

6 August 2012

Education Bureau Circular No. 12/2012

Learning Support Grant for Primary Schools

(Note: This circular should be read by -

- (a) Supervisors and heads of all government, aided and DSS primary schools – for necessary action; and
- (b) Heads of special schools and sections – for information.)

SUMMARY

This circular announces the simplified procedure for allocation of the Learning Support Grant (LSG) for Primary Schools. This circular supersedes the Education Bureau (EDB) Circular No. 10/2008 dated 23 May 2008.

BACKGROUND

2. To help schools cater for their students with special educational needs (SEN)¹ and academically low achievers (ALAs)², the EDB has been providing schools with additional resources, professional support and teacher training. Additional resources include LSG, Enhanced Speech Therapy Grant, additional teachers under the Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme (IRTP) and the Integrated Education Programme, etc. Schools should flexibly deploy their resources to cater for student diversity through the 3-tier intervention model, which consists of:

- (a) Tier-1 support – quality teaching in the regular classroom for supporting students with transient or mild learning difficulties;
- (b) Tier-2 support – “add-on” intervention for students assessed to have persistent learning difficulties, including those with SEN. This may

¹ The eight types of SEN are: Specific Learning Difficulties, Intellectual Disability, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Physical Disability, Visual Impairment, Hearing Impairment and Speech and Language Impairment.

² ALAs refer to those students who are backward by two or more years in academic attainment in at least two of the three key learning areas (i.e. Chinese, English and Mathematics) as assessed by teachers using the Learning Achievement Measurement Kit (LAMK) developed by the EDB.

- involve small group learning, pull-out programmes, etc.; and
- (c) Tier-3 support – intensive individualized support for students with severe learning difficulties and SEN, including drawing up of an Individual Education Plan.

3. Details on the provision and use of the LSG for primary schools are at Appendix 1. The information, as well as suggestions and details of the support measures have been included in the “Operation Guide on The Whole School Approach to Integrated Education”³ for schools’ reference.

DETAILS

4. The EDB has streamlined the arrangement for provision of the LSG starting from the 2011/12 school year. Specifically, in August each year, schools will receive the first allotment of the grant for the next school year, amounting to 70% of last school year’s entitled provision. Schools are required to submit the information on students with SEN and ALAs via the Special Education Management Information System (SEMIS) by 30 November in the same year. The EDB will calculate the entitled amount of LSG of the school for the whole school year accordingly and notify the school in February in the coming year. After deduction of the first allotment, the balance will be disbursed as the second allotment to aided and government primary schools in March and April respectively. In other words, schools can base on every school year’s entitled provision to estimate the minimum amount of LSG that they will receive in the next school year to facilitate an early planning of the support services for students accordingly.

5. With effect from the 2012/13 school year, we will further streamline the administrative procedures for the allotment of the LSG by disbursing the grant directly to public sector primary schools. For schools that have been provided with the LSG in the 2011/12 school year, we will continue the disbursement arrangement according to the calculation method as mentioned above. As for schools that are entitled to the LSG but have never submitted any applications or schools⁴ that have not been provided with the LSG in the

³ Website: http://www.edb.gov.hk/FileManager/EN/Content_7385/ie%20guide_en.pdf

⁴ This funding arrangement applies to: (i) all government and aided primary schools that have never submitted applications nor been provided with LSG in the current school year and have not operated the Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme (IRTP) or the Integrated Education Programme; (ii) schools operating only one IRTP: if the total number of SEN students and ALAs exceed the number of students allowable in one IRTP, the extra students will be counted for the purpose of LSG.

2011/12 school year because they have no such students, we will estimate the entitled amount of the LSG of the school for the whole year according to the number of eligible students in SEMIS in July of the current year, and the schools concerned will receive 70% of their entitled amount in August as the first allotment for the 2012/13 school year⁵. Schools are required to submit information on students with SEN and ALAs via SEMIS, together with their assessment reports, to the EDB by 30 November in the same year for our vetting of their entitled amount of LSG for the whole school year and disbursement of the second allotment. Details of the funding procedure and payment schedule are available at Appendix 2. Examples of calculation of the LSG can be accessed via the following website:

http://www.edb.gov.hk/FileManager/EN/Content_7433/lsgps_calculation_e.pdf

6. For schools participating in the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS), the EDB will continue to include the LSG in the DSS unit subsidy.

Evaluation and Accountability

7. When planning for the use of the LSG to support students with SEN and ALAs, schools should discuss with teachers and parents on the needs of the students to ensure that the resources are used effectively. Under the School Development and Accountability Framework, schools should embed the use of the LSG and the support for students with SEN and ALAs in their regular self-evaluation mechanism. Schools should also let their stakeholders, including parents, understand how school support their students with SEN and ALAs to enhance the school transparency. As such, schools are required to report its policies, additional resources and support measures, etc. on Integrated Education in its Annual School Report, and upload such information onto their school websites. Schools may refer to “Catering for Student Differences ~ Indicators for Inclusion”⁶ and “Operation Guide on The Whole School Approach to Integrated Education” compiled by the EDB for developing school-based inclusive culture, policy and practices.

8. For monitoring and improving the overall implementation of the LSG, schools are required to complete the “Year-end Evaluation Form at School Level on Whole School Approach to catering for students with SEN”

⁵ In future, if a school does not receive LSG in a specific school year because there are no eligible students, the Bureau will follow the arrangement above and count the number of students eligible for LSG in SEMIS as at July of that school year to estimate and disburse the first allotment of LSG of the school for the next school year.

⁶ Website: http://www.edb.gov.hk/FileManager/EN/Content_7385/indicators-082008_e.pdf

and return it to the EDB through SEMIS by 31 August each year. The evaluation form is available on the EDB's webpage and will be updated as and when required. The EDB will arrange regular school visits by professional staff and organise training and inter-school sharing sessions, etc. to ensure the optimal use of resources by the schools to cater for students with SEN and ALAs.

Accounting Arrangement

9. Schools are required to keep a separate ledger account to handle all income and expenditure of the LSG. Aided schools should adhere to the guidelines set out in the relevant circular memoranda for submission of audited annual accounts in categorising the accounts and submission of their annual accounts for auditing. For government primary schools, the LSG will be provided in the form of budget allocations. They are required to charge the expenditure to the designated user codes and are not allowed to over-spend the allocations within the financial year. Schools should also pay attention to the prevailing ordinances, regulations and circulars related to employment, procuring outside services and handling of accounts, etc.

10. Schools are encouraged to fully utilise the LSG provided every school year to cater for the needs of the students of that school year, hence, schools should not have large surplus of LSG. If aided schools have accumulated a surplus in excess of 30% of the 12 months' provision of the LSG, the surplus will be clawed back at the end of each school year. The government primary schools are allowed to carry forward the surplus of the LSG up to 30% of the current financial year's provision to the next financial year. Any excess surplus will be lapsed at the end of the financial year.

Enquiries

11. For enquiries on the arrangement of the LSG, please contact your respective Special Education Support Officers or Inspectors. For other enquiries, please contact your respective Senior School Development Officers.

Miss Hera CHUM
for Permanent Secretary for Education

Provision and Use of the LSG for Primary Schools

Provision of the LSG

1. Provision of the LSG for primary schools is based on the number of students with SEN and ALAs enrolled at the school and the tier of support required. The funding arrangements are as follows:

- A basic provision of \$120,000 per school per annum for the first one to six student(s) requiring tier-3 support;
- A grant of \$20,000 per student per annum for the seventh and each of the other students requiring tier-3 support;
- A grant of \$10,000 per annum for each student requiring tier-2 support; and
- A ceiling at \$1 million⁷ per school per annum.

Use of the LSG

2. The LSG should be used for supporting students with SEN and ALAs. Schools should flexibly and strategically deploy the LSG, and also pool together various school resources (such as the Capacity Enhancement Grant, Enhanced Speech Therapy Grant and Student Guidance Grant, etc.) to support students with SEN and ALAs. Specifically, schools can:

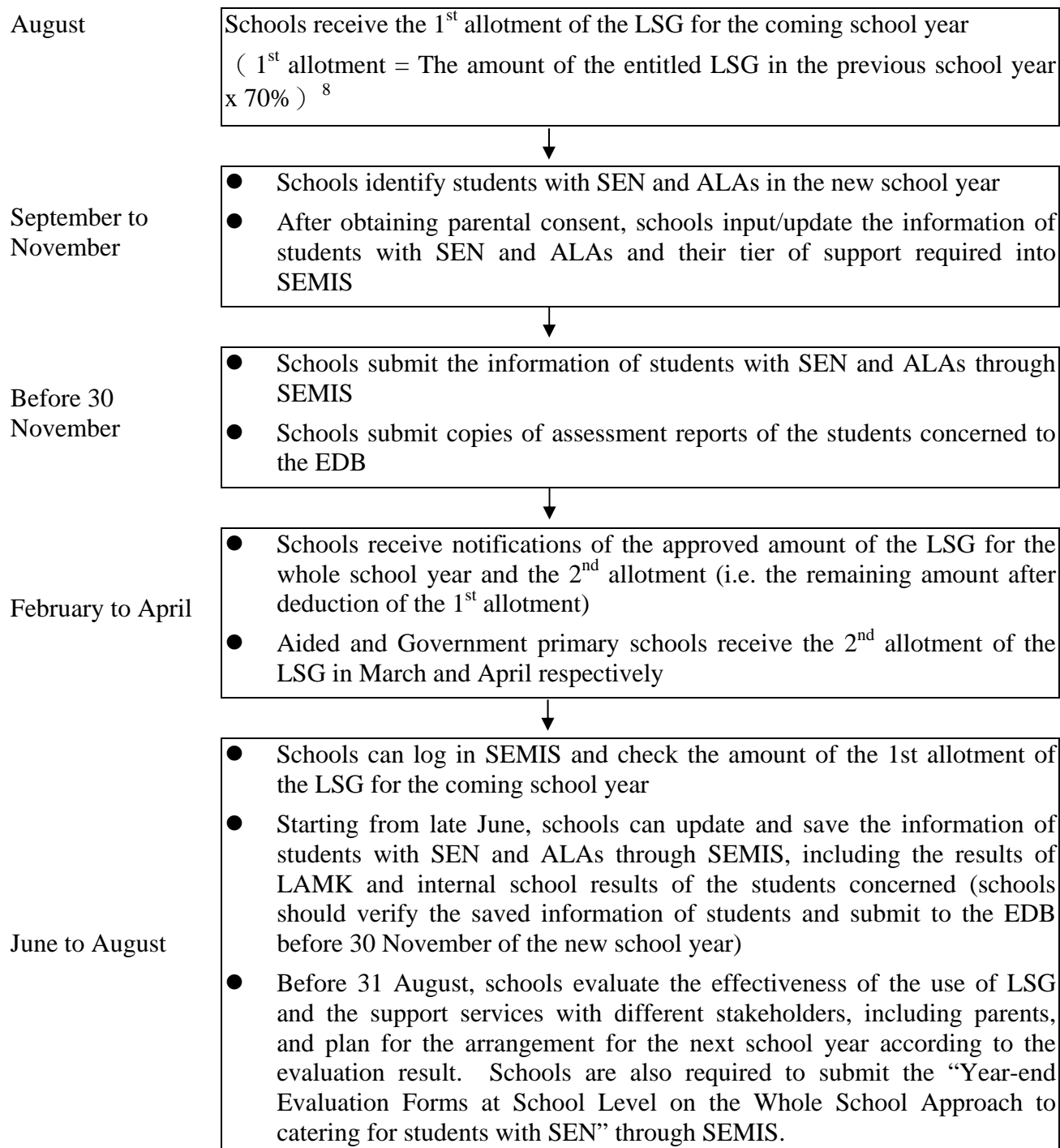
- Employ additional teaching staff, on a full-time and/or part-time basis, to facilitate small group or individual remedial support;
- Employ additional teaching assistants to assist teachers in designing learning activities and materials, supporting students in classroom learning activities, providing individual support on homework, training students with SEN on the use of assistive aids, helping students with writing problems to take notes, collecting data and records of student progress and liaising with parents, etc. ;
- Collaborate with other professionals through hire of services (for example, school-based remedial support programmes, behaviour guidance, speech therapy, etc.);

⁷ For primary schools adopting mixed mode (i.e. operating one IRTP with provision of LSG), the ceiling of LSG is capped at \$0.35 million per school per annum.

- Purchase teaching resources and aids (for example, graded readers or audio-visual software for strengthening the reading and writing abilities of students with Specific Learning Difficulties or Speech and Language Impairment) to facilitate the learning of students with SEN;
- Organise programmes on learning or inclusive culture so as to promote peer acceptance and support for students with SEN;
- Conduct school-based teacher training programmes to enhance teachers' understanding of integrated education and support measures so as to strengthen teachers' professionalism in catering for student diversity; and
- Strengthen home-school co-operation through organising groups of parent volunteers for instance, to provide paired-reading programmes for students.

3. Schools can also tap resources available in the community to provide more comprehensive services.

Funding Procedure and Payment Schedule of the LSG for Primary Schools



⁸ For primary schools that have not been provided with LSG in the 2011/12 school year, the 1st allotment for the 2012/13 school year = (The number of eligible students with SEN in July in SEMIS x \$10,000) x 70%.