

EDUCATION BUREAU CIRCULAR MEMORANDUM NO. 84/2023

From: Secretary for Education

To: Heads of all government, aided, caput
and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools

Ref: (2) in EDB(SES1)74/1429/2000(25)

Date: 1 June 2023

School Partnership Scheme in Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 School Years

SUMMARY

This circular memorandum invites primary and secondary schools to participate in the School Partnership Scheme (the Scheme) for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 school years.

BACKGROUND

2. The Education Bureau (EDB) has all along encouraged schools to adopt the Whole School Approach (WSA) to implement integrated education (IE), and provided public sector ordinary schools with additional resources, professional support and teacher training to help them cater for students with special educational needs (SEN). We have, among others, implemented the Scheme since the 2003/04 school year, under which special schools are invited to serve as Special School cum Resource Centres (SSRCs). Special schools with rich experience and expertise will support students with SEN in ordinary schools through sharing of knowledge and skills, short-term attachment programme, etc. Upon years of efforts and practice of the WSA to IE, ordinary schools have accumulated considerable experiences and achievements. In this connection, we have optimised the Scheme in the 2021/22 and 2022/23 school years to provide support services that better suit the needs of schools and students.

DETAILS

3. In the 2023/24 and 2024/25 school years, the first support mode under the Scheme will continue to specifically cater for students with intellectual disability (ID) with the adjusted mode of collaboration between special schools and ordinary schools, whereas the second support mode will remain unchanged. Details are set out below:

- (a) The first support mode

We have invited 10 special schools to serve as SSRCs. With rich expertise and

experience in supporting students with ID, SSRCs will share with ordinary schools their knowledge and skills in catering for these students and assist ordinary schools in dealing with individual students with ID who display severe adjustment difficulties.

(b) The second support mode

We have invited 8 schools for social development (SSD) to serve as SSRC(SSD)s to provide support for their leavers (including students who completed the short-term adjustment programme in SSD, hereafter referred to as leavers) in their first year of returning to ordinary schools as well as for the ordinary schools concerned to facilitate the smooth and continuous re-integration of these students into school life.

The first support mode

4. SSRCs provide support services for ordinary schools with the notion of “reaching out”, “welcoming in” and “walking together”. Each SSRC will upload details of the support services tentatively for the next school year onto its website around end-June to mid-July of a school year for ordinary schools’ information and participation in the respective support activities premised upon their needs. In this connection, inspectors of the Special Education Support (SES) 3 and 4 Sections of the EDB will approach primary and secondary schools respectively to encourage their participation to the support activities according to their needs.

(a) “Reaching out” – organising thematic workshops

Each SSRC will organise at least 3 district-based or school-based thematic workshops every school year to share the effective strategies and skills in supporting students with ID.

(b) “Welcoming in” – opening up classrooms/holding sharing sessions

After each thematic workshop, SSRCs will open up classrooms/hold sharing sessions for teachers, teaching assistants and relevant staff who have joined the thematic workshop, so that they can visit SSRCs to observe classroom teaching and training activities of teachers of SSRCs, to understand how to apply the respective strategies and skills in an actual classroom setting.

(c) “Walking together” – provision of short-term attachment programme and consultation service

SSRCs will offer short-term attachment programmes for ordinary school students with ID who display severe adjustment difficulties to receive intensive remedial service at SSRCs. These students can also interact with peers of comparable ability, learn classroom practices and acquire social adaptive skills at SSRCs. Recommendations and experience sharing will also be made available to ordinary

schools via different means (e.g. provision of on-site/online/telephone consultation service and suggestions about training resource), with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of support provided by ordinary schools for these students.

In each school year, the short-term attachment programme run by each SSRC will support a maximum of 5 ordinary school students with ID who display severe adjustment difficulties. Each student will receive placement service for 3 to 6 months¹. Schools that intend to refer students to a short-term attachment programme should first seek advice from school-based educational psychologists or inspectors of the SES3 / SES4 Section of the EDB. With the recommendation of these personnel and consent of parents, schools may send the completed referral form² to the SES Section, which will then refer the student concerned to an appropriate SSRC for placement. The respective SSRC will approach the school concerned direct to discuss specific arrangements for admission to its short-term attachment programme.

In addition, teachers from SSRCs will provide training and consultation service for teachers of the schools concerned so as to enhance their professional capacity in supporting students who return upon completion of a short-term attachment programme. These teachers are required to participate actively in these professional development activities and collaborate with the SSRC in devising an individual education plan for the students concerned and reviewing their progress. During the initial period when these students re-integrate into ordinary schools after attachment, teachers from the SSRC will keep in touch with teachers of the ordinary schools and provide consultation service to facilitate the students' early adaptation to school life in their original schools.

The second support mode

5. Each SSRC(SSD) will upload details of the support services tentatively for the next school year onto its website around end-June to mid-July of a school year for the information of students, parents and ordinary schools.

(a) Student level

After SSD leavers return to ordinary school, SSRC(SSD)s will follow up each of the SSD leavers on their learning and adaptation in ordinary schools. They will

¹ The SSRC will, together with teachers of the school that has referred students to its short-term attachment programme, work out the support plan for the students concerned and determine the support period, which should not exceed 3 months in principle. If a review by both parties indicates that the target of the support plan has been achieved within 3 months, arrangement should be made for the student to return to his/her original school. The support period may be progressively extended by 1 to 3 months if further support is considered necessary after a review by both parties. In other words, the support period of a short-term attachment programme may be up to a maximum of 6 months.

² The referral form is available on the EDB website (<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/en/professional-support/school-partnership-scheme.html>).

provide guidance for individual students who are prone to experience learning or emotional and behavioral problems, and promote home-school collaboration in supporting these students. Specific services include offering advice on the choice of schools before a student leaves an SSD; helping students find out more about the ordinary schools they are going to attend and get well-prepared; providing students with guidance before admission to an ordinary school; initiating contacts to show care to students who have returned to an ordinary school, inquiring of how well they are doing and offering advice and assistance where necessary; holding gatherings for alumni; and maintaining communication with parents of SSD leavers and responding to their enquiries.

(b) School level

Upon obtaining consent from SSD leavers and their parents, SSRC(SSD)s will transfer the student information that they hold to the ordinary schools concerned, liaise with these schools about initiating professional discussion on issues of mutual concern, and promote home-school collaboration to enable the smooth and continuous re-integration of these students into school life in ordinary schools. Specific services include organising workshops/sharing sessions on handling of emotional or behavioural problems/provision of academic guidance; providing professional consultation for staff of ordinary schools; and offering on-site support services for individual school leavers with emotional problems or adaptation difficulties. Ordinary schools that have admitted SSD leavers can also take the initiative to approach SSRC(SSD)s so that efforts can be pulled together to help students re-integrate into school life.

6. The respective list of SSRCs and SSRC(SSD)s is available on the EDB website (<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/en/professional-support/school-partnership-scheme.html>).

Obligations of participating schools

7. Ordinary schools participating in the Scheme are required to actively engage in support activities organised by SSRCs/SSRC(SSD)s to learn from and tap on different experiences, acquire knowledge and skills, and apply them to support students in need. In order to support students effectively, the school management of participating schools should give teachers professional steer and support. Schools are required to deploy suitable teachers and give them adequate room to communicate and work with the SSRCs/SSRC(SSD)s, so as to enhance the professional capacity of teachers to support the respective students.

Evaluation

8. To evaluate the effectiveness of the Scheme, all the participating ordinary schools are

required to provide feedback on the support services received. Inspectors of the EDB will also pay visits to schools to understand the delivery of support services, and collect views from the schools, SSRCs and SSRC(SSD)s concerned.

ENQUIRIES

9. For enquiries, please contact the SES Section:

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Telephone no.</u>
SSRCs	Ms CHENG Siu-kuen, Susanna	3698 4421
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for Secretary for Education

c.c. Heads of sections – for information