

19 June 2015

EDUCATION BUREAU CIRCULAR NO. 11/2015

Implementation of the Next Phase of the School Development and Accountability Framework

[Note: This circular should be read by –

- (a) Supervisors and Heads of government, aided schools (including special schools), Caput schools and schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme – for action; and
- (b) Heads of Sections – for information.]

Summary

This circular informs schools of the details for the implementation of the next phase of the School Development and Accountability (SDA) framework, which is to start from the 2015/16 school year. Education Bureau (EDB) Circular No. 13/2008 dated 3 July 2008 is hereby superseded.

Background

2. Introduced in 2003, the SDA framework aims to empower schools to strengthen their self-evaluation for continuous improvement while enhancing accountability and transparency. School self-evaluation (SSE) is complemented by school inspections and external school reviews (ESR) to give schools the benefit of feedback and suggestions for improvement from different perspectives. Based on the experience gained in the course of implementation, measures were introduced in the second cycle, which began in the 2008/09 school year, to streamline procedures and address schools' concerns, notably teachers' perceived workload and stress.

3. The *Impact Study on the Implementation of the Second Cycle of SDA Framework for Enhancing School Development in Hong Kong*¹ (Impact Study) affirms the positive impact of the SDA framework on school improvement and the

¹ The Impact Study was an independent study led by Professor John MacBeath from the University of Cambridge. The [report](#) is available for downloading from the EDB website.

wider support gained for ESR as the second cycle of SDA proceeded. The findings reveal that schools have demonstrated a progressive, deepening understanding of SSE and its relationship to ESR. They are making much greater use of SSE tools and data, and employing a variety of strategies to embed SSE in day-to-day practice. School personnel welcomed the decreased amount of pre-ESR preparation, reduction of documentation, as well as lower stress and anxiety associated with ESR.

4. To take the implementation of the SDA framework forward in the coming years, improvement measures have been devised with reference to the findings of the Impact Study and views from a wide range of stakeholders and educational bodies gathered from working group meetings, consultation sessions and piloting exercises. On the whole, the current measures are fine-tuned with a view to creating an environment conducive to the promotion of schools' sustained development and accountability for improvement of students' learning. The details on the implementation of the next phase of the SDA framework are set out in the following paragraphs.

Details

On SSE and school development planning

5. The capacity of schools to plan their work strategically and develop a culture of reflective practice is fundamental to their continuous development and improvement. As such, SSE through the process of planning-implementation-evaluation is a core element of school-based management (SBM), under which schools are to be held accountable for the provision of quality education. In the next phase of the SDA framework, schools shall continue to set out the development focuses with related strategies in the School Development Plan (SDP), devise implementation details in the Annual School Plan (ASP), report on the progress made in the School Report (SR), and conduct a holistic review of their SDP at the end of their school development cycle to inform forward planning.

6. The Regional Education Offices will continue to support schools' development through SSE, advising them on the formulation and implementation of the SDP and the improvement strategies to follow up the recommendations of ESR. Details on the implementation of the SDA framework, various resources, such as templates of, and writing guidelines for, SDP, ASP and SR, the [*Online Interactive Resource on Enhancing Sustainable School Development through SSE and ESR*](#) and other self-learning materials, are available on the [EDB website](#).

They will be updated regularly for the reference of schools.

7. A range of evaluation tools, such as the Performance Indicators (PI), Key Performance Measures (KPM) and questionnaires of the Stakeholder Survey, will continue to be made available for schools for their self-evaluation. The evaluation tools will be updated from time to time to serve schools' needs and tie in with the development of new education initiatives. For instance, starting from the 2015/16 school year, the set of KPM will be updated to include two new items, namely, "Professional Training on Special Educational Needs" and "Subject Choices at Senior Secondary Levels". The Evidence of Performance of the PI will also be refined for schools' reference. Schools will be informed of the updated evaluation tools via the E-platform for School Development and Accountability (ESDA) and the [EDB website](#).

8. To further promote the use of evidence and data in the review of school performance, schools are required to submit KPM and Stakeholder Survey data to EDB via ESDA prior to ESR and at the end of their school development cycle as from the 2015/16 school year. The data collected will be used to generate reference data for feeding back to schools for their SSE.

On ESR and Focus Inspections (FI)

9. While SSE is a core business inherent in SBM to enhance school development and accountability, EDB conducts ESR and FI as an external quality assurance mechanism to strengthen schools' self-evaluation. To better position ESR as an on-going measure to complement SSE rather than an event that takes place at a given interval, ESR in the next phase of SDA will not be bound by a fixed cycle. EDB will select schools² for conducting ESR at random, with adjustments to be made to address operational issues, such as the time span between two successive ESR. Schools will receive notification for ESR about 12 weeks in advance.

10. To allow the flexibility to cater for schools' different stages of development and needs, school sponsoring bodies (SSB) will be invited to nominate schools under their purview for conducting ESR. EDB will allocate a small quota of ESR to cater for the needs of the nominated schools. Briefing sessions for SSB will be arranged to keep them informed of the purpose and nomination procedures.

² Applicable to public sector schools and schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme not bound by a service agreement with the Government.

11. While ESR will continue to be conducted in a school-specific and focused manner, and perform its function of validating SSE, focusing on schools' priorities and needs in their particular stage of development, a more flexible approach to address schools' different contexts and needs will be adopted. Schools may request a more in-depth review of a particular area in which they wish to make improvement. Depending on the school size and context, the number of days for which the ESR team will stay at a school will vary from three to five in the next phase of implementation.

12. The well-received Collegial Participation in ESR scheme, which enables school principals to participate in ESR as external reviewers (ER), will continue. Starting from the 2015/16 school year, training on ER will be included in the designated programme for newly appointed principals (NAP). Priority will be given to NAP who have been duly trained to serve as ER so as to accelerate their professional growth.

13. FI, as another form of quality assurance inspection, enables schools to better benefit from the professional views of EDB officers for sustained improvement in Key Learning Areas (KLA) and policy initiatives. Many schools also welcome the more focused and specific feedback that FI is able to offer. Towards this end, more FI on KLA and designated themes related to the latest curriculum development trends and policy initiatives will be conducted in the next phase.

On ESR and FI reports

14. The presentation of the ESR report will be revised to align with the flexible approach. The unique contexts of the schools and their key strengths and areas for further improvement in relation to their priority tasks or other areas will be reported in a concise and focused manner to facilitate improvement and follow-up.

15. To uphold accountability and transparency, schools are required to make their ESR reports available in the school premises for reference and easy access of key stakeholders, including parents. While uploading of the ESR reports for public access remains the ultimate goal of EDB, schools are encouraged to upload ESR reports to their homepage for the purpose of accountability.

16. To provide in-depth feedback to the school management for improvement of learning and teaching in KLA and specific areas, FI reports will be sent to the Incorporated Management Committee/School Management Committee for reference and follow-up, as is the prevailing practice for ESR reports.

On quality assurance of Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools

17. For DSS schools having entered into a service agreement (SA) with the Government, a Comprehensive Review on their performance is required. Schools with their SA renewed are required to undergo ESR. While the timing for conducting ESR has been set out in the renewed SA, the procedures and requirements of ESR for DSS schools will be the same as those for public sector schools. For DSS schools not bound by SA with the Government, the overall arrangements for conducting ESR will be the same as those for public sector schools. Please refer to the information on [quality assurance of DSS schools](#) on the EDB website for details.

Enquiry

18. Schools are advised to refer to the [EDB website](#) for further information about the next phase of implementation of the SDA framework. Enquiries concerning the content of this circular can be directed to the Quality Assurance Sections, Quality Assurance and School-based Support Division, EDB at 3902 3737.

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