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

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Ms Angel WONG
Clerk to Panel on Education
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

19 July 2019

Dear Ms WONG,

Follow up Agenda Item IV of Panel on Education Meeting on 3 May 2019

Thank you for your letter dated 6 May 2019. The Education Bureau's response to the Hon IP Kin-yuen's questions to follow up Agenda Item IV of Panel on Education Meeting on 3 May 2019 is set out at the Annex.

Yours sincerely,

(Godwin LAI)
for Secretary for Education

The Education Bureau (EDB)'s response to the Hon IP Kin-yuen's
questions to follow up Agenda Item IV of
Panel on Education Meeting on 3 May 2019

The Integrated Education (IE) Programme was implemented in 1997. The targets are students with hearing impairment, visual impairment, physical disability, intellectual disability and autism spectrum disorders. The Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme (IRTP)¹ was implemented in 2000 and the targets are academic low achievers, students with specific learning difficulties and students with intellectual disability. The targets of these two programmes are limited. The provision under these two programmes, viz. additional teacher(s), is not designed to cater for the needs of students with different special educational needs (SEN) across the spectrum, such as attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, speech and language impairment and mental illness. In the 2003/04 school year, the EDB introduced the Learning Support Grant (LSG) to cover students with all types of SEN. LSG is provided to schools according to the number of students with SEN and academic low achievers (applicable to primary schools) enrolled in the school and the tier of support the students require. Schools may deploy the grant flexibly to provide various kinds of support services for students. We have been encouraging schools to switch to LSG to support students with SEN. We launched the Migration Mode² in the 2009/10 school year to facilitate schools' full adoption of LSG. Despite so, in the 2018/19 school year, there are still 239 aided primary schools that have not changed to adopt or fully adopt LSG and another eight aided secondary schools are also yet to adopt LSG.

The EDB conducted a series of consultations with stakeholders before formulating the enhancement measures to be implemented in the 2019/20 school year. In the 2017/18 school year, we consulted school sponsoring bodies, school councils, school head associations, the Task Force on

¹ Since 1983, the former Education Department provided students of low academic achievement with a range of intensive remedial services, including resource classes operated in public sector ordinary primary schools. From September 2000, resource class was renamed as IRTP under which schools are encouraged to abolish the concept of "a separate class" and provide enhanced support services through the Whole School Approach.

² Migrating from the Mixed Mode to full adoption of LSG during a grace period of six school years with the LSG ceiling capped at \$600,000.

Integrated Education in Mainstream Schools, parent groups, public sector primary and secondary schools as well as Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCO), etc. On March 2, 2018, we briefed the Panel on Education of the Legislative Council of the review and directions of enhancement with regard to IE. Basically, mainstream views concurred that our enhancement measures should aim at providing schools with a stable teaching force and flexibility in deployment of additional resources. A series of IE enhancement measures were drawn up by the EDB after taking into account the mainstream views of stakeholders, as well as making reference to the recommendations of the Report No 70 of the Director of Audit that the EDB should take measures to speed up schools' switching from IRTP to LSG and suggestion of the Report No 70 of the Public Accounts Committee that the EDB should consider introducing a new scheme merging the merits of both LSG and IRTP.

From the 2019/20 school year, the EDB will consolidate various subvented programmes for IE. LSG will replace IRTP and IE Programme, and be extended to all public sector ordinary schools. Under the enhanced LSG, about 1 000 additional regular teaching posts will be created in public sector schools, 306 of which are for retaining teachers of IRTP/IE Programme while the rest are newly created posts. The restructuring of various subvented programmes for IE and enhancement of LSG involve an additional expenditure of about \$300 million. Other IE enhancement measures include upgrading most SENCO posts to promotion rank, extending the Enhanced School-based Educational Psychology Service (SBEPS), implementing the Enhanced School-based Speech Therapy Service and providing additional resources to public sector ordinary schools that admit non-Chinese speaking students with SEN. These enhancement measures involve an additional expenditure of about \$800 million. The total expenditure on IE in the 2019/20 school year is estimated to be about \$3 billion. This shows that the Government is committed to supporting schools to implement IE.

To let schools understand the implementation arrangement of the enhancement measures to be introduced in the 2019/20 school year, briefing sessions were held for public sector ordinary schools from late October to early November 2018 to explain the details. Among them, we specially explained the special arrangements for schools implementing IRTP/and IE Programme to transit to adopt enhanced LSG. In addition, views from schools were gauged for fine-tuning the implementation details. We also

sent a letter to public sector ordinary schools on December 10, 2018 to explain the preparation work to be made for the 2019/20 school year, with briefing materials attached, for them to make early preparation. Our inspectors have, during their school visits, further explained to schools the LSG arrangements in the coming school year according to individual schools' situation and answered enquiries from schools. On March 29, 2019, we formally issued a circular setting out the details of the enhanced LSG. In the light of the above, the enhancement measures were formulated after extensive consultations and schools were informed of the relevant arrangements through various means in the process.

Regarding the Hon IP Kin-yuen's questions, our reply is as follows:

1.

The number of public sector ordinary primary schools adopting LSG, IRTP, Mixed Mode and Migration Mode from the 2014/15 to 2018/19 school years is set out as follows:

School Year	LSG	IRTP	Mixed Mode	Migration Mode
2014/15	202	148	96	6
2015/16	211	144	92	7
2016/17	212	140	92	10
2017/18	213	140	90	11
2018/19	217	140	86	13

The expenditures on the provision of LSG and IRTP for primary schools from the 2014/15 to 2018/19 school years are tabulated as follows:

School Year	LSG (\$ million)	IRTP (\$ million)
2014/15	223.6	192.6
2015/16	245.6	196.2
2016/17	262.4	202.3
2017/18	280.9	207.2

School Year	LSG (\$ million)	IRTP (\$ million)
2018/19 (revised estimate)	308.8	214.5

Note : The expenditures above include those for Mixed Mode and Migration Mode. Schools under Mixed Mode operate one IRTP and receive LSG with a ceiling capped at \$0.35 million whereas schools under Migration Mode migrate from Mixed Mode to fully adopt LSG during a grace period of 6 school years with LSG ceiling capped at \$0.6 million.

2.

In the 2019/20 school year, the estimated expenditure for re-structuring of various subvented programmes for IE and enhancement of LSG is about \$1.3 billion, which represents a substantial increase of about 45% over the estimated expenditure of about \$900 million for LSG, IRTP and IE Programme for the 2018/19 school year.

3.

The number of public sector ordinary primary schools with 1, 2 or 3 IRTP from the 2014/15 to 2018/19 school years is set out as follows:

School Year	Number of schools				
	with 1 IRTP			with 2 IRTP	with 3 IRTP
	IRTP ^{note}	Mixed Mode	Migration Mode		
2014/15	5	96	6	138	5
2015/16	4	92	7	135	5
2016/17	4	92	10	131	5
2017/18	4	90	11	131	5
2018/19	4	86	13	131	5

Note: These primary schools are running IE programme in parallel.

4. to 6.

Under the enhanced LSG, all public sector ordinary schools are provided with the corresponding LSG and additional teaching posts in the establishment according to the number of students with SEN and the tier of support the students require. The EDB has put in place a special

arrangement for retaining IRTP and IE Programme teachers in the establishment so that they are not affected. Specifically, in the 2019/20 school year, if the additional teaching post(s) to be created through conversion or provision under LSG is/are insufficient to retain all the IRTP or IE Programme teachers, schools with teaching post vacancies in the establishment, including frozen teaching post vacancies in the approved establishment or vacancies arising from wastage (such as retirement, resignation of serving teachers) or increase in the number of classes, should make rectification as soon as possible. This is a long-established practice. If schools do not have any teaching post vacancies, part of the LSG can be converted into additional regular teaching post(s) for retaining these teachers in the establishment.

In the 2018/19 school year, there are 239 aided primary schools operating IRTPs, 25 of which are running IE Programme in parallel, involving about 400 teaching posts. Under the new measure, all the teachers concerned can remain in the school's establishment should schools adopt the above arrangement. In other words, no teachers will be rendered redundant. Among these primary schools, 143 (including 47 schools under IRTP, 83 schools under Mixed Mode and 13 schools under Migration Mode) have retained all the IRTP/IE Programme teachers with the additional teaching posts provided under the enhanced LSG. Among the 143 schools, 29 schools (including 7 schools under IRTP, 15 schools under Mixed Mode and 7 schools under Migration Mode) have 1 or 2 teaching post(s) more under the enhanced LSG than that under IRTP. The remaining 95 primary schools (including 93 schools under IRTP and 2 schools under Mixed Mode) (additionally, one school will be closed in the 2019/20 school year) have fully retained such IRTP/IE Programme teachers through the following means. Two primary schools each have made use of one new teaching post vacancy in the establishment arising from the increase in the number of classes for retaining purpose. 55 primary schools have made use of frozen teaching post vacancies for retaining purpose, out of which 48 used one such frozen vacancy while seven, which have three to five such frozen teaching post vacancies (some being senior teacher vacancies), used two. Besides, should there be teaching posts vacated by departing teachers in these 55 primary schools later, the vacancies will be used in place of frozen teaching posts for retaining purpose. Regarding the 38 schools without any teaching post vacancies, they are allowed to convert part of LSG into an additional regular teaching post for retaining IRTP/IE Programme teachers. In other words, no school needs to use the newly provided SENCO post to retain the

teachers concerned.

As for the seven schools that have to make use of two frozen teaching post vacancies, the amount of LSG receivable, after deducting the sum for conversion, in the 2019/20 school year for supporting students with SEN is estimated to be around \$0.8 million to \$1.1 million. A SENCO post at promotion rank will also be provided to each of these schools in the 2019/20 school year to support IE. Also, these schools will be given additional resources for hiring additional executive officer under the “One Executive Officer for Each School” policy. Overall speaking, despite having to use two frozen teaching post vacancies, these schools still have substantial additional resources for creating room for school heads and teachers to address the learning, emotional, behavioural and developmental needs of their students.

7. and 8.

Counting only the situation caused by the transition to new measure, 236 of the 239 aided primary schools operating IRTP in the 2018/19 school year will not have the situation mentioned in question (7). Of the remaining primary schools, one will not reach the threshold of 24 classes and two will not reach the threshold of 12 classes in the 2019/20 school year. We have met with and explained to the schools concerned how their cases can be handled. On the rank of school heads, the above three schools have a situation in which the substantive rank of heads are higher than that in the approved establishment. This could be suitably handled by school sponsoring bodies in accordance with the established practice, viz. through internal redeployment as far as possible. If internal redeployment cannot be arranged, schools can apply to the EDB for retaining the pay points of the school heads concerned, and should make rectification of the situation at an opportune time in due course. On deputy heads, the deputy head posts of two of the schools will be re-ranked as senior teacher. The schools could handle this in accordance with school-based procedures, viz. applying for retaining the pay points of the deputy heads concerned, and rectify the situation at an opportune time in due course. On senior teachers, since all the schools concerned will be entitled to upgrade the SENCO post to promotion rank, the number of senior teachers at substantive rank will not be higher than the number of the approved entitlement due to the closure of IRTP. Regarding the reduction of clerical staff and Workman II³ posts, two

³ The number of clerical staff and Workman II posts in the non-teaching staff establishment of aided primary schools is basically used for calculating the disburseable

schools will have one Assistant Clerical Officer post reduced; one school will have one Clerical Assistant post reduced; and eight schools will have one Workman II post reduced. Although the number of clerical staff or Workman II posts in the non-teaching staff establishment of individual schools will be reduced owing to the closure of IRTP, the Government will provide support through other measures to enable schools to cope with the situation. For example, the “One Executive Officer for Each School” policy to be implemented in public sector schools starting from the 2019/20 school year will provide schools with additional resources for strengthening school administrative support. If necessary, schools may retain the existing clerical staff by applying for suspension of the Administration Grant for Additional Clerical Assistant. Schools may also, under the principle of flexible deployment of the Operating Expenses Block Grant (OEBG)/Expanded Operating Expenses Block Grant (EOEBG), use resources flexibly to hire additional clerical staff or janitors in the light of their specific circumstances.

9.

As stated in the 2018 Policy Address, the Government will implement enhanced measures on IE to provide support for students with SEN in different areas, involving an annual additional funding of about \$800 million. The enhanced measures include:

- re-structuring various subvented programmes for IE and expanding LSG, increasing the grant rate for tier-3 support multifold, and providing regular teaching posts for schools with comparatively large number of students with SEN. This accounts for about 38% of the annual additional funding of \$800 million.
- upgrading the SENCO post to a promotion rank (i.e. Primary School Master/Mistress (PSM) for primary schools and Senior Graduate Master/Mistress (SGM) for secondary schools) in public sector ordinary schools with comparatively large number of students with SEN to facilitate SENCOs to deliver their leadership duties more effectively. This accounts for about 28% of the annual additional funding of \$800

amount of Administration Grant/Revised Administration Grant, which have been subsumed under the OEBG/EOEBG. Under the principle of flexible deployment of the block grant, schools may use their resources more flexibly, having regard to their school-based circumstances, to employ administrative/clerical staff and janitors or hire outside services to meet their specific needs.

million.

- extending further the “Enhanced School-based Educational Psychology Service” (i.e. educational psychologist to school ratio at 1:4), with the target of about 60% of schools receiving the service by the 2023/24 school year, while the related ratio will be enhanced to 1:6 for the remaining 40% of schools. This accounts for about 2% of the annual additional funding of \$800 million.
- implementing the Enhanced School-based Speech Therapy Service by creating school-based speech therapist (SBST) posts in public sector ordinary secondary and primary schools by phases in three years starting from the 2019/20 school year to allow schools to form clusters to employ SBSTs to support students with speech and language impairment or students with other SEN to develop communication and language abilities. This accounts for about 32% of the annual additional funding of \$800 million.

10.

The enhanced LSG will be implemented from the 2019/20 school year with the unit grant rate for tier-2 support increased to \$15,000 where that for tier-3 support increased multifold to \$60,000. Apart from having LSG, schools will have additional regular teaching post(s) through conversion/provision when LSG reaching the threshold(s).

We have consulted and analysed the current situation of the use of LSG in schools and found that most schools hire contract teachers or teaching assistants with LSG. We understand that teachers in the establishment can better maintain the stability of the teaching force. Therefore, when considering the setting of the threshold of LSG, we decided to provide schools with a relatively large number of students with SEN with more stable additional teaching posts. Should LSG reach Threshold 1 (i.e. \$600,000), schools can convert part of the LSG (i.e. equivalent to the annual salary at starting point of a basic rank graduate teacher (about \$360,000)) into a graduate teaching post in the establishment. Schools will still have a certain amount of LSG for flexible deployment, such as appointing additional teaching assistant(s) or hiring professional services for supporting students with SEN after conversion. This is a reasonable arrangement from the perspective of public resource management and school operation. We have made reference to the LSG ceiling of 2018/19 school year (i.e.

\$1,652,434) to set Threshold 2 as \$1,600,000. Should LSG reach Threshold 2, apart from using part of LSG to convert a graduate teaching post in the establishment, schools are provided with an additional regular graduate teaching post in the establishment, i.e. a total of two additional regular graduate teaching posts. Should LSG reach Threshold 3 (which is set as \$2,200,000 for the 2019/20 school year with reference to the calculation of Thresholds 1 and 2), apart from using part of LSG to convert a graduate teaching post in the establishment, schools are provided with two additional regular graduate teaching posts in the establishment, i.e. a total of three additional regular graduate teaching posts.

It is noteworthy that the EDB provides schools with professional support, including assessment and consultation services from educational psychologists, speech therapists and audiologists on an ongoing basis. We also introduce to schools teaching strategies for supporting students with SEN and develop teaching resources for use by teachers from time to time. The SBEPS has been extended to cover all public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools since the 2016/17 school year. Moreover, schools are also provided with other related resources to support students with SEN based on their situations, such as the top-up fund for procurement of special furniture and equipment, as well as intensive support grant for hardcore cases of students with SEN.