

25 May 2020

Education Bureau Circular No. 4/2020

**Enhancement of the Staff Establishment of
the Boarding Sections of Aided Special Schools**

[Note: This circular should be read by –

- (a) Supervisors and heads of aided special schools with a boarding section – for action; and
- (b) Supervisors and heads of other aided special schools and heads of sections – for information]

Summary

This circular informs aided special schools with a boarding section of the details about the enhancement of the staff establishment and resources of the boarding sections of aided special schools by the Government starting from the 2020/21 school year.

Background

2. The objective of providing boarding service in special schools is to cater for the needs for long-term residence of students with more severe or multiple disabilities and hence facilitate their schooling during school days. The Education Bureau (EDB) assesses students' needs for boarding service in light of their individual circumstances and arranges suitable boarding service for them according to their diverse needs for long-term residence.

3. To help schools provide more appropriate support for boarders with more severe or multiple disabilities, starting from the 2014/15 school year, the EDB has increased Saturday and Sunday manpower for the boarding sections of special schools, re-graded the establishment of Enrolled Nurse in the boarding sections as Registered Nurse, and provided an additional grant for boarders with medical complexity. In view of the stakeholders' rising expectation for boarding service and a growing number of boarders in need of 7-day boarding service and more intensive care in recent years, the EDB will upgrade warden's rank on the establishment of special schools' boarding sections with a comparatively larger size and enhance the provision of resources from the 2020/21 school year, to let special schools have more manpower to provide better services to cater for the physical and mental well-being of all boarders.

Details

4. According to the Chief Executive's 2019 Policy Address, the Government will further enhance the staff establishment of the boarding sections in aided special schools starting from the 2020/21 school year to improve the quality of services, so that more appropriate support will be provided for the boarders of these schools. Relevant enhancement measures are as follows:

- (i) upgrading the ranks of warden and assistant warden on the establishment of boarding sections with a capacity of 40 or above, and increasing the number of assistant warden and houseparent-in-charge on the establishment correspondingly to strengthen the collaboration between the management teams of boarding sections and school sections in special schools to provide more appropriate life skills training and counselling for boarders;
- (ii) further improving Saturday and Sunday manning ratios for boarding sections so that special schools offering 7-day boarding service will have extra manpower to take care of their boarders; and
- (iii) providing an additional grant for the boarding sections of schools for children with physical disability (PD), moderate intellectual disability (ID), severe ID and visual impairment (VI) cum ID to employ personal care workers or hire related services.

Rank of Warden and Establishment of Assistant Warden and Houseparent-in-charge

5. Starting from the 2020/21 school year, the rank of warden on the establishment of boarding sections with a capacity of 40 or above will be upgraded to Social Work Officer, while the rank of warden of boarding sections with a capacity below 40 will remain as Assistant Social Work Officer.

6. In addition, the rank of assistant warden of boarding sections with a capacity of 40 or above will be upgraded correspondingly to Assistant Social Work Officer, with the number of post on the establishment increased to 2. Schools can follow existing arrangement to appoint 2 staff of the approved establishment of houseparent(s) and programme worker(s) as assistant warden. In tandem, 1 houseparent-in-charge may be appointed among every 4 houseparents in these boarding sections.

Saturday and Sunday Manning Ratios for Boarding Sections

7. The manning ratio of houseparents, programme workers, nurses, cooks and janitor staff for the boarding sections of special schools offering 5-day and 7-day boarding service will be increased to 1 : 2 starting from the 2020/21 school year. Besides, the number of watchman in boarding sections offering 7-day boarding service will be increased across-the-board to 4.

8. For the improvement measures set out in paragraphs 5 to 7 above, the relevant sections of Code of Aid for Special Schools, Code of Aid for Aided Schools and Compendium to Code of Aid for Aided Schools will be amended accordingly.

Personal Care Worker Grant

9. Starting from the 2020/21 school year, the boarding sections of schools for children with PD, moderate ID, severe ID and VI cum ID will be provided with a Personal Care Worker Grant (PCWG). These boarding sections may deploy the PCWG to employ personal care workers or hire related services in light of their actual needs, so that the workload of houseparents and programme workers in taking care of boarders' daily life can be relieved and more focused efforts can be dedicated to the provision of training and counselling.

10. Eligible special schools will be provided with the PCWG each school year based on the number of nurses on the establishment of their boarding section, on the scale of one unit of additional grant for two nurse posts. In calculating the PCWG, the minimum portion of unit (after rounding off) is half a unit. The amount of each unit of PCWG will be determined according to the mid-point salary of a personal care worker as prescribed in the Salary Scale of Common Posts in the Non-governmental Organisations released by the Social Welfare Department, subject to annual adjustment ^{Note}. Special schools may, in light of their own needs, combine the PCWG with the Additional Support Grant for Enhancing the Support for Boarders with Medical Complexity in Aided Special Schools, Additional Cash Grant for supporting the 24-hour Ventilator-Assisted Students, etc. to employ personal care workers or hire related services. If the funds are insufficient to cover the expenditure, special schools may deploy the surplus under the Expanded Operating Expenses Block Grant (EOEBG) to cover the deficit. Any remaining deficit should then be covered by the schools' own funds.

11. If the PCWG is used for employment of personal care workers, all expenditure incurred, including salaries, leave entitlement and statutory benefits, such as Mandatory Provident Fund, long service payment and severance payment, should also be covered by the grant. For matters related to appointment and hiring of services, please refer to the School Administration Guide and relevant EDB circulars and guidelines (if applicable).

12. The PCWG will be disbursed to special schools in two instalments in September (the amount to be disbursed is seven-twelfths of the annual amount of PCWG) and April (the amount to be disbursed is five-twelfths of the annual amount of PCWG) each school year. The grant is not subsumed under the EOEBG and special schools are required to keep a separate ledger account to record all relevant transactions for making report as required (when necessary). Aided special schools must comply with the requirements in the EDB Circular Memorandum on submission of audited annual accounts and submit their inspected accounts to the EDB before the specified deadline.

13. In principle, special schools should fully utilise the PCWG in any school year. However, in view of the operational needs of their boarding sections, schools are allowed to retain a surplus up to 12 months' provision of the grant. Based on the annual audited accounts, special schools should return any surplus in excess of the capped amount to the EDB. Transfer of funds and/or its unspent balance to other accounts out of this cash grant is not allowed.

Note: The amount of each unit of PCWG in each school year is determined based on the mid-point salary of Personal Care Worker in respective September. For example, the grant rate of PCWG for the 2020/21 school year will be calculated according to the mid-point salary of Personal Care Worker in the September 2020 (i.e. 2020-21 Civil Service Pay). As the 2020-21 Civil Service Pay Adjustment is not yet announced, to facilitate special schools to plan and make reference, the 2019-20 Civil Service Pay is used to calculate the PCWG, and the amount is \$236,817. The EDB will adjust the amount of each unit of PCWG for the 2020/21 school year upon any adjustment of the mid-point salary of Personal Care Worker as at September 2020.

Enquiries

14. For enquiries about the said enhancement measures, schools may contact the Inspectors of the Special Education Support 1 Section (telephone number: 3509 7471 or 3509 7473). For enquiries about staff establishment, appointment and administrative matters, schools may contact the respective Senior School Development Officers.

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for Permanent Secretary for Education