

8 July 2019

Education Bureau Circular No. 18/2019

Secondary School Places Allocation System New Arrangements for Notifying Successful Discretionary Places Applicants

[Note: This circular should be read by –

- (a) Supervisors and heads of all primary and secondary schools – for action; and
- (b) Heads of Sections – for information.]

Summary

This circular aims to inform all primary and secondary schools that starting from the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) 2020 (i.e. applicable to students who will be admitted to Secondary One (S1) in September 2020), secondary schools participating in SSPA will be required to, after processing applications for Discretionary Places (DP), notify successful applicants of their inclusion in the Successful Lists for Secondary One Discretionary Places on a specified date before the Central Allocation (CA) stage. The new arrangements for notifying successful DP applicants (new notification arrangements) set out in this circular are administrative measures. The prevailing SSPA mechanism and procedures remain unchanged. This circular should be read in conjunction with the Education Bureau (EDB) Circular No. 3/2006 on Revised Secondary School Places Allocation System issued on 1 March 2006.

Background

2. The prevailing SSPA System is divided into two stages: the DP and CA stages. During the DP stage, students may apply, without restrictions on districts, to not more than two participating secondary schools in January every year. Students who are successful in their DP applications will not be allocated other school places at the CA stage. DP application results and CA results will be released concurrently in early July every year. Apart from applying for DP in participating secondary schools, students may also apply for school places in non-participating Direct Subsidy Scheme secondary schools (NDSS secondary schools). Under the existing system, NDSS secondary schools will collect from parents of students who accept

the S1 places offered the signed undertakings together with the original copies of their children's Primary 6 Student Record Forms for confirmation of acceptance of the offers and surrendering of other S1 places subsidised by the Government (i.e. S1 places to be allocated through the SSPA System).

New Notification Arrangements

3. The new notification arrangements to be implemented starting from SSPA 2020 are administrative measures. The existing SSPA mechanism remains unchanged. The new notification arrangements are summarised below:

- (i) Parents who intend to apply for DP will submit applications to not more than two preferred participating secondary schools in January every year as usual.
- (ii) Participating secondary schools should conclude all the selection procedures before the end of March, and notify parents of successful applicants of their children's inclusion in the Successful Lists for Secondary One Discretionary Places on a date specified by EDB (normally in late March/early April). These notification arrangements are not applicable to reserve and unsuccessful applicants.
- (iii) Parents who have received notifications from participating secondary schools of successful DP applications do not need to reply to the notifications, nor to fill out the Choice of Schools Forms at the CA stage which begins in April.
- (iv) If parents of individual students have received notifications of successful DP applications from two participating secondary schools respectively, those students will be allocated with an S1 place in schools of their first choice according to the existing SSPA mechanism. Some students (including those who have not received any notification or those who have received notification from the school of their second choice only) may be allocated with an S1 place in schools they have applied to in the DP stage (including schools of their first choice) in the capacity of reserve applicants.

- (v) If the parents concerned have also successfully applied for a school place in an NDSS secondary school for their children, they may decide whether to accept the offer within a specified period of time. If parents decide to retain the school place, they should disregard the notifications from participating secondary schools. If they decide to decline the offer, they may notify the NDSS secondary school concerned and retrieve the signed undertaking and the original copy of the Primary 6 Student Record Form within a specified period of time in April (i.e. within around one week after receiving notifications from schools) in order to retain the DP place which they have successfully obtained.
- (vi) All students will receive the SSPA allocation results (including results at the DP and CA stages) in early July as usual. Parents are required to complete the registration procedures with the secondary schools their children are allocated to within a specified period of time.

4. The points to note for primary and secondary schools regarding the new notification arrangements are set out at [Appendix 1](#). As regards the implementation details of the arrangements, please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions available on the SSPA webpage (EDB Home > Education System and Policy > Primary and Secondary School Education > School Places Allocation Systems > Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System). Besides, EDB will issue relevant circular letters regarding the schedule of each SSPA cycle and the specific arrangements for DP applications to primary and secondary schools as and when appropriate. The circular letter on SSPA 2020 has been issued on the same day.

Briefing Sessions

5. EDB will organise six briefing sessions on 26, 28, and 29 August 2019 to introduce the implementation details of the new notification arrangements to schools. Details of the briefing sessions are at [Appendix 2](#). EDB will send invitations to schools separately.

Enquiries

6. For enquiries, please contact the School Places Allocation Section at 2832 7700 or 2832 7740.

Ms Teresa CHAN
for Secretary for Education

Secondary School Places Allocation System

New Arrangements for Notifying Successful Discretionary Places Applicants

Points to note applicable to participating primary schools

- (i) With the implementation of the new notification arrangements, participating primary schools should conclude the Primary 6 second term (P6/2) internal assessments before the end of March, and submit P6/2 scores to EDB in late April.
- (ii) All parents will receive the Choice of Schools Forms and the relevant school lists at the CA stage in April as usual. Parents who are notified by participating secondary schools of their children's inclusion in the Successful Lists for Secondary One Discretionary Places, or whose children are admitted to NDSS secondary schools do not need to fill out the forms for making school choices.
- (iii) Based on the Successful Lists for Secondary One Discretionary Places submitted by participating secondary schools, EDB will provide each participating primary school with its respective list of successful DP applicants (which will not show the names of the secondary schools concerned and whether the students are selected as successful applicants by one or two secondary schools) in early April in order to facilitate primary schools' reminding of the parents concerned that they do not have to make school choices in the CA stage, and provision of appropriate support to students not having received notification under the new arrangements in preparation for CA.
- (iv) Primary schools are reminded to clearly explain to parents that, under the new notification arrangements, the SSPA mechanism remains unchanged. If individual students are selected as successful DP applicants by two participating secondary schools at the same time, they will eventually be allocated with an S1 place in schools of their first choice. Some students may be notified of their successful DP applications by the schools of their second choice and selected as reserve applicants by the schools of their first choice. They may eventually be allocated to the schools of their first choice in the capacity of reserve applicants. Besides, students who have not been notified as successful applicants may still be allocated a DP in the capacity of reserve applicants¹.

¹ Students who have received notifications of their successful DP applications from two participating secondary schools will eventually be allocated with an S1 place in schools of their first choice according to the existing SSPA mechanism, leaving one school place available. If successful applicants relinquish the DP allocated to them and accept the places offered by NDSS secondary schools, the places allocated to them at the DP stage will also be rendered available.

- (v) Schools are requested to remind parents whose children are notified by participating secondary schools as successful DP applicants that in case their children have also been offered an S1 school place by an NDSS secondary school and they decide to decline the offer from the NDSS secondary school, they may notify the NDSS secondary school concerned and retrieve the signed undertaking and the original copy of the Primary 6 Student Record Form within a specified period of time (i.e. within around one week after receiving notifications from participating secondary schools) in order to retain the DP place which they have successfully obtained. Once the signed undertakings are retrieved, it will serve as confirmation that the parents concerned have surrendered the school place in the NDSS secondary school.
- (vi) The Successful Lists for Secondary One Discretionary Places are not the final DP application results. Schools **are not allowed** to disclose the related information to avoid affecting other students' strategies for making school choices at the CA stage.
- (vii) Schools should encourage all students to keep on studying hard for progression to secondary schools. They should also provide support to students in need and encourage them to stay positive.

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Points to note applicable to participating secondary schools

- (i) To ensure that DP applications are handled in a fair and just manner, participating secondary schools should, as they have all along been required to, keep parents well-informed of their DP admission criteria, weightings and application procedures, as well as put in place an enquiry/complaint handling mechanism. Schools are also required to keep DP admission-related records properly for parents' examination as and when required.
- (ii) Participating schools will accept DP applications in January every year as usual. They are required to submit EDB's copies of Application Forms for S1 Discretionary Place to EDB in mid-/late January.
- (iii) Participating secondary schools will receive the Rank Order List compiled by EDB in late February to facilitate their processing of DP applications and/or interview procedures as early as possible.
- (iv) Participating secondary schools are required to complete all selection procedures before late March and submit the Lists of Successful/Reserve DP Applicants to EDB. Schools are required to check the Lists of Successful/Reserve DP Applicants with extreme care to ensure the accuracy of the information therein.
- (v) Participating secondary schools are required to notify parents of all successful applicants by letter and phone on a specified date (normally in late March/early April). The sample notification letter is at Appendix 3. Schools are required to keep parents well informed of the notification arrangements, and collect necessary contact information beforehand.
- (vi) Individual students may receive notifications of successful DP applications from two participating secondary schools at the same time, and they will eventually be allocated with an S1 place in schools of their first choice according to the existing SSPA mechanism. Some of them may surrender the DP they have successfully obtained and accept a school place in an NDSS secondary school instead. Participating secondary schools **are not allowed** to ask the parents concerned whether they will accept the DP or not, nor the order of their school preference at the DP stage.

- (vii) Schools **are not allowed** to contact parents of reserve applicants, nor disclose to them that their children may eventually be admitted to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings and unrealistic expectations from parents.
- (viii) Schools **are not allowed** to disclose the Successful Lists for Secondary One Discretionary Places or related information to avoid affecting other students' strategies for making school choices at the CA stage.
- (ix) After submitting the Lists of Successful/Reserve DP Applicants to EDB, schools **should not** and **are not allowed to** make any changes to the Lists except under special circumstances. Should there be any need to change the Lists, schools should provide a written explanation to EDB in a timely manner and notify the parents concerned as soon as possible after seeking prior approval from EDB.

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Points to note applicable to
non-participating Direct Subsidy Scheme secondary schools

- (i) As with the existing arrangements, NDSS secondary schools may, without any restriction on admission timeframe and district, establish their school-based S1 admission mechanisms based on their cultures and education objectives.
- (ii) In line with the established practice, on the premise of effective use of public resources, NDSS secondary schools will collect from parents of students who accept the S1 places offered the signed undertakings together with the original copies of their children's Primary 6 Student Record Forms for confirmation of acceptance of the offers and surrendering of other S1 places subsidised by the Government.
- (iii) Under the new notification arrangements, if parents who are notified of their children's successful DP applications in participating secondary schools decide to decline the offer of an S1 school place from an NDSS secondary school, they may notify the NDSS secondary school concerned and retrieve the signed undertaking and the original copy of the Primary 6 Student Record Form within a specified period of time in April (i.e. within around one week after receiving notifications from the schools). Once the relevant documents are retrieved, it serves as confirmation that the parents concerned surrender the S1 school place previously offered by the NDSS secondary school.
- (iv) NDSS secondary schools may admit other students in accordance with their waiting lists to fill the vacancies by the end of April.
- (v) NDSS secondary schools are required to complete all admission procedures by the end of April and submit their Successful Lists of Participating Students and the signed undertakings to EDB.
- (vi) Students included in the Successful Lists of Participating Students of NDSS secondary schools will not be allocated any school places under SSPA.

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Briefing Sessions

EDB will organise six briefing sessions on 26, 28 and 29 August 2019. Primary and secondary school representatives (preferably, principals/vice-principals/teachers responsible for S1 admission) are cordially invited to attend the briefing sessions. A maximum of 2 places will be reserved for each school. Details of the briefing sessions are as follows:

Secondary Schools

Session	Date and time	Venue	School's respective district
1	26 August 2019 (Monday) 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.	Lecture Theatre, 4/F, West Block, EDB Kowloon Tong Education Services Centre, 19 Suffolk Road, Kowloon Tong	<u>Secondary schools</u> in the following districts: Central and Western, Wan Chai, Eastern, Southern, Yau Tsim Mong, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon City
2	28 August 2019 (Wednesday) 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.	Lecture Theatre, 4/F, West Block, EDB Kowloon Tong Education Services Centre, 19 Suffolk Road, Kowloon Tong	<u>Secondary schools</u> in the following districts: Wong Tai Sin, Kwun Tong, Kwai Tsing, Tsuen Wan, Tuen Mun
3	29 August 2019 (Thursday) 2:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.	Lecture Theatre, 4/F, West Block, EDB Kowloon Tong Education Services Centre, 19 Suffolk Road, Kowloon Tong	<u>Secondary schools</u> in the following districts: Yuen Long, North, Tai Po, Sha Tin, Sai Kung, Islands (including Tung Chung)

Primary Schools

Session	Date and time	Venue	School's respective district
4	26 August 2019 (Monday) 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.	Lecture Theatre, 4/F, West Block, EDB Kowloon Tong Education Services Centre, 19 Suffolk Road, Kowloon Tong	<u>Primary schools</u> in the following districts: Central and Western, Wan Chai, Eastern, Southern, Yau Tsim Mong, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon City
5	28 August 2019 (Wednesday) 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.	Lecture Theatre, 4/F, West Block, EDB Kowloon Tong Education Services Centre, 19 Suffolk Road, Kowloon Tong	<u>Primary schools</u> in the following districts: Wong Tai Sin, Kwun Tong, Kwai Tsing, Tsuen Wan, Tuen Mun
6	29 August 2019 (Thursday) 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.	Lecture Theatre, 4/F, West Block, EDB Kowloon Tong Education Services Centre, 19 Suffolk Road, Kowloon Tong	<u>Primary schools</u> in the following districts: Yuen Long, North, Tai Po, Sha Tin, Sai Kung, Islands (including Tung Chung)

**Secondary School Places Allocation System
Participating Secondary Schools to Notify in Advance
the Successful Applicants of their Inclusion in
the List of Successful Applicants for Discretionary Places**

[Sample Notification Letter]

 Date

Dear Mr/Ms Name of Parent :

Application for Secondary One Discretionary Places

Thank you for applying for the discretionary places (DP) of our school in SSPA (*cycle*) (for admission to Secondary One in September *Year*). Our school has concluded all selection procedures for DP applications. We would like to inform you that your child (*Name of student*) has been selected as a successful DP applicant and hence included in the List of Successful Applicants for DP of our school. Please note that this notification may not be the final DP application results under SSPA. The school to which your child will eventually be allocated will be announced concurrently with Central Allocation result on ___ July. Parents do not need to reply to this notification.

For enquiries, please contact our staff (*or name of the designated staff member/teacher*) at (*enquiry hotline of the school*).

Yours sincerely,

 Name of Principal

 Name of Secondary School