

Education Bureau Circular Memorandum No. 13/2014

From: Permanent Secretary for Education To: Supervisors and heads of all aided schools for children with intellectual disability, schools for children with physical disability, schools for children with visual impairment, and schools for children with hearing impairment

Ref: EDB(SES1)/ADM/150/5/1(6) – for action; and Supervisors and heads of other aided special schools and Heads of Sections

Date: 17 January 2014 – for information.

Cash Grant for Specialist Staff in Aided Special Schools

Summary

This circular memorandum informs all aided special schools that the provision of Cash Grant for Speech Therapist (CGST), Cash Grant for Occupational Therapist (CGOT), Cash Grant for Physiotherapist (CGPT) and Substitute Nurse Grant (SNG) is enhanced with effect from 1 January 2014.

Background

2. Currently, CGST, CGOT, and CGPT are provided for schools' revocable freezing of vacant speech therapist (ST) / occupational therapist (OT) / physiotherapist (PT) posts and/or temporary replacement for STs/OTs/PTs on approved leave for a period of not less than 30 days respectively in exchange for a cash grant to employ qualified temporary ST/OT/PT or hire qualified speech therapy/occupational therapy/physiotherapy services to meet the needs of their students. For school/boarding nurses on approved leave or unfilled vacancies of school/boarding nurses, SNG is provided at fixed daily rates for hiring nursing service or employing daily-rated supply nurse(s) as temporary replacement, provided that the special school has made every effort to fill such vacancies.

Enhanced Arrangements

3. The enhanced arrangements which take effect from 1 January 2014 are as follows:
- (a) The rate of CGST/CGOT/CGPT for revocable freezing of vacant ST/OT/PT posts and/or temporary replacement for ST/OT/PT on approved leave for a period of not less than 30 days is revised from the starting salary point of the respective basic rank¹ to the

¹ plus Employer's contributions to Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes where appropriate

mid-point salary of the respective basic rank¹ in the event of basic ranks, or at the starting salary point of the respective promotion ranks¹ in the event of promotion ranks;

- (b) The provision of SNG is extended to cover revocable freezing of vacant nurse posts;
 - (c) The rate of SNG for revocable freezing of vacant nurse posts and/or temporary replacement for nurses on approved leave for a period of not less than 30 days respectively is revised from the fixed daily rate of the respective rank¹ to the mid-point salary of the respective rank¹. In case of temporary replacement for nurses on approved leave for a period of less than 30 days or for filling vacancies of nurse for a period of less than 30 days, the rate of SNG remains unchanged at fixed daily rates as announced in the relevant circular/circular memorandum; and
 - (d) The cap for freezing the vacant posts for encashment is adjusted to two OT posts and two PT posts, while the cap of one ST post remains unchanged. (Starting from the 2014/15 school year, the cap for freezing the vacant ST posts for encashment was adjusted to two for schools which have four or above ST posts in the staff establishment.)
4. The qualified period for revocable freezing of the vacant posts is up to one year within a school year. Under no circumstances shall a qualified period be less than 30 days.
5. The above encashment arrangements for the specialist staff aim to alleviate the recruitment difficulties of these staff. They will be reviewed in the 2017/18 school year, having regard to the actual supply and demand situation at that time and other factors as appropriate. (EDB conducted a review in mid-2018. The above encashment arrangements for the specialist staff as well as the cap for freezing the vacant posts for encashment will remain unchanged in light of the review results. EDB will closely monitor the actual supply and demand situation along with other relevant factors, and will conduct another review on the above encashment arrangements as and when appropriate.)

Utilisation of CGST/CGOT/CGPT/SNG

6. For freezing of vacant ST/OT/PT/Nurse posts, the respective cash grant is provided for schools in two installments to be payable in September and March for each school year. For temporary replacement for ST/OT/PT/nurse on approved leave, the respective cash grants will be provided for schools after receipt and verification of the related claim form(s) from the school.
7. CGST/CGOT/CGPT/SNG are grants outside the Operating Expenses Block Grant (OEBG) /Expanded Operating Expenses Block Grant (EOEBG). Utilisation of CGST/CGOT/CGPT/SNG is limited to hiring of respective qualified professional service or

employment of respective qualified temporary staff. For the latter, the grants have included all statutory employment-related payments such as severance payments, leave entitlement as well as related replacement during leave, etc. The schools will not be provided with additional funding to cover expenditure arising from the above employment.

Administrative arrangements

8. Schools are required to make the following administrative arrangements:
 - (a) To opt for CGST, CGOT, CGPT and/or SNG in exchange for vacant ST/OT/PT/Nurse posts for relief of recruitment difficulties, schools are required to obtain in advance the consent of the school management committees(SMC)/incorporated management committees(IMC) and the majority of STs, OTs, PTs and/or nurses respectively of the school. The usage of CGST/CGOT/CGPT/SNG must be endorsed by the SMC/IMC and made transparent to the staff of the school.
 - (b) Schools wishing to apply for CGST/CGOT/CGPT/SNG or daily-rated supply nurse reimbursement are required to complete the relevant sections of the claim form(s) at [Annex 1](#) (for CGST), [Annex 2](#) (for CGOT), [Annex 3](#) (for CGPT) and/or [Annex 4](#) (for SNG and daily-rated supply nurse reimbursement) and send it/them to the Recurrent Subventions Section of the Education Bureau (EDB) direct. Any adjustment to the cap will be included in the claim forms where necessary by 30 June each year. The updated claim forms are available at the website of the Education Bureau.
(<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/en/special-education/grants/cash-grant-for-specialist-staff-in-aided-special-schools.html>)
 - (c) For the cash grants in exchange for vacant posts, schools are required to submit the claim form(s) within the respective school year. For those in lieu of temporary replacement for ST/OT/PT/nurse, schools are normally required to submit the claim form(s) within one month after the leave period ends. In case the approved leave spans over two school years, schools should submit the claim form(s) for the approved leave period in the first school year at the end of the first school year, and the claim form(s) for the remaining leave period should be submitted separately in the following school year within one month after the leave period ends. For prolonged approved leave, schools may submit the claim form(s) at appropriate intervals, say every three months.
 - (d) For hiring of outside specialist services, schools are required to observe EDB Circular No. 4/2013 on Procurement Procedures in Aided Schools. For employing temporary STs/OTs/PTs/nurses or supply nurses, schools should also observe the qualifications,

conditions of appointment, etc. as stipulated in the Code of Aid for Special Schools/Code of Aid for Aided Schools. Appointment forms are not required to be submitted to EDB for appointments funded by these cash grants.

- (e) Schools should ensure that utilisation of each cash grant can be covered by the amount of provision given. In the event of a deficit, it should firstly be met by the surplus under EOEBG/the General Domain of OEBG. Any unsettled deficit will then be borne by the school's own funds.
 - (f) As the provision of these grants is a temporary measure to allow schools with greater flexibility in utilizing the resources to meet the students' need for timely specialist services, schools should not retain surplus of the cash grants as a matter of principle. However, in order to cater for the operational needs of the schools, schools are allowed to retain a maximum of 30% of 12 months' provision of each cash grant calculated as at the end of the school year. Surplus of each grant not exceeding such maximum amount at the end of a school year can be carried forward to the next school year and be spent only on the permitted use of the respective grants. EDB will claw back the surplus of each grant which is in excess of such maximum amount. Transfer of funds out of these cash grants is not allowed. For SNG, the foregoing clawback arrangement takes effect from the 2013/14 school year.
 - (g) Schools are required to keep a separate ledger account for each of these cash grants to record all income and expenditure chargeable to these cash grants. The payment records should be retained for seven school years.
 - (h) The SMC/IMC of the school would be accountable for proper use of all public resources, including these cash grants. Schools are required to ensure that timely and appropriate speech therapy/occupational therapy/physiotherapy/nursing service is provided for students.
9. This circular memorandum supersedes the circular letters on "Substitute Nurse Grant in Aided Special Schools" dated 25 July 2007, "Cash Grant for Speech Therapist in Aided Special Schools" dated 27 January 2011 and "Cash Grant for Occupational Therapist and Cash Grant for Physiotherapist in Aided Special Schools" dated 12 July 2012.
10. For enquiry, please contact the respective Senior School Development Officer.

(Ms Hera CHUM)
for Permanent Secretary for Education