

## **Education Bureau Circular Memorandum No. 126/2017**

From : Secretary for Education

Ref : EDB(EPSK)/1-50/1

Date : 7 July 2017

To : Heads of Primary,  
Secondary and Special  
Schools

cc : Heads of Sections – for  
information

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### **Enhancement on Mental Health Promotion and Support for Students with Mental Health Needs**

#### **Summary**

This circular memorandum serves to remind schools to promote mental health, take appropriate measures to enhance support for students with mental health needs and to announce the relevant measures to be implemented with effect from the 2017/18 school year including the “Joyful@School” Campaign, teacher professional development programme, and provision of the Learning Support Grant (LSG).

#### **Details**

2. At present, schools adopt the Whole School Approach to Guidance and Discipline to provide broad and comprehensive guidance service for students in order to help them achieve whole-person development and life-long learning. The School Guidance Team will review the developmental needs of students in a comprehensive manner, devise overall plans for guidance services, provide individual/group intervention or referral services, for students with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties as well as support other teachers by providing resource materials and sharing guidance skills and relevant experience, etc..

3. Moreover, the Education Bureau (EDB) has been encouraging schools to adopt the Whole School Approach directed at three levels, namely Universal, Selective and Indicated as follows to promote mental health

amongst students and to enhance support for students with mental health needs. At the Universal level, schools should raise awareness on mental health and enhance mental health literacy of students, teachers and parents, early detect students in need as well as strengthen students' resilience and mental health. Schools should also reduce the stigma associated with help-seeking behaviour. At the Selective level, schools should put emphasis on enhancing identification of and support for at-risk students. At the Indicated level, schools should ensure students with mental health problems (including those with mental illness) could receive timely and appropriate mental health support services.

4. In supporting students with mental health needs, schools should make reference to Sections 3.5.1 and 3.5.2 in Chapter 3 of the "School Administration Guide" to take care of students' health (including mental health). The main tasks of schools include soliciting parents' co-operation in reporting the medical history of their children, properly maintaining students' health records for reference, and obtaining parent consent before disclosing information to other parties; and schools should follow doctors' advice in making appropriate arrangements for students with health problems to participate in school activities. Schools should also make reference to the EDB's guideline entitled "How Schools can Help Students with Mental Health Problems" on the EDB website<sup>1</sup> in order to cater to the needs of students concerned. Besides, schools can refer to the Final Report of the Committee on Prevention of Student Suicides (CPSS) issued in November 2016 which has provided detailed recommendations to schools on means to support students with mental health needs at the Universal, Selective and Indicated levels respectively. The report has been uploaded to the EDB website<sup>2</sup>.

## **Mental Health Promotion**

5. Besides promoting mental health at school and strengthening health education as well as life and death education at the Universal level through

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<sup>1</sup> Website: <http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/student-parents/crisis-management/about-crisis-management/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> Website: <http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/teacher/prevention-of-student-suicides/index.html>

means like value education, schools could also join the mental health projects and guidance programmes<sup>3</sup> implemented by the EDB on enhancing students' resilience and coping with adversities. The "Joyful@School" Campaign was launched jointly by the EDB and the Department of Health in the 2016/17 school year and will continue in the 2017/18 school year. The campaign aims at enhancing students' awareness and understanding about mental health and their competency in coping with environmental changes. The EDB also encourages schools, in the process of strengthening their bridging programmes for Secondary 1 and Secondary 4 students, to put more emphasis on enhancing students' adjustment and adaptation capacity which may include problem solving skills, positive emotions and positive relationships.

6. To encourage multi-sectoral collaboration between non-governmental organisations (NGOs)/tertiary institutions and schools to conduct activities relating to the promotion of mental health, the Quality Education Fund (QEF) Steering Committee has exempted the quota for collaborative mini applications under the "Joyful@School" Campaign since April this year. The maximum grant approved for mini applications has been increased to \$200,000. Schools (or in collaboration with NGOs) can submit applications to the QEF through the simplified application mechanism for funding to implement related activities under the "Joyful@School" Campaign. The details of the mini application under the "Joyful@School" Campaign has been uploaded to the EDB website<sup>4</sup>.

### **Professional Development Programme**

7. To raise teachers' concerns on mental health so as to facilitate work at the Selective level in school and to enhance schools' capacity to identify and support students with mental health needs, the EDB will conduct professional development programme starting from the 2017/18 school year. The

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<sup>3</sup> Programmes include the "Enhanced Smart Teen Project for secondary schools" and the "Understanding Adolescent Project" for primary schools to enhance students' self-confidence and resilience; the "Pupil Ambassador Scheme on Positive Living" to equip primary and secondary school students' life value. Moreover, the "Healthy Harmonious and Caring Campus Award Scheme" fosters a caring culture and creating a harmonious campus of primary and secondary schools.

<sup>4</sup> Website: <http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/teacher/prevention-of-student-suicides/index.html>

programme includes elementary training for teachers at large and in-depth training for designated teachers. Details are as follows:

	Elementary Course	In-depth Course
Content :	Fundamental knowledge and skills in promoting mental health on campus, and identifying and supporting students with mental health needs.	Advanced knowledge and skills in identifying and supporting students with mental health needs including students with suicidal risk, implementing preventive measures of student suicide, and coordinating the deployment of manpower and resources in school.
Participant Group :	Serving teachers in ordinary primary and secondary schools as well as special schools	Serving teachers in ordinary primary and secondary schools as well as special schools, who are tasked with the related responsibilities, such as teachers of the Guidance Team
No. of Hours :	18 Hours	30 Hours

8. Detailed information will be announced in late August via the Training Calendar System (Elementary Course ID: SE0020180018; In-depth Course ID: SE0020180019). It is required that in the three-year period as from the 2017/18 school year, at least one teacher per school will have completed the Elementary Course; and at least one designated teacher will have completed the In-depth Course. The Supply Teacher Grant will be provided by the EDB for regular teachers in schools accordingly. We also welcome principals and vice-principals to attend the above courses.

## **Additional Resources**

9. Starting from the 2017/18 school year, the LSG that the EDB provides for public sector ordinary secondary and primary schools to support students with special educational needs will cover students with mental illness so that schools<sup>5</sup> will have additional resources to enhance their support to cater for these students' learning, social, emotional and behavioural needs at the Indicated level.

10. There are many types of mental illness. Those commonly found amongst children and adolescents include Anxiety Disorders, Depressive Disorders and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. There are also more severe mental illnesses such as Psychotic Disorders and Bipolar Disorder, the symptoms of which are usually more persistent and their influence are usually more pervasive. Schools should provide the EDB with diagnostic reports from psychiatrists or the Child Assessment Service of the Department of Health/Hospital Authority. Schools should also evaluate the students' performance on the areas of learning, behavioural and emotional adjustment to determine the level of support. Based on the above information, the EDB will judge whether the students have been confirmed with or suspected of mental illness and the corresponding support needed, and will calculate and release the entitled amount of the LSG to the schools.

11. Students with mental illness need treatment by medical professionals. They are usually followed up by psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, and medical social workers. Schools play a complementary role in coping with the advice on treatment and rehabilitation given by the medical professionals, and help the students overcome the difficulties they are facing, which are transient in nature. Specifically speaking, the School Guidance Team should take the lead in coordinating, formulating and implementing support strategies for students with mental illness in school as well as contacting professionals inside and outside school so as to provide support services in different levels with respect to the students' difficulties and conditions, such

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<sup>5</sup> All public sector ordinary schools, including schools that have been provided with the LSG and schools which are implementing the "Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme" or "Integrated Education".

as drawing up of an Individual Education Plan, and reviewing the effectiveness of the support strategies and resource allocation from time to time. In addition, the School Guidance Team should collaborate with the Student Support Team in consulting professionals (including school social workers and educational psychologists) and parents to jointly determine the level of support required and the use of the LSG for the students, with a view to facilitate their integration into school life. For example, the LSG can be used for employing teaching assistants to design activities and materials in helping students engage in classroom learning activities, procuring outside professional support or counseling services (such as providing counseling on behavioural and emotional problems in school), and conducting school-based teacher training activities. For details, please refer to the Education Bureau Circular (EDBC) No. 8/2017 on the “Learning Support Grant”.

### **Enquiries**

12. For enquiries, please contact Ms. S M CHIU, Senior School Development Officer of the Educational Psychology Service (Kowloon) Section, at 3698 4303.

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for Secretary for Education