Sought

38. Members are invited to note the content of this paper and offer views on the enhanced support measures to strengthen the support for students with SEN in the public sector schools.

Education Bureau
April 2019

**Number of students in special schools
in the 2018/19 school year
(Positioned as at 15 September 2018)**

School Type	Number of Schools	Number of Students
Visual Impairment ^{Note 1}	2	110
Hearing Impairment	1	64
Physical Disability	7	907
Mild Intellectual Disability ^{Note 2}	17	3 218
Moderate Intellectual Disability ^{Note 2}	21	2 040
Severe Intellectual Disability	10	706
School for Social Development	8	614
Hospital School ^{Note 3}	1	280

Note:

1. The schools for children with visual impairment (VI) include 1 school for children with VI and 1 school for children with VI cum intellectual disability (ID).
2. The schools for children with mild intellectual disability (MiID) and schools for children with moderate intellectual disability (MoID) include the respective sections of the 5 schools for children with MiID and children with MoID.
3. The Hospital School operates classes at 18 hospitals.

**Number of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in public sector ordinary schools
in the 2018/19 school year
(Positioned as at 15 September 2018)**

	SEN Type								
	Specific Learning Difficulties	Intellectual Disability	Autism Spectrum Disorders	Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder	Physical Disability	Visual Impairment	Hearing Impairment	Speech & Language Impairment	Mental Illness
Primary School	10 370	760	5 690	5 110	110	40	360	2 510	60
Secondary School	11 430	830	3 840	6 780	150	60	310	360	310
Total	21 800	1 590	9 530	11 890	260	100	670	2 870	370

The teacher-to-student ratio and the teacher and specialist staff-to-student ratio for different types of special schools in the 2018/19 school year

School Type	Standard Class Size	Teacher-to-Student Ratio Note 3	Teacher and Specialist Staff-to-Student Ratio Note 4
Visual Impairment ^{Note 1}	12 (for VI) ; 10(for VI cum ID)	1 : 2.6	1 : 1.7
Hearing Impairment	10	1 : 2.5	1 : 1.8
Physical Disability	10	1 : 4.0	1 : 2.3
Mild Intellectual Disability	15	1 : 5.4	1 : 4.2
Moderate Intellectual Disability	10	1 : 3.7	1 : 2.8
Severe Intellectual Disability	8	1 : 3.4	1 : 2.1
School for Social Development ^{Note 1}	12	1 : 3.2	1 : 2.8
Hospital School ^{Note 2}	Psychiatric class : 8 Non-psychiatric class : 15 (primary section), 10 (secondary section)	1 : 4.3	1 : 4.3

Note:

1. From the 2014/15 school year, the class size for the school for children with visual impairment and schools for social development was reduced progressively from 15 to 12 students per class. The measure will be fully implemented in the 2019/20 school year.
2. Specialist services provided by respective hospitals.
3. Teacher-to-student ratio calculated is based on total number of teachers in the establishment and the actual number of student admitted to schools.

4. Teacher and specialist staff-to-student ratio calculated is based on total number of teachers and specialist staff in the establishment and the actual number of student admitted to schools. Specialist staff includes school social worker, educational psychologist, speech therapist, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, occupational therapy assistant, school nurse and braille staff.