

Education Bureau Circular No. 23/2019

Policy and Practice in Early Identification and Intervention for Students with Special Educational Needs

[Note: This circular should be read by –

- (a) Supervisors and heads of all government, aided and Direct Subsidy Scheme primary schools - for necessary action;
- (b) Supervisors and heads of all private schools - for information and action where applicable; and
- (c) Heads of secondary schools, special schools and Sections - for information.]

Summary

This circular reminds primary schools to implement the early identification and intervention policy and practice to support students with special educational needs (SEN) or learning difficulties. This circular supersedes the Education Bureau (EDB) Circular No. 12/2018 dated 29 August 2018.

Background

2. The EDB has all along been promoting integrated education (IE) in accordance with five basic principles of Early Identification, Early Intervention, Whole School Approach (WSA), Home-school Co-operation and Cross-sector Collaboration. In addition to the regular subvention, the EDB provides public sector ordinary schools with additional resources, professional support and teacher training to help schools cater for students with SEN. Schools have to adopt the WSA for aligning school policies, culture and practices, and deploy resources flexibly, for early identification and intervention for students with SEN.

Enhanced Transition from Kindergarten to Primary School

3. A collaborative mechanism is in place among the EDB, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and the Child Assessment Service under the Department of Health (DH) and the

Hospital Authority (HA) to ensure that when children with special needs proceed to primary schools from pre-school centres/kindergartens, the primary schools can have an early understanding of their special needs and arrange support for their smooth transition into learning life of primary school. Every school year, upon parental consent, the child assessment centres of the DH and the HA will send the assessment information of the children concerned to the EDB so that the EDB could contact the schools before the commencement of the new school year and transfer the assessment information of these children to their recipient government/aided/Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) primary schools. As for the progress reports of the upcoming Primary One (P1) students prepared by the pre-school rehabilitation service units subvented by the SWD, they will be transmitted electronically through the Special Education Management Information System (SEMIS) of the EDB to their recipient schools before the commencement of the new school year.

4. The Student Support Team (SST) in schools have to scrutinise the assessment information and/or progress reports of P1 students concerned and discuss early with their parents about the daily performance of the students. After understanding the conditions of the students, the SST have to enter their information into the student support register and make appropriate support arrangement for them according to their actual needs. Upon parental consent¹, the SST should record the support measures in the “Summary of Transition Support for P1 Student²” in SEMIS on or before late October. The EDB staff will understand from schools their planning of support measures for the respective students by reviewing the “Summary of Transition Support for P1 Student” devised by schools through SEMIS within six to eight weeks upon the commencement of a new school year and offer professional advice. Schools have to provide a copy of the “Summary of Transition Support for P1 Student” to parents so that they can understand the support arrangements by schools and make suitable complement to enhance the effectiveness of support and home-school communication.

Early Identification and Intervention Programme for P1 Students with Learning Difficulties

5. The EDB has been implementing the ‘Early Identification and Intervention Programme for Primary One Students with Learning Difficulties’ (EII Programme) in all public sector

¹ A sample of parental consent form is available at Appendix 1 to the EDB Circular No. 15/2019 on “Transfer of Information of Students with Special Educational Needs”. Since the EDB will check students’ schooling status through the Enrolment Survey conducted in September every school year, schools are advised to input new record of parental consent in SEMIS after ascertaining that schooling status of the P1 student concerned could be retrieved in SEMIS.

² A function for printing the “Summary of Transition Support for P1 Student” is available in SEMIS for schools’ use.

primary schools. Starting from the 2019/20 school year, primary schools should include P1 students with assessment information and/or progress reports as targets of the Programme. For those P1 students without assessment information and/or progress reports, schools can follow the procedure described in Paragraph 6 to observe and identify their learning needs to ensure that P1 students with learning difficulties can be identified and supported at an early stage.

6. According to the procedure of the EII Programme, teachers should start observing the learning performance, social adjustment and self-care abilities of P1 students through classroom interaction, review of homework assignments and individual interviews, etc. at the beginning of the school year, and complete the Observation Checklist for Teachers (OCT) during the period from December to January. For P1 students with assessment information and/or progress reports³, teachers should also complete the OCT for them and input their identification results into SEMIS for tracking and monitoring of their progress. The SST should hold meetings with teachers concerned and the school-based educational psychologist (EP) in January to February for identifying the degree of learning difficulties of the students according to the results of the OCT and learning performance of the students. Schools should issue a notice to the parents concerned under the EII Programme to keep them informed of the identification results and follow up services⁴ of the students.

7. The school should formulate and implement intervention plans for P1 students identified with marked learning difficulties, devise “Summary of Support for Student”⁵ for them and regularly review their progress. If schools have already devised the “Summary of Transition Support for P1 Student” for these students at the beginning of the school year, they should review if the recommendations are still applicable. If the support measures are still applicable, the “Summary of Transition Support for P1 Student” of these students can serve as the “Summary of Support for Student”; if adjustment is needed, the school may additionally issue the “Summary of Support for Student” to the parents.

8. In addition, schools should regularly review the implementation of the EII Programme and input the relevant information into SEMIS as scheduled, which includes entering the number of P1 students identified as having learning difficulties and the information of the students identified with marked learning difficulties in early March, as well as the information

³ Schools will normally arrange Individual Education Plans for those P1 students being assessed as having Intellectual disability to cater for their learning difficulties. Schools do not need to complete the OCT for them.

⁴ A sample letter can be found in the SST reference handbook on the EII Programme (2019).

⁵ A sample of “Summary of Support for Student” is available at Appendix 5 to the EDB Circular No. 6/2019 on “Learning Support Grant”.

of the Year-end Evaluation Form of the EII Programme in early July.

9. The SST reference handbook on the EII Programme, the OCT, related remedial materials and the leaflet on EII Programme in different languages have been uploaded respectively onto the EDB website⁶ and the Hong Kong Education City website⁷ for the use of schools. The EDB organises a seminar on EII Programme at the beginning of every school year to update teachers about the latest development of the EII Programme and share the good practices of schools in early identification and intervention. For enrolment, please refer to the Training Calendar System⁸ of the EDB.

Early Identification and Support for P1 Students with Speech and Language Impairment

10. For P1 students with pre-school speech and language assessment or progress reports indicating that the students had speech and language impairment (SLI), schools should refer the students to school-based speech therapists (SBSTs) for follow-up as soon as possible. Schools should also early identify and refer students suspected to have SLI to SBSTs for follow-up through the school-based early identification and referral mechanism, in which teachers using the “Teachers’ Observation Checklist for Identifying Students with Speech and Language Impairment” provided by the EDB or other school-based screening tools. SBSTs, after receiving the referral cases, will review the speech, language and communication needs of students, early plan and arrange appropriate school-based speech therapy service (SBSTS), such as individual therapy, group or in-class support, etc. SBSTs will also communicate with parents regularly to ensure that parents understand the speech and language abilities, intervention goals, intervention plans and progress of the students. In addition, schools should arrange comprehensive SBSTS in the domains of prevention, intervention and development in the form of school-based services through the cooperation of SBSTs, teachers and parents, to enable students in need to receive appropriate support early, and enhance the overall speech and language abilities and learning effectiveness of students.

3-Tier Intervention Model

11. In each school year, the EDB will provide Learning Support Grant (LSG) for public sector ordinary primary schools and DSS primary schools to cater for the P1 students identified to have SEN. In addition, the EDB will, premised upon the number of P1 students identified as

⁶ EDB website: EDB Home (<https://www.edb.gov.hk>) > Education System and Policy > Special Education > Resources > Special Education Resource Centre

⁷ Hong Kong Education City website: <http://www.hkedcity.net/sen/spld/basic/page> (Chinese version only)

⁸ Please input keyword(s) ‘EII Programme’ in the website of Training Calendar System of EDB.

having marked learning difficulties through the EII Programme in the previous school year (based on the information input by schools in SEMIS in March⁹ each year), provide the schools with LSG to help them arrange appropriate support for P1 students in need. Public sector ordinary primary schools and DSS primary schools should flexibly deploy the additional resources to cater for the needs of students of P1 and other grades with SEN or learning difficulties according to the 3-Tier Intervention Model¹⁰.

12. Under the 3-Tier Intervention Model, teachers should adopt the principle of “intervention before assessment”. Basically, Tier-1 support refers to early identification and catering for the diverse learning and adjustment needs of all students, including those with mild or transient learning or adjustment difficulties through quality teaching in regular classrooms. Tier-2 support refers to additional support or “add on” intervention, such as small group tutoring, after-school remedial programmes and pull-out remedial programmes for students with persistent learning or adjustment difficulties. Tier-3 support refers to individualised intensive support for students with persistent and severe learning or adjustment difficulties, including drawing up of Individual Education Plans.

13. Meanwhile, schools should regularly review the progress and needs of the students with SEN, and adjust the support arrangement according to their needs. For students receiving Tier-2 or Tier-3 support, in addition to formulating support measures for them and providing their parents with a copy of the “Summary of Support for Student” for reference at the beginning of the school year¹¹ to facilitate home-school collaboration, schools have to review the progress of students after intervention at the end of the school year and complete the “Year-end Evaluation Form for Individual Student” for them. A sample of the Form is available at the respective appendix of the Operation Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education¹².

14. If teachers suspect that a student might need support in areas other than learning or language impairment, they should consult the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), SST or Student Guidance Personnel for advice on the follow-up actions; and consult

⁹ That number will have deducted the number of P1 students with SEN who have already been provided with LSG in the respective school year.

¹⁰ Please refer to the Operation Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education for details of 3-Tier Intervention Model.

¹¹ Procedures of formulating “Summary of Support for Student” for P1 Students can be found in Paragraphs 4 and 7 of this circular. Please note that the “Summary of Support for Student” is not required for students with IEP whose parents are involved in IEP meetings.

¹² Website of the Operation Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education: EDB Home (<https://www.edb.gov.hk>) > Education System and Policy > Special Education > Support and Subsidy > Ordinary School > [Integrated Education](#) Operation Guide

the school-based EP or other professionals as appropriate on the formulation of follow-up and support plans. In addition, the SENCO and SST should strategically plan and implement the policies and practices of IE, including strengthening the collaboration with the school-based EP on the implementation of EII, so that with professional support, teachers can cater for the students in need appropriately.

Home-School Co-operation

15. Home-school co-operation is crucial to the implementation of IE. After admission of P1 students, schools should inform parents about the early identification and support measures for P1 students through established communication channels, like P1 orientation meeting and parent day on IE policies and practices so that parents can cooperate correspondingly. The class teachers of P1 students should also discuss with parents of students with SEN regularly about the learning progress of their children and encourage them to observe their learning conditions and behavioural performance. Parents should take the initiative to consult teachers about issues in upbringing their children if necessary. The effectiveness of support measures for students with SEN or learning difficulties will be further enhanced through home-school co-operation.

Enquiries

16. For enquiries on issues of IE, please contact the respective Inspector of Special Education Support 3 Section of your school. For enquiries on the details of EII, please contact Educational Psychology Service (New Territories East) Section on 3547 2218. For enquiries on school-based speech therapy service, please contact the respective Inspector of Speech and Hearing Services Section.

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for Secretary for Education