

## **Education Bureau Circular Memorandum No. 60/2024**

From: Secretary for Education

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

Ref.: EDB(EPSK1)/1-50/1

Date: 12 April 2024

---

### **Mental Health@School 4Rs Mental Health Charter**

#### **Summary**

This circular memorandum informs public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools about the details of the 4Rs Mental Health Charter (4Rs Charter) launched by the Education Bureau (EDB) and calls for active participation from schools with the aim of enhancing student mental health.

#### **Background**

2. EDB attaches great importance to student mental health and has been supporting schools in addressing the mental health needs of students at three levels, namely “Universal”, “Selective” and “Indicated”<sup>1</sup>. Schools are encouraged to raise awareness of psychological well-being among students, teachers and parents, enhance their mental health literacy and build their resilience, while also creating a supportive and conducive environment for students to develop adaptive coping skills and ultimately achieve whole-person development.

3. Schools have been adopting a whole-school approach to address student developmental needs. They have responded actively to the mental health promotion measures and activities implemented by EDB in recent years to build a strong safety net for students. EDB issued a circular memorandum in November 2023 to promote the “Spread the Love, Care and Shine” Campaign<sup>2</sup>, and provided all publicly-funded primary and secondary schools with two additional grants, namely the One-off Grant for Mental Health at School<sup>3</sup> and the One-off Grant for Mental Health of Parents and Students<sup>4</sup>, in December 2023. Schools have been urged to prioritise student mental health as their primary concern, and collaborate with various stakeholders to

---

<sup>1</sup> At the “Universal” level, schools should raise the awareness on mental health and enhance mental health literacy among students, teachers and parents, early detect students in need, strengthen students’ resilience and mental health, and reduce the stigma associated with help-seeking behaviour. At the “Selective” level, schools should put emphasis on enhancing identification and support for at-risk students. At the “Indicated” level, schools should ensure that students with mental health needs (including those with mental illness) receive timely and appropriate support services.

<sup>2</sup> Please refer to EDBCM No. 209/2023 “‘Mental Health@School’ Measures for Promotion of Students’ Mental Health” for details.

<sup>3</sup> Please refer to EDBCM No. 216/2023 “One-off Grant for Mental Health at School” for details.

<sup>4</sup> Please refer to EDBCM No. 217/2023 “One-off Grant for Mental Health of Parents and Students” for details.

enhance the mental health of students, teachers and parents. Moreover, EDB has implemented the Three Tier School-based Emergency Mechanism (the Mechanism) since December 2023 through cross-departmental collaboration with the Health Bureau and the Social Welfare Department, to assist schools in identifying students with higher suicidal risk at an early stage and providing appropriate support as soon as possible. After reviewing the relevant circumstances and listening to the views of the sector, the Government has decided to extend the implementation period of the Mechanism until 31 December 2024.

4. To promote mental health in schools in a more comprehensive and systematic manner, EDB will launch the 4Rs Charter in the 2024/25 school year and is now appealing to all public sector and DSS schools to join the Charter.

## Details

5. In order for schools to set practical and feasible goals and take concrete actions to implement measures that promote students' physical and psychological well-being, EDB invites all public sector and DSS schools in Hong Kong to join its newly-launched 4Rs Charter and implement the various student mental health promotion measures set out there in starting from the 2024/25 school year.

## Objectives

6. The 4Rs Charter, which aims to promote mental health, encompasses the following four elements (the 4Rs), each with its specific objectives:

<b>Rest:</b> To help students develop healthy habits from a young age, such as having sufficient rest, adequate sleep and engaging in leisure activities.	<b>Relationship:</b> To strengthen students' relationships with their peers, teachers and parents to enhance their sense of connectedness; and help students understand their roles and significance in these relationships, thereby fostering their willingness to take on responsibilities and make contributions.
<b>Relaxation:</b> To teach students to take the time to relax, take care of their mental health and practise self-compassion.	<b>Resilience:</b> To equip students to adapt to the inevitable stress and setbacks in life, and teach them to handle their emotions, cope with stress and overcome difficulties with a positive attitude.

7. The 4Rs are equally important in promoting student mental health, and they are interconnected. Helping students develop healthy habits and strengthening their interpersonal relationships will enhance their resilience, thereby improving their physical and psychological well-being.

## Action pledges

### *Promoting student mental health*

8. Schools joining the 4Rs Charter must pledge to collaborate with parents and various stakeholders and take concrete actions by implementing the following measures and organising related activities, with a view to fostering student mental health. They should support students in developing healthy living habits, provide them with more opportunities to relax and unwind, help them build positive interpersonal relationships, and enhance their sense of well-being and resilience, thereby enhancing the overall healthy culture in schools.

#### (i) **Rest -**

- Review and suitably arrange school timetables to allow sufficient time for students to rest and relax. A quarter of the school time should be allocated for rest and relaxation on a weekly or cyclical basis. These may include recesses, lunch breaks, morning exercises, exercises between lessons and leisure activities (such as reading, ball games, music and art activities). Lunch breaks refer to the time for having meals and taking breaks after the meal, during which students can enjoy free time or be provided with choices of activities that contribute to their physical and psychological well-being. Arrangements such as scheduling make-up classes and academic assessments during lunch breaks are not recommended. This is to ensure that students have ample time to relax and interact more with their peers and teachers.
- Regarding assignments, it is quality rather than quantity that matters. Schools should formulate an appropriate school-based assignment policy and co-ordinate the workload across different subjects to avoid giving students an excessive amount of assignments. Relevant policies should be regularly reviewed and refined to strike a balance between the quality and quantity of assignments. Effective measures should be taken to provide students in need with homework guidance. These may include catering for their diverse needs by arranging tutorial sessions for students to complete some of their assignments under teachers' guidance. Schools should maintain adequate communication with stakeholders, explain the school-based assignment policies clearly to parents and students, and make the policies available on the school website for parents and the public to access so that they can understand the policies and the rationale behind.
- Review the existing assessment policies, including the frequency of dictations, tests and examinations, as well as the contents, scopes and modes of assessment. Measures include replacing traditional written tests and examinations with flexible and diversified modes of assessment; arranging less dictations, tests and examinations, or cancelling term examinations for individual year levels, particularly Primary One, where diversified modes of assessment instead of tests and examinations should be adopted in the first school term. Assessment at different key stages should be planned and arranged in a progressive manner to alleviate the academic pressure on

students.

- Convey to parents and students the importance of sleep for learning and physical and psychological well-being. Students should be encouraged to establish bedtime routines and good sleep habits, so as to achieve sufficient and quality sleep every day.

**(ii) Relaxation -**

- Arrange relaxation exercises for students regularly (daily/weekly/cyclically). These may include progressive muscle relaxation exercises, mindfulness practices, tea ceremonies and calligraphy.
- Organise Mental Health Day/Week/Month once a year to enhance awareness of mental health among school staff and students.
- Set up a Mental Health Corner/Room on campus to provide a space where students feel secure and comfortable, helping them relieve stress and attend to their emotional needs.
- Encourage students to engage in more physical exercise by, for example, arranging morning exercises/exercises between lessons, providing suitable sports equipment for students' use and participating in activities under EDB's "Active Students, Active People" (ASAP) Campaign (such as "MVPA60 Award Scheme"), so as to develop students' habit of regular exercise.

**(iii) Relationship -**

- Arrange at least one session per week for class teachers to conduct class-based activities with their students; or allocate time for them to meet with individual or groups of students to foster positive teacher-student relationships.
- Organise team building activities in classes (such as celebrations, games days and joyful fruit days) at least twice a year to provide opportunities for students to interact with their teachers and classmates, thereby promoting teacher-student relationships, fostering a sense of connectedness, while allowing teachers to become aware of students' emotional or other needs and provide timely assistance.
- Arrange at least two whole-school thematic activity days each year (such as Christmas parties, Chinese culture days, Lunar New Year lantern carnivals and campus thanksgiving activities) to promote co-operation, communication and positive interaction among students.
- Enhance students' skills in building relationship with others or fostering relationships with parents.
- Help students understand their roles and significance in different relationships, thereby fostering their willingness to take on responsibilities and make contributions.

**(iv) Resilience -**

- Make use of the "Sharing Sessions by Elite Athletes" video of the ASAP Campaign or other appropriate learning and teaching resources to empower students to develop proper values and attitudes, such as perseverance, diligence

and willingness to accept challenges; help them understand their personal strengths, weaknesses and potential; and inspire them to pursue their dreams and explore future possibilities.

- Cultivate students' proper values and strengthen their resilience by, for example, organising school-based activities, participating in programmes conducted by EDB or non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and promoting inspirational books for them to read.
- Systematically plan a school-based values education curriculum (including life education and health education), integrating comprehensive, day-to-day, diversified, reflective and practical learning activities within and beyond the classroom. These activities may include voluntary work, adventure-based training, and programmes on life education, mental health literacy, positive psychology or mindfulness, with the aim of acquainting students with the meaning and enjoyment of life, inspire them to respect and cherish life, and cultivate in them positivity and optimism to embrace adversities and challenges in their journey of growth.

### *Promoting Teacher Mental Health*

9. While attending to student mental health, it is also important for schools to pay attention to teacher mental health. We believe that a physically and emotionally healthy teaching force is key to nurturing positivity among students. Hence, providing a mental health-friendly workplace for teachers should be one of the school's priorities. For this reason, **schools joining the 4Rs Charter must also pledge to join the Mental Health Workplace Charter (MHWC), which is jointly implemented by the Department of Health (DH), the Labour Department and the Occupational Safety and Health Council.** By joining MHWC, schools will receive professional support (including online seminars, tailor-made mental well-being advisory services, mental health first aid training courses) and information on mental health community resources. In addition, organisers will arrange in-house workshops to facilitate the provision of on-campus activities aimed at enhancing mental health of school staff. For details of MHWC, please refer to the outline at **Annex I** or visit the MHWC webpage.

*MHWC webpage:*

<https://mentalhealthcharter.hk/en/index.html>



10. Furthermore, starting from the 2023/24 school year, EDB will commission NGOs or post-secondary institutions to organise courses on physical and psychological well-being for teachers every year. Starting from the 2024/25 school year, enrolment priority will be given to teachers from schools participating in the 4Rs Charter. Schools should note that these physical and psychological well-being courses are recognised as Continuing Professional Development activities and teachers participated in these courses would be awarded the training hours counted for meeting the soft target of training in each three-year cycle. For details of these courses,

please refer to the Training Calendar System webpage.

*Training Calendar System webpage:*

<https://tcs.edb.gov.hk/tcs/admin/courses/previewCourse/forPortal.htm?courseId=PDT020240067&lang=en>



### *Promoting Health in Schools*

11. The Government is taking forward the Whole School Health Programme (WSHP) to draw schools' attention to students' physical activities, healthy eating, mental health and social well-being, and encourage them to review and enhance their health promotion efforts. Given the interconnectedness of physical activities, diet, social well-being and mental health, **schools signing the 4Rs Charter are required to make a pledge to sign the Whole School Health Charter as well.** They will then become participating schools of WSHP, under which health promotion strategies can be formulated according to their school-based needs. DH will provide these schools with guidelines, checklists and overall health profiles of their students. Activities and training are offered under WSHP, enabling participating schools to carry on with their school-based health promotion efforts in a sustainable comprehensive, and effective manner. For details of WSHP, please refer to the outline at **Annex II** or visit the following webpage.

*WSHP webpage:*

<https://www.studenthealth.gov.hk/english/hps/hps.html>



### *Promoting Positive Parent Education*

12. Parents play a vital role in their children's development and learning. Parenting practices have a major influence on the self-esteem and mental health of adolescents. Schools participating in the 4Rs Charter should organise parent education programmes or activities every year to promote positive parent education. These initiatives may include parent-child activities, parent-child community services, and sharing sessions on ways to raise happy and positive children.

### **Inter-departmental and cross-sectoral support**

13. Various government bureaux/departments and NGOs are providing mental health support to students at different levels and in diversified modes. EDB will continue to engage them as partner organisations of the 4Rs Charter. Enrolment priority will be given to students, teachers and parents from participating schools for workshops, talks, courses and activities organised by these partner organisations. Information about the mental health promotion activities will be uploaded to the 4Rs Charter webpage. Participating schools can select activities or services that

suit their school-based needs and contact the partner organisations to make relevant arrangements.

#### **4Rs Charter webpage**

14. To facilitate the ongoing enhancement of mental health policies and measures by schools participating in the 4Rs Charter, EDB has launched a 4Rs Mental Health Charter webpage under the Mental Health@School website. The webpage contains relevant information for schools' references, including details of the action pledges, illustrative examples, a list of partner organisations and their activities, as well as a list of participating schools.

15. EDB will collect good practices from schools participating in the 4Rs Charter regarding the effective promotion of mental health among teachers and students. These resources will be shared with other schools through various channels to foster professional exchanges.

*4Rs Charter designated webpage:*

<https://mentalhealth.edb.gov.hk/en/promotion-at-the-universal-level/promotional-resources-for-schools/121.html>



#### **Application procedures**

16. Schools interested in joining the 4Rs Charter must pledge to join WSHP and MHWC as well. Please submit an application **on or before 31 May 2024 (Friday)** by:

- (i) **completing the enrolment form at Annex III** to join the 4Rs Charter and WSHP, and send it to the Educational Psychology Service (Kowloon 1) Section (Fax No.: 2715 8056); and
- (ii) joining MHWC **via the following webpage.**

**Enrolment form** on the MHWC webpage:

<https://mentalhealthcharter.hk/mhcharterform/Notice.aspx?LANG=EN>



## Enquiry

17. For enquires about this circular memorandum, please contact Ms Mandy YEUNG of the Educational Psychology Service (Kowloon 1) Section at 3698 4311.

Ms Mandy HO  
for Secretary for Education

c.c.

Heads of private primary and secondary schools } - for information  
Heads of Sections



## **Outline of the Mental Health Workplace Charter**

### **(I) Background**

The Mental Health Workplace Charter (MHWC), which is implemented jointly by the Department of Health, the Labour Department and the Occupational Safety and Health Council (OSHC), is a part of the “Shall We Talk” mental health promotion and public education initiative (the Initiative).

### **(II) Objectives and content of the Initiative**

#### *Objectives:*

1. Promote mental well-being at workplace including a respectful and positive environment;
2. Promote active listening and communication, encourage help-seeking, and facilitate early identification of mental distress and timely treatment; and
3. Create an inclusive and friendly workplace environment for colleagues with mental distress.

#### *Charter Statement:*

“We value and pledge to promote a mental health-friendly workplace environment”

### **(III) Joining MHWC**

#### *Chartered Signatories*

**Schools that pledge to promote a mental health-friendly workplace environment can apply to become “Chartered Signatories” of MHWC. Schools signing the 4Rs Mental Health Charter must also apply to become the MHWC Signatories.** Chartered signatories will be supported with:

- (i) in-house workshops, talks or online seminars, tailor-made mental well-being advisory services and mental health first aid training course delivered by the organisers\*
- (ii) information on mental health community resources

\*Note: Places for in-house workshops, talks, tailor-made mental well-being advisory services and mental health first aid training courses are limited.

### **(IV) Recognition scheme and actions**

*“Mental Health Friendly Organisation” or “Mental Health Friendly Supreme Organisation”*

“Chartered Signatories” may choose to attain either of the two titles, namely “Mental Health Friendly Organisation” and “Mental Health Friendly Supreme Organisation”, by completing a designated number of action items from a set of 12 as follows:

Mental Health Friendly Organisation	Completed at least three actions under Objective I
Mental Health Friendly Supreme Organisation	Completed at least three actions under each of Objectives I and II

12 items of action:

<b>Objective I - Promote mental well-being at workplace including a respectful and positive environment, active listening and communication, encourage help-seeking, and facilitate early identification of mental distress and timely treatment (A-H, eight items)</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>A</b>	Organise family and staff gatherings to promote sharing and activities for fun and enjoyment
<b>B</b>	Organise talks/workshops/activities to strengthen positive minds and respect in workplace
<b>C</b>	Promote information flow on mental health
<b>D</b>	Encourage help-seeking behaviour by providing information on mental health support services
<b>E</b>	Organise talks on mental health
<b>F</b>	Offer training to staff to equip them with basic skills to resolve conflict, provide peer support, and handle mental health emergency
<b>G</b>	Encourage colleagues to listen to each other and share mental health related experience
<b>H</b>	Introduce mentorship scheme to facilitate sharing on mental health-related concerns
<b>Objective II - Create an inclusive and friendly workplace environment for colleagues with mental distress (I-L, four items)</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>I</b>	Assign a team/coordinator to implement committed measures
<b>J</b>	Introduce human resources policies to care for employees with mental health needs and offer supportive environment to facilitate recovery
<b>K</b>	Introduce measures to promote work-life balance
<b>L</b>	Offer job opportunities to persons recovered or recovering from mental health issues

## **(V) Enquiries**

For enquires about MHWC, please call Ms FUNG at 3106 4348 / Mr YIP at 2116 5677 of OSHC or email to [mentalhealthcharter@oshc.org.hk](mailto:mentalhealthcharter@oshc.org.hk).

## **Outline of the Whole School Health Programme**

### **(I) Background**

Health and education are interconnected, and schools play a pivotal role in student development. The concept of Health Promoting School (HPS), advocated by the World Health Organization, is an effective, holistic and whole-school approach to health promotion, and has been adopted in many countries and regions, including Hong Kong.

The Department of Health (DH) launched the HPS Programme as a pilot project in 30 schools from the 2019/20 to 2022/23 school years. Building upon the experiences gained from the pilot project, DH renamed the programme as the “Whole School Health Programme” (WSHP) in the 2023/24 school year to continue supporting participating schools in their active health promotion efforts, while gradually introducing the HPS concept to other schools in Hong Kong.

### **(II) Objectives and content of WSHP**

Participating schools must pledge to develop school-based health promotion strategies under HPS model, focusing on six key factors, namely (i) healthy school policies; (ii) school’s physical environment, (iii) school’s social environment; (iv) community links; (v) action competencies for healthy living; and (vi) school health care and promotion services. WSHP currently encompasses four themes: physical activity, healthy eating, mental health and social well-being. Participating schools may set priorities based on their school contexts and students’ health needs, and develop school-based strategies and action plans for future health promotion efforts.

### **(III) School-based development pace**

**Schools joining the 4Rs Mental Health Charter are also required to sign up for WSHP.** DH will assist participating schools to build a healthy campus by offering the following support:

1. Providing schools with professional advice and health information, producing guidelines, checklists and overall health profiles of students to give schools a better picture of the effectiveness of their health promotion efforts and the health condition of their students, and assisting schools in reviewing and consolidating available resources.
2. Organising seminars and activities to equip stakeholders with practical knowledge and skills for establishing HPS.
3. Setting up diversified or interactive platforms for sharing HPS information and tools and health information, and providing professional advice through healthcare professionals.

Depending on their school-based experience, development pace and availability of resources, schools may participate in WSHP as “Pledged School”, “Action School” and “Advanced School”. Details are as follows: -

### *Pledged Schools*

Schools signing the Whole School Health Charter will be acknowledged as a “Pledged School” upon verification. They will receive health profiles of their students and various forms of support. They can choose to submit the HPS Checklist (Checklist) provided by DH by the end of the school year (i.e. April to June of each year) to become an “Action School”.

### *Action Schools*

Upon completion of the Checklist provided by DH, a “Pledged School” will be upgraded to become an “Action School” in the following school year. “Action Schools” are required to submit the Checklist every two years. DH will compile a report by collating the submitted Checklists and, based on the health profiles of the students, provide overall recommendations on health promotion for schools to plan, develop and organise health promotion activities for the coming year. Schools can also have access to additional activities organised/co-organised by DH to enrich their school-based health promoting strategies.

### *Advanced Schools*

An “Action School” that is well developed in terms of the six key factors on the Checklist will be invited to share its experience and awarded the title of an “Advanced School” for a period of three years.

## **(IV) Enquiries**

For enquires about WSHP, please contact the Nursing Officer of DH at 3163 4696 or 3163 4622.

To: Educational Psychology Service (Kowloon 1) Section (Fax No.: 2715 8056)

**Enrolment Form**  
**4Rs Mental Health Charter and Whole School Health Programme**

We, \_\_\_\_\_ (name of school), hereby pledge to join the 4Rs Mental Health Charter and the Whole School Health Programme. We commit to taking concrete actions to enhance the mental health of our students and staff by implementing various policies and measures and organising activities in collaboration with parents and stakeholders. We undertake to adopt the Health Promoting School model to promote health with a comprehensive and whole-school approach, with a view to entrenching the concept of “whole person health” into every aspects of the school setting and fostering a culture of health in our school. We will sustain our health promotion efforts with regard to our school-based experience and development pace.

Contact information:

Name of contact person:	
Post:	
Email address:	
School telephone no.:	Fax No.:
School address:	

Principal's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

School Chop: