



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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22 July 2019

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

Dear Ms. WONG,

**Issues on “Enhanced Support Measures for Schools to  
Cater for Students with Special Educational Needs”**

Thank you for your letter dated 6 May 2019. The Education Bureau's response to the Hon SHIU Ka-chun's questions regarding “Enhanced Support Measures for Schools to Cater for Students with Special Educational Needs” is set out at the Annex.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke.

( Godwin LAI )  
for Secretary for Education

**EDB's Reply to Questions Raised by Hon SHIU Ka-chun Regarding  
"Enhanced Support Measures for Schools to  
Cater for Students with Special Educational Needs"**

**Question 1 : Types of Special Educational Needs (SEN)**

Since 1983, the former Education Department has provided a range of intensive remedial services for students with significant low academic achievement, including the operation of Resource Class in public sector ordinary primary schools. Starting from September 2000, the Resource Class has been renamed as Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme (IRTP) to encourage schools to get rid of the concept of "class" and to enhance the support services through the Whole School Approach (WSA). Similarly, the target students of IRTP are academic low achievers, including students with specific learning difficulties (SpLD) and students with intellectual disability (ID). The Integrated Education (IE) Programme was launched in 1997. The target students are students with hearing impairment (HI), visual impairment (VI), physical disability (PD), intellectual disability (ID) and autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Under IRTP and IE Programme, schools are provided with additional manpower to support the students in need. In view of the fact that the two programmes are not designed to cater for all types of students with SEN, the Education Bureau (EDB) launched the New Funding Mode in the 2003/04 school year to support schools to cater for students with SEN, and started to provide the Learning Support Grant (LSG) to public sector ordinary primary schools according to the number of students with eight types of SEN and academic low achievers and the tier of support the students require. The eight types of SEN include SpLD, ID, ASD, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD), PD, VI, HI and speech and language impairment. These students generally need long-term, continuous and specific support in learning. For students who have visceral disability encounter significant learning and / or adjustment difficulties, the EDB will categorise their type of SEN as PD, and include them in the calculation of LSG so that schools could have additional resources to provide them with appropriate support. As the difficulties encountered by the students with mental illness (MI) are mostly transient in nature, they generally could overcome their difficulties after receiving proper treatment, support and guidance service. Hence, the EDB and schools have all along been supporting the students concerned through different mechanisms and guidance service, such as One School Social Worker for Each School, Comprehensive Student Guidance Service and School-based Educational Psychology Service, etc. Nevertheless, starting from the 2017/18 school year, the EDB has extended the target students of LSG to cover students with MI so that schools will have additional resources to cater for these students' learning, social, emotional and behavioural needs at indicated level. The EDB has issued Education Bureau Circular Memorandum No.126/2017 to explain the relevant arrangements. From the 2019/20 school year, the EDB will re-structure various subvented

programmes for IE. LSG will be extended to all public sector ordinary schools to replace IRTP and IE Programme. Under the enhanced LSG, all public sector ordinary schools will be provided with the corresponding LSG and additional graduate teaching post(s) in the establishment according to the number of students with SEN and the tier of support the students require, so as to cater for students with all types of SEN. Overall speaking, LSG has covered the ten types of disabilities mentioned in the “Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan”. Schools are provided with additional resources for supporting the students concerned.

The EDB continuously reviews and updates the “Operation Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education”. In response to the implementation of a series of enhanced IE measures in recent years, we expect to upload the updated version onto the EDB website at the end of 2018/19 school year to provide more specific guidelines, such as helping teachers and related specialists to arrange the required level of support and record the progress of the students with different types of SEN (including MI), detailing the duties of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) and Special Educational Needs Support Teacher (SENST), etc. In addition, the EDB assists schools and teachers to learn more about the various IE measures and information about supporting students with SEN through various thematic circulars, other guidelines and resource manuals (such as the School Administration Guide and the "Teacher's Resource Handbook on Understanding and Supporting Students with Mental Illness" developed in collaboration with the Hospital Authority).

## Question 2 : Cross-departmental Collaboration in Supporting Students with SEN

The relevant bureaux and departments of the government have been working together through a multi-disciplinary mode to provide various services for children with special needs or at risk of developmental delay. Specifically, the Food and Health Bureau provides assessment and medical services to children in need, while the Labour and Welfare Bureau provides rehabilitation and welfare services. EDB is responsible for providing public sector ordinary schools with various additional resources, professional support and teacher training to help them cater for students with SEN.

The 31 Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs) of the Department of Health (DH) provide a range of health promotion and disease prevention services to children from birth to five years. The child health services include immunisation, health and developmental surveillance, and parenting education. Children with developmental concerns identified during developmental surveillance will be arranged for a doctor's preliminary developmental assessment by a doctor of MCHCs. In the past three years, waiting time for developmental assessment conducted by doctors ranged from one to eight weeks among MCHCs, the median waiting time ranged from three to four weeks. DH will continue to monitor the service demand and arrange internal redeployment of resources, if needed.

The Child Assessment Service (CAS) of DH provides comprehensive assessment and diagnosis, and formulates rehabilitation plan for children who are under 12 years of age and suspected to have developmental problems; provides these children and their families with interim support and reviews evaluation; and conducts public health education activities. After assessment, follow-up plans will be formulated according to the needs of individual children, who will be referred to other appropriate service providers for training and education support. While the children are awaiting assessment and rehabilitation services, CAS will provide support for their parents, such as organising seminars, workshops and practical training, with a view to enhancing the parents' understanding of their children's conditions and giving them information on community resources, so that they can provide home-based training effectively to support the development and growth of their children.

In the past few years, the number of new referrals to the CAS of DH has been on an increasing trend. Nearly all new cases in CAS were seen within three weeks after registration. The assessment service will then be arranged according to needs. Due to the continuous increase in the demand for assessment service and the high turnover rate and difficulties in recruiting doctors, CAS was unable to meet the target for completion of assessment for 90% of the new cases within six months in 2018. CAS has already adopted a triage system to ensure that children with urgent and more serious conditions are accorded with higher priority in assessment.

In addition, the DH has started preparing for the establishment of a new Child Assessment Centre (CAC) with a view to strengthening the manpower support and enhancing service capacity to cater for the increasing number of referrals. As an interim measure, a temporary CAC has commenced operation in January 2018. Besides, the Government has allocated a recurrent provision of \$18.4 million from 2019-20 onwards for the creation of 22 civil service posts to cope with the growing demand for CAS.

For pre-school rehabilitation services, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) provides children with special needs from birth to age of six with early intervention through pre-school rehabilitation services, including Early Education and Training Centres, Integrated Programme in Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centre, Special Child Care Centre and On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services, with a view to enhancing their physical, psychological and social developments, thus improving their opportunities for participating in ordinary schools and daily life activities and helping their family meet their special needs. Furthermore, the SWD provides training subsidy for eligible children who are on the waiting list of subvented pre-school rehabilitation services with a view to enabling them to acquire self-financing services run by recognised service providers to facilitate their learning and development.

To further enhance the effectiveness of transition mechanism from pre-school to primary schooling, the EDB and the SWD, together with CAC under the DH and the

Hospital Authority have strengthened collaboration since the 2017/18 school year. When children with special needs proceed to primary schools from pre-school centres/kindergartens, their assessment information and progress reports will be transferred to the primary schools they will attend so that the schools can timely understand the conditions of and provide support for the children, so as to foster their smooth integration into primary school learning.

On top of regular subvention, the EDB provides public sector ordinary schools with additional resources, professional support and teacher training to provide early support for the students in need. The EDB assists schools to use resources and manpower flexibly, to provide appropriate support for students based on the principle of "intervention before assessment" and refer them to the specialists for assessment as needed. From the 2014/15 to 2017/18 school years, about 80% of the cases that schools referred to the educational psychologists (EPs) were assessed within two months, while about 10% were assessed within two to three months. Some cases with a longer waiting time are usually due to specific circumstances, such as cases where parents requested to defer the assessment or the assessment has to be held up pending the student's medical treatment. As for the students referred to the school-based speech therapists by schools, they will be assessed and followed up within one to two months on average. In addition, we will continuously enhance the professional capacity of teachers in early identification of and providing appropriate support to the students with SEN.

Relevant bureaux and departments will continue to work in close collaboration to early identify, assess and support children with SEN so that they can receive appropriate services.

### Question 3 : Equal Opportunities to Receive Education

With the implementation of the Disability Discrimination Ordinance and the Code of Practice on Education issued under the Ordinance, students with SEN are well protected from disability discrimination. 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. The EDB has also issued a circular regarding "The Principle of Equal Opportunities" to remind schools that, in formulating and revising their school policies, including policies in IE, in addition to observing the Disability Discrimination Ordinance and the Code of Practice on Education issued under the Ordinance, schools should comply with the principle of equal opportunities so as to provide equal opportunities in the aspects of information, education, services, facilities, and personal development.

To facilitate students with SEN to enjoy education together with other students in ordinary schools as far as possible and to allow them to develop their full potential by learning in the least restrictive environment, the government has all along been

actively promoting IE in accordance with five basic principles, namely early identification, early intervention, WSA, home-school co-operation and cross-sector collaboration. Under these basic principles, the EDB reviews and promotes schools in establishing WSA in IE policies, school-based mechanisms and measures as well as inclusive culture on an on-going basis. For instance, various training activities and guidelines are provided to remind schools of the importance of early identification and intervention. To enhance the transparency of information and provide parents with further information for enhancing home-school cooperation, a specific column in the Primary and Secondary School Profiles has been assigned for schools to elucidate the implementation of the WSA in IE. From the 2018/19 school year, the EDB requires schools to provide a “Student Support Summary” to the parents of students with SEN every year. The support summary should list out the major support measures and accommodation items to enable parents to have a clear picture of the support received by their children.

Furthermore, to help schools cater for students with SEN, the EDB has all along been providing public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools with additional resources, professional support and teacher training. With regard to the support in learning and teaching of schools, the EDB is actively involved in the development of evidence-based support model and strategies, as well as related teaching resources for students with different SEN types. The guidelines on “Special Arrangements for Internal Examinations for Students with Special Educational Needs” and related frequently asked questions are revised periodically and uploaded to the EDB website for reference by different stakeholders. Moreover, seminars and workshops are organised on a regular basis to assist schools in fine-tuning their school-based special examination policies and measures.

The EDB also works closely with The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA), including sending representatives to participate in the Committee on Special Needs Candidates and the Task Group on Special Examination Arrangements for Candidates with Specific Learning Disabilities (SpLD), and joining hands with the HKEAA to review and improve measures in special examination arrangements. For instance, candidates with SpLD having severe difficulties in writing can apply for the use of speech-to-text software in the Liberal Studies papers in Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE) from 2017 and in another 7 elective subjects in 2020. Apart from that, starting from the 2016 HKDSE, candidates with ASD may apply for the provision of plain text labels / descriptions to questions that involve high-level comprehension / interpretation of cartoons or complicated pictures (normally in Liberal Studies, Chinese History and History). The EDB will elaborate to parents and schools on the target students, criteria and measures of special examination arrangements at talks organised by the HKEAA,

Under the School Development and Accountability Framework, schools are required to assess the effectiveness of their support for students with SEN and improve various support measures, as with other school policies and measures, through self-evaluation every year. The EDB also requires schools to submit an annual self-

evaluation report on the implementation of the WSA to IE to the EDB at the end of every school year, which will be validated through External School Review. To further enhance transparency, schools are required to set out in their annual school reports how resources are deployed to provide support services for students with SEN and upload such information onto their school websites. Furthermore, we have stepped up our efforts to monitor the effective deployment of LSG by schools. Various measures include providing schools with guidelines on deployment of LSG and claw back mechanism, conducting regular school visits to advise on the deployment of resources to support students with SEN, organising experience sharing activities among schools, and issuing reminders to individual schools for making improvements should undesirable situation be detected.

According to our observations and communication with schools, schools are in support of IE. With practical experience accumulated over the years, more and more schools are adopting WSA in providing appropriate support for students with SEN and successful cases have been seen in schools in respect of culture building, policy formulation and implementation. For instance, a secondary school admitted a Secondary 1 student with VI and AD/HD through the Secondary School Places Allocation System. The student received tier-3 support in Primary 6. After recognising the student's SEN from the Special Education Management Information System and the feeder primary school, the school's SENCO arranged to meet with parents, the resource teacher under the Resource Support Programme for Students with Visual Impairment and the school-based EP. Based on the support measures provided by the feeder primary school, the SENCO and the student support team, collaborating with the previously mentioned parties, formulated a school-based support plan tailor made for the student's specific needs, applied for the Top-up Fund from the EDB to purchase an electronic desktop magnifier to enhance the student's effectiveness in classroom learning. As a result, the student adapted well and continued to learn in a barrier free environment upon the start of the school year in September. The parents were very satisfied with the supports provided by the school. Similar success cases about schools' collaboration in providing appropriate and effective supports to students with SEN are commonly seen.

To improve the implementation of various measures, the EDB reviews the implementation of integrated education and listens to the views of different stakeholders on an on-going basis, and introduces improvement measures when necessary and practicable. 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 flexibly deployed and enhanced professional support. We believe that with the full implementation of the measures, the effectiveness of special education and IE will be further enhanced.