

Education Bureau Circular Memorandum No. 36/2018

From: Secretary for Education

To: Supervisors/Heads of government and aided primary schools, and special schools

Ref.: EDB (GD)/20/10/10/O

Date: 27 April 2018

c.c. Supervisors/Heads of primary schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme and private primary schools – for reference

The Policy of ‘One School Social Worker for Each School’ in Primary Schools

Summary

Starting from the 2018/19 school year, the Government will provide more resources for public sector primary schools and special schools to enhance their social work and guidance services, and progressively implement the policy of “one school social worker for each school” in public sector primary schools. This circular memorandum sets out the details of the policy and encourages schools to implement “one school social worker for each school” policy according to school-based circumstances. This circular memorandum should be read together with the Education Bureau (EDB) Circular No. 2/2012. Special schools should refer to paragraphs 15 to 17 of this circular memorandum and the paragraphs concerned under the “Administration, Payment and Accounting Arrangements” of this circular memorandum. The EDB will also inform special schools of the arrangements where applicable separately.

Background

2. When the Government first provided student guidance service for primary schools, the then Education Department deployed “Student Guidance Officers (SGO)” to provide guidance service to students in need in primary schools. Later, the then Education Department created “Student Guidance Teacher (SGT)” posts in aided primary schools to provide school-based guidance service while the Government primary schools continued to have school-based SGOs to provide guidance service. The EDB implemented the Comprehensive Student Guidance Service (CSGS) in all primary schools starting from the 2002/03 school year. Since then, schools may choose to appoint SGTs or receive the SGS Grant to employ student guidance personnel on their own or to purchase service from non-governmental organizations to provide guidance service to schools. To further enhance the student guidance service in primary schools, a Top-up Student Guidance Service Grant (Top-up Grant) has been provided for all public sector primary schools with 5 or more classes as from the 2012/13 school year.

3. At present, public sector primary schools should formulate their CSGS Plan according to students’ needs and school-based circumstances. Schools are also required to build a student guidance system to implement holistic and integrated school-based guidance service through the Whole School Approach. This guidance system should work closely with other sub-systems, e.g. management and organization, learning and teaching, teacher training, parent education, etc. at school to provide all students with diversified guidance service.

Details of the New Measure

4. As announced in the 2018-19 Budget, the Government will enhance the current provision of student guidance service to primary schools by implementing the policy of “one school social worker for each school” in public sector ordinary primary schools starting from the 2018/19 school year with a view to strengthening social work and guidance services in public sector primary schools so that each public sector primary school will be ultimately served by at least one school-based registered graduate school social worker. Primary schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) will also be benefited under the new measure. The Government will also increase social workers in special schools and provide extra resources to public sector primary schools and special schools to enhance the support and supervision for the school social workers. The EDB will include the additional cost arising from the implementation of “one school social worker for each school” in aided primary schools in the DSS unit subsidy rate. As such, DSS schools have to make reference to the qualification of the social worker and manpower required under the policy of ‘one school social worker for each school’ as stated in this circular memorandum to enhance their social work and guidance services as appropriate.

New Funding Mode

5. Starting from the 2018/19 school year, the New Funding Mode will gradually replace the old funding mode. Under the New Funding Mode, schools may:

- (i) create a regular Assistant Social Work Officer (ASWO) post on the approved staff establishment¹. The salary of the ASWO employed by school is linked to civil servant ASWO, i.e. Master Pay Scale point 16 to point 33. The terms of appointment, welfare and supply staff arrangement are the same as specialists paid by the Salaries Grant² in school; or
- (ii) receive the School Social Work Service Grant (SSWSG) to employ a school-based registered graduate social worker or hire service of a school-based registered graduate social worker from a social work service provider. The SSWSG is determined in accordance with the mid-point salary of the ASWO. According to the salary level of 2017-18, the full year amount is \$583,560. The grant amount will be adjusted annually according to the salary of the ASWO.

As for schools employing SGTs, they can continue to employ their SGTs under the old funding mode.

6. Schools adopting the New Funding Mode to employ social workers must appoint at least one full-time school-based registered graduate social worker. For work and entry requirements of the social worker, please see [Annex 1](#). Schools which hire services should specify that the service provider must provide at least one full-time school-based registered social worker.

7. Schools that have chosen the New Funding Mode cannot revert to the old funding mode.

¹ Since the creation of posts in government schools is different from that of aided schools, this mode is not applicable to government schools in the 2018/19 school year.

² The school social worker, who fills the post, is a specialist under the approved staff establishment. He/she will enjoy the terms of appointment and welfare, including leaves and retirement arrangements, as specialists in school paid by the Salaries Grant. If this school social worker takes leaves as approved or for whatever reasons, the school can employ supply staff in accordance with related Code of Aid and related chapters in the School Administration Guide.

Nevertheless, schools that have chosen one of the New Funding Modes can change to another New Funding Mode in the next school year if there are sufficient grounds (e.g. resignation of the ASWO or expiry of the contract signed with the service provider).

8. All public sector primary schools are required to complete Annex 2 attached to this circular memorandum to confirm whether or not to change to the New Funding Mode in the 2018/19 school year. Schools should submit the completed form to the Guidance and Discipline Section on or before 31 May 2018.

9. All public sector schools currently receiving SGS Grant should switch to the New Funding Mode. In principle, these schools should change the mode as soon as possible. Nevertheless, the EDB understands that some of the public sector primary schools now receiving the SGS Grant may have already signed contracts with duration more than one year with the student guidance personnel or social work service providers. For this reason, the EDB will provide a three-year transitional period for schools to switch to the New Funding Mode before the 2021/22 school year. In case schools are not able to switch to the New Funding Mode after the three-year transitional period owing to the need for more time to handle personnel matters in respect of their serving student guidance personnel, including retaining their serving student guidance personnel due to special needs, they may discuss with the EDB separately.

10. Schools being served by SGOs of the EDB are also required to change to the New Funding Mode within the three-year transitional period, i.e., the EDB will cease to deploy SGOs to public sector primary schools to provide guidance service starting from the 2021/22 school year.

11. As regards those schools with SGTs, they can continue with the existing arrangements, including the appointment of SGTs, the regrading of non-graduate SGTs and transfer of the current SGTs under the same sponsoring body (SSB). The EDB will maintain close communication with the schools concerned and explore with them various feasible proposals so as to facilitate them in adopting the best way to provide guidance and social work services for their students.

12. In other words, under normal circumstances, except for those schools which have already appointed SGTs, all public sector primary schools are required to adopt the New Funding Mode starting from the 2021/22 school year.

Revision of the Top-up Grant Arrangement

13. The EDB Circular No. 2/2012 has set out in detail the arrangement of the existing Top-up Grant. For schools currently receiving the SGS Grant, they will follow the old arrangement as stipulated in the above circular, i.e. starting from the 5th or 18th class, each class will be provided with one unit of Top-up Grant, before switching to the New Funding Mode. After they have switched to the New Funding Mode, there will be a new arrangement for the Top-up Grant for them. Under the new arrangement, schools with 12 classes or above will be provided with the Top-up Grant. One unit of Top-up Grant will be provided for each class starting from the 12th class. Under the New Funding Mode and the new arrangement for the Top-up Grant, all schools will benefit from the additional resources. In order to enhance student guidance work under the existing funding mode, each school employing SGT will be provided with additional 6 units of Top-up Grant on top of those under the old arrangement.

14. As usual, the rate of the Top-up Grant is subject to annual adjustment in accordance with the movement of the Composite Consumer Price Index. The rate of the Top-up Grant under the New Funding Mode for each class is the same as the existing one. For the grant rate for the 2018/19 school year, schools should refer to the EDB's Circular Memorandum on revision of the grant to be issued in August 2018.

Increase of the Manpower of Special Schools

15. The Government has been providing social workers for special schools. At present, special schools are provided with 0.5 school social worker for every 35 students. Starting from the 2018/19 school year, the Government will enhance the provision of school social workers in special schools. One school social worker will be provided for special schools with the approved capacity at or less than 60 students, and subsequently 0.5 school social worker for every 30 students. The new measure can ensure that special schools with fewer students will be provided with at least one school social worker.

Provision of Additional Consultation Service Grant

16. Starting from the 2018/19 school year, each school choosing the New Funding Mode will be provided with a Consultation Service Grant (CSG) to purchase consultation, supervision and other support services to school social workers, such as casework consultation, urgent support for crisis, regular review and professional training. Special schools will also be provided with a unit of CSG for each school social worker to purchase consultation, supervision or other support services to school social workers as from the 2018/19 school year. According to the salary level of 2017-18, the full year grant amount is \$118,629, which will be adjusted annually in accordance with the salary of the Social Work Officer.

17. SSBs can consider coordinating the use of the CSG to support their school social workers/guidance personnel by purchasing services for their schools through quotation/tendering or appointing a social work supervisor so as to make the best use of the CSG. For details of involvement of SSB in schools' procurement activities, please refer to the Guidelines on Procurement Procedures in Aided Schools.

Administration, Payment and Accounting Arrangements

18. The above new arrangements and the release of grants are subject to the passage of the Appropriation Bill 2018 by the Legislative Council.

19. When appointing specialists including school social workers, primary schools should follow the qualifications, work requirements, staff establishment, salary and employment conditions stipulated in Annex 1. The relevant parts of the Code of Aid for Primary Schools and the Code of Aid for Aided Schools will be amended accordingly. If the serving student guidance personnel meet the qualification requirements, schools may consider according priority to employ them. For employment procedures, please refer to the relevant paragraphs of the School Administration Guide.

20. For uses of the SSWSG, Top-up Grant and CSG, please refer to [Annex 3](#) and [Annex 4](#). Schools can purchase social work service from service providers or employ staff on their own to prevent and handle student problems in school. Schools can combine the SSWSG, Top-up Grant and CSG with other school resources flexibly according to the school-based needs to employ at least one graduate social worker or purchase various student guidance services from non-governmental organizations. Schools may also employ extra guidance personnel. For employment of social workers or extra guidance personnel by using the grants, all expenditure related to salaries, leave entitlement and statutory benefits such as Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF), Long Service Payment and Severance Payment should also be covered by the grants. If the funds are insufficient to settle the payment, schools may deploy the surplus under the Operating Expense Block Grant (OEBG)/Expanded Operating Expenses Block Grant (EOEBG) or the school's own funds to cover the deficit.

21. When purchasing services, under the principles of openness and fairness, schools should have competitive quotation/tender exercises at regular intervals for service procurement. Under normal circumstances, the contract period for any service provider should not exceed 3 years. To ensure the stability of social work service and safeguard the well-being of students, the School Management Committees (SMC)/Incorporated Management Committees (IMC) may consider drawing up contracts with a longer contract period (e.g. 5 years) under these special circumstances with full justifications. The SMC/IMC should properly record such considerations and related factors to justify the extended contract period. An assessment panel to evaluate the offer based on a pre-determined marking scheme and evaluation criteria stipulated in the quotation/tender documents should be set up. On the other hand, in order to maintain the stability of social work service, schools should avoid drawing up contracts with a short contract period.

22. In general, schools should initiate a new quotation/tender exercise before the expiry of the existing service contract. However, in order to maintain the stability of the social work service, schools may specify a term in the service contract that schools reserve the right to extend the contract period (for example, not more than 1 year). Nevertheless, schools should prudently consider if the extension arrangement is unavoidable and fully justified, including whether the service provider has provided quality service during the contract period, it is specified in the terms of contract that the fee cannot be increased or an increase mechanism has been included during the extended period, same services can be obtained at a lower price as other primary schools in that period (if not, whether the quality of service is better and good enough to be a justification for an extension), and better services can be obtained as a result of new tendering. Schools should specify all considerations in the terms of contract. Nevertheless, schools should avoid this kind of contract amendment, and if unavoidable, adopt it only as a stop-gap measure. The reasons and relevant factors considered should be properly recorded to justify the extended contract period by the SMC/IMC.

23. Schools should note that the contract periods as set out in paragraphs 21 and 22 above are special arrangements for purchasing school-based social work service. Such arrangements should not be considered as a general practice when schools purchase other services.

24. The Top-up Grant will continue to be included in the OEBG/EOEBG/Expanded Subject and Curriculum Block Grant (ESCBG). As for the SSWSG and CSG, they will not be included in the OEBG/EOEBG/ESCBG. The payment will be provided on a half-yearly basis in September and April of the school year.

25. The SSWSG and CSG are school-specific grants. Schools are required to keep a separate ledger account for making report (when necessary). Aided schools are required to refer to the EDB's Circular Memorandum on submission of annual audited account in order to submit their accounts to the EDB before the deadline. For government primary schools, the grants should be charged to the user code assigned. The grants are financial year-based and the funds allocated will not exceed the budget.

26. Schools should manage their finances prudently. Nevertheless, aided schools can meet the deficits by the surplus of the OEBG/EOEBG. Since the SSWG and CSG aim at enhancing social work and guidance services, schools should make the best use of them to timely cater for the needs of students. Schools should not retain surpluses of these 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 12 months' provision calculated as at the end of each school year. Based on the annual audited accounts, schools should return the surplus which is in excess of the maximum amount to the EDB. As for government schools, the grants are financial year-based and any unspent balance in excess of the cap will lapse at the end of the relevant financial year.

27. Private primary schools will continue to be served by SGOs from the EDB. As for DSS schools and schools offering Full-time Initiation Programme, the above grants will be subsumed in the Unit Subsidy Rate and the Block Grant.

Evaluation and Accountability

28. To ensure the quality of student guidance service, schools should formulate their CSGS Plan according to students' needs and school-based circumstances, listing out their work targets and measures as well as the use of resources. Continuous evaluation should be conducted during the school term. Schools should also compile an Evaluation Report on CSGS each year, conducting evaluation and analysis in a scientific and objective manner of the use of student guidance resources, the effectiveness of the services and the targets achieved, etc. The Evaluation Report should be approved by the SMC/IMC. Schools need to file the Report on the CSGS properly for inspection by the EDB during advisory school visits. To understand schools' deployment of subsidy under the new funding arrangements, the EDB will also conduct a survey in schools to collect the related information on a need basis. Our professional colleagues on student guidance will continue to provide support to frontline school social workers and guidance personnel by paying regular school visits and discussing with principals/vice-principals on the work and supervision of school social workers. If necessary, consultation, professional advice and school-based support will be offered.

Briefing Session

29. A briefing session will be held on 3 May 2018 to introduce the details to schools. Please refer to the EDB's Training Calendar for details.

Enquiry

30. For enquiries, please contact the Guidance and Discipline Section of the EDB.

District	Phone Number
Hong Kong	2863 4618
Kowloon	2863 4791
New Territories East	2863 4686
New Territories West	2863 4689

Ms Y Y SO
for Secretary for Education

Appointment of School Social Worker in Primary Schools

1. School social work service in primary schools aims at:
 - helping students build a sense of self-esteem and self-discipline as well as a positive and optimistic attitude, and developing their potentials to the fullest and achieving healthy personal growth under a positive school climate;
 - helping students cultivate a respectful attitude towards others and a sense of commitment, develop an interest in learning and establish harmonious interpersonal relationships as well as play a positive and active role in their family; and
 - strengthening the connection between family, school and the community in nurturing students so as to equip students with the ability to cope with various challenges of growth and work independently.

2. The school social worker in a primary school, being the ex-officio member of the guidance team, plays an important role in the Comprehensive Student Guidance Service (CSGS). Apart from assisting the school in drawing up the student guidance policy and the Annual CSGS Plan, the primary school social worker should also render assistance to the school in implementing student guidance service in the following areas: personal growth education, support service for parents and teachers, and responsive service for students with specific needs. These remedial, preventive and developmental student guidance services include: casework, group work and programmes, consultation and coordination of community resources.

3. To be eligible for appointment as a school social worker in a primary school, a candidate must have attained professional accredited training and the following qualifications:
 - (a) registered under the Social Workers Registration Ordinance, Chapter 505;
 - (b)
 - (i) a local degree in Social Science majoring in Social Work, or equivalent; or
 - (ii) a local degree, or equivalent, and has successfully completed a one-year post-graduate course in Social Work at an approved institution; or
 - (iii) a local degree, or equivalent, and has successfully completed an approved two-year post-graduate course in social study/social work; or
 - (iv) a local degree, or equivalent, and a Master's Degree in Social Work obtained at an approved institution;
 - (c) English Language (Syllabus B) and Chinese Language at Grade E or above in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination, or equivalent; and
 - (d) the ability to speak fluent Cantonese.

4. Schools may request the primary school social worker to handle a certain number of cases and organise a certain number of programmes having regard to their own circumstances. Schools are advised to strike a proper balance between the two requirements.

Application Form for “One School Social Worker for Each School” in Primary Schools

Please submit the application for enhancing the Comprehensive Student Guidance Service by fax (2564 4643) or by post on or before **31 May 2018** :

Guidance and Discipline Section
Education Bureau
Room 601, Cityplaza 3,
14 Taikoo Wan Road,
Hong Kong

(Remark: Please ensure that sufficient postage is paid to avoid unsuccessful delivery of mails. Any underpaid mail items will be disposed of by the Hong Kong Post.)

To: Guidance and Discipline Section of the Education Bureau

- Starting from the 2018/19 school year, we will create a regular school social worker post at the Assistant Social Work Officer rank
- Starting from the 2018/19 school year, we will apply for the School Social Work Service Grant
- In the 2018/19 school year, we will keep the existing funding mode of student guidance service

(Please choose only one of the above)

School Name :

Name of Contact Person:

Position of Contact Person:

Telephone Number:

Fax Number:

Signature of Supervisor : _____

Name of Supervisor: _____

Date: _____

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Uses of “School Social Work Service Grant” and “Top-Up Grant”

The uses of the School Social Work Service Grant and Top-up Grant are basically the same as Student Guidance Service Grant and the Top-up grant listed in the Guide on Comprehensive Student Guidance Service uploaded to the EDB webpage. Schools can combine the grants with other school resources flexibly according to students’ needs and school-based circumstances. Aside from employing at least one graduate social worker on their own or hire social work services from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), they can purchase various student guidance service from NGOs:

- (a) Increasing the stationing days of the school social workers/student guidance personnel deployed by NGOs (ranging from 1 to 5 days) or employing additional full-time or part-time school social workers/student guidance personnel to cater for more students in need. The student guidance personnel are required to be registered social workers, registered teachers with qualifications and experience in guidance and/or teaching or other professionals with qualifications on counselling.
- (b) Systematic life-skills training packages and/or thematic developmental training activities for youth development (on themes such as enhancement of resilience, prevention of drug abuse/bullying, internet addiction, relationships with the opposite sex) to help students stay away from undesirable influences and develop a healthy lifestyle; and/or support groups for students and individual counselling service to help them overcome their behavioural and emotional problems in order to prevent student problems in school. The above guidance programmes can be conducted as one-off thematic activities, a series of activities lasting for several days/months or long-term and regular guidance programmes. Services can be provided in the form of group counselling or services for the form/whole school;
- (c) Services for parents, such as parent groups, talks on parenting skills, a series of training programmes for parents, parent networks to strengthen home-school cooperation so that children can grow up healthily under the care of parents and school; and
- (d) Professional development programmes to enhance teachers’ guidance skills so as to strengthen their understanding of students’ needs and their abilities to identify students with emotional and behavioural problems/at high risk as well as teachers’ classroom management strategies.

Uses of “Consultation Service Grant” (CSG)

To ensure that students are provided with quality school social work/student guidance service, schools have to engage professional consultation services for school-based social workers/student guidance personnel. When making use of the CSG to procure additional professional supervision service from service providers with established professional quality assurance, schools may refer to the following recommendations and make adjustments based on the needs of schools:

1. In relation to the supervisor service to provide consultation, supervision and support to school social workers/student guidance personnel, the supervisor must be a registered social worker holding a recognized degree or above in Social Work with at least 10 years’ experience working as an ASWO or equivalent, preferably having working experience in primary schools. In respect of special schools, work experience in special schools is preferable.
2. Providing the following consultation, supervision and support to school social workers/student guidance personnel:
 - (a) Casework - e.g. assessment and intervention skills, report writing, consultation skills to school and parents; and provide advice and more intensive support on the handling of difficult cases;
 - (b) Teacher support level - e.g. assist in planning teacher training according to needs;
 - (c) School system level - e.g. (i) assisting in overall emotional and behavioural analysis of students; (ii) advising on the mechanism and policy of student support, crisis management and school-based guidance policy; and (iii) providing review reports to schools for reference and filing at the end of the school year;
 - (d) Professional issue and development level - e.g. arranging professional training, professional ethics, sharing of updated resources development and researches in social work;
 - (e) Individual level - e.g. discussing with school social workers/student guidance personnel of their strengths and weaknesses, participating in annual appraisals of these colleagues, providing special coaching to school social workers/student guidance personnel in need;
 - (f) School sponsoring body (SSB) level - e.g. advising, facilitating and advancing the overall development of the Comprehensive Student Guidance Service (CSGS) of the schools under the SSB.
3. Consultation, supervision and support can take the following forms:
 - (a) The supervisor conducts regular visits to school to have meetings with the social workers individually or in small group and a review meeting with school each year with the records properly maintained;
 - (b) Providing regular professional training to school social workers/student guidance personnel, (The number of training programmes or number of training hours each year may be set out);
 - (c) Reviewing the documents (e.g. case records, minutes of meetings, activities plans and evaluation and CSGS Annual Plan) written by school social workers/student guidance personnel and suggest improvement;
 - (d) Providing individual coaching and on-site support whenever deemed necessary (including ad hoc issues, urgent/complicated cases or service disruptions) as well as the deployment of manpower as appropriate;

- (e) In view of the needs arising from child abuse cases handled by the school social worker, professional supervision will also cover the chairmanship of the Multi-disciplinary Case Conference on Child Abuse convened by the Family and Child Protective Services Units of the Social Welfare Department (SWD) (for details, please refer to paragraph C, Chapter 11 of the “Procedural Guide for Handling Child Abuse Cases (Revised 2015)” issued by the SWD).