External School Review: Information for Schools

I. Key Points about External School Review

- The "School Development and Accountability (SDA) framework" was introduced by the Education Bureau (EDB) in the 2003/04 school year in supporting schools to implement school-based management (SBM). The framework emphasises that school self-evaluation (SSE) is a core element of schools for their perpetual improvement. SSE, complemented by school inspections (including External School Review (ESR) and Focus Inspection), helps promote schools' continuous development and strengthen accountability through putting in place a systematic Planning-Implementation-Evaluation (P-I-E) cycle.

- To strengthen SBM, EDB announced the implementation of the "enhanced SDA framework" in the 2022/23 school year to bolster the accountability of staff in publicly funded schools in providing quality school education and enhancing the national education through the adoption of a whole school approach in particular. For details, please refer to the EDB Circular No. 15/2022.

- ESR is an ongoing measure that complements SSE. It aims at validating the effectiveness of SSE and giving schools suggestions for improvement.

- EDB conducts ESR in a school-specific and focused manner, focusing on schools' priority areas and needs in their development. A flexible approach to addressing schools' different contexts is adopted in arranging the related work.

Schools are **unique** in terms of:

- the school context, including:
  - ➢ the school mission
  - ➢ the school culture
  - ➢ the school size
  - ➢ the student background

- the priority areas in school development

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When reviewing school performance, the ESR Team **focuses** on:

- the effectiveness of SSE in enhancing the school's continuous development

- the measures taken to follow up the suggestions made in the previous ESR Report or Comprehensive Review[1] Report

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[1] Applicable to Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools

- The ESR Team uses different means, such as document review, observation and discussion with stakeholders, to understand the progress of school work from different perspectives for validating the effectiveness of SSE, which should be more focused on the seven learning goals under the enhanced SDA framework. The documents that schools need to prepare before an ESR are in fact their existing documents. There is no need to rewrite or repackage school documents, or compile new ones. Thus, over-preparation is not necessary.

II.   ESR Team and Duration of ESR

- To increase the transparency of the work of ESR and promote an exchange of experiences across schools, an ESR Team comprises EDB officers and front-line school personnel serving as External Reviewers (ERs). The ERs can provide his/her professional views from the perspective of a front-line education practitioner. Training is provided for all ERs before they take up their duties.

- Depending on the school size and context, the number of days[2] for which an ESR is conducted ranges from three to five.

III. Pre-ESR Arrangements

- About 12 weeks before an ESR, an EDB representative contacts the school by phone to notify them of the ESR period.

- The school is required to submit the following documents to the ESR Team: the latest two School Development Plans (SDP), Annual School Plans (ASP) and School Reports (SR)[3], as well as the latest Key Performance Measures and Stakeholder Survey Reports.

- The Team Leader (TL) discusses with the school to confirm the dates of the Pre-ESR Introduction Session, Pre-ESR Meeting and ESR and sends a notification letter to the school around 6 weeks before the ESR.

- The ESR Team Representative(s) brief(s) school personnel on the ESR arrangements prior to the ESR. All school personnel are invited.

- The school head is invited to a Pre-ESR Meeting to give a presentation on the school's recent development and effectiveness of its SSE work. He/She may be accompanied

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[2] Seven to eight days for a "through-train" school.
[3] For information on how to compile the documents, please refer to the writing guidelines and templates available on the following website:
http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/sch-admin/sch-quality-assurance/sse/index.html

by no more than two school personnel.

IV. Arrangements during ESR

- Reviewing existing school documents and student assignments

  ➢ The ESR Team reviews existing school documents and student assignments to understand how the school implements the development plan, monitors progress of work and evaluates the impact of related work on student learning. In addition, the Team collects evidence on how the school enhances students' academic and non-academic performance through continuous self-evaluation and improvement.

  ➢ Schools should make available six to eight samples of marked student assignments, taken from different levels and different Key Learning Areas/subjects, for illustration of curriculum and assessment strategies.

- Observation of learning and teaching activities[4]

  ➢ The ESR Team observes school activities, such as morning assemblies and activities that take place after school.

  ➢ The focus of lesson observation is mainly on the effectiveness of learning and teaching. The ESR Team does not set out to look for any preferred modes of teaching. Teachers are encouraged to conduct their lessons as usual and there is no need to submit lesson plans.

  ➢ The school is informed of the observation schedule of face-to-face and/or real-time online lessons before the commencement of lessons on the day of observation.

  ➢ The ESR Team observes the lessons of at least 50% of the teachers.

  ➢ Brief post-lesson observation sharing is arranged for the teachers observed as far as possible. The purpose is to provide an opportunity for the teachers observed to reflect on their teaching.

- Meetings/interviews

  ➢ Meetings/interviews with different stakeholders, for example, representatives of the Incorporated Management Committee (IMC)/School Management Committee (SMC)[5], parents, middle managers, specialists, teachers and students are flexibly arranged on a need basis to understand the implementation of the school plans and its effectiveness.

  ➢ The ESR Team also has meetings/interviews with students. The school is

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[4] Learning and teaching activities include activities/lessons conducted in face-to-face and/or online mode. Flexible arrangements will be made for observation of related activities in accordance with the actual circumstances of the school.

[5] Officer(s) of the Regional Education Office is/are invited to attend the meeting with representatives of the IMC/SMC.

informed of the students to be invited during the ESR. The students selected may include student leaders. The school should help to inform the students and their parents of the meeting arrangements.

- Corporate judgment and oral feedback

  ➢ On the last day of the ESR, the ESR Team conducts an oral feedback session with the school to share the Team's major judgements based on the corporate judgement made during ESR.
  ➢ The School Supervisor/SMC Chairperson, school head, key school personnel responsible for school development and teacher representatives are invited to take part in the oral feedback session. The total number of school personnel should not exceed twelve as far as possible.
  ➢ Officer(s) of the Regional Education Office is/are invited to attend the oral feedback session.

V. Post-ESR Arrangements

- Upon receiving the draft ESR Report, the school management should lead all teachers to discuss the inspection findings and suggestions for improvement, and encourage them to provide their views on ESR to EDB by completing the anonymous 'Online questionnaire on ESR' through the revamped E-platform for School Development and Accountability.

- The school's written response to the draft ESR Report, signed by the School Supervisor /SMC Chairperson, should be sent to the TL within four weeks.

- Upon receiving the school's response, the final ESR Report is issued to the School Supervisor/SMC Chairperson. The school's written response is included as an appendix to the final ESR Report to facilitate the stakeholders' understanding of the school situation from different perspectives.

VI. Follow-up of the ESR Report

- Upon receiving the final ESR Report, the school should release the ESR findings to the stakeholders. To uphold accountability and transparency, starting from the second term of the 2023/24 school year, EDB will upload the concluding chapter of the ESR reports of the respective school year to its website and schools are required to make their ESR Reports available on the school premises for reference and easy access of key stakeholders, including parents. Besides, schools are encouraged to upload the ESR Reports to their homepages for the purpose of accountability.

- The school management should lead the school personnel to follow up the recommendations made in the ESR Report.

- The Regional Education Offices of EDB continue to support schools' development through SSE, advising them on the formulation and implementation of the SDP and the improvement strategies to follow up the recommendations of ESR.

VII. ESR for Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) Schools

- The procedures and requirements of ESR for DSS schools are the same as those for public sector schools.

VIII. Reference Materials

- Schools may obtain detailed information relating to SSE and ESR by visiting the following websites:

EDB Circular No. 15/2022: The enhanced School Development and Accountability framework	https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/sch-admin/sch-quality-assurance/circulars-letter/EDBC22015EN.pdf	
Guidelines on the compilation of SDP, ASP and SR and related templates	http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/sch-admin/sch-quality-assurance/sse/index.html	
Performance Indicators for Hong Kong Schools and SSE Tools	http://edb.gov.hk/en/sch-admin/sch-quality-assurance/performance-indicators/index.html	
Professional Support/Online Resources	https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/sch-admin/sch-quality-assurance/professional-support-online-resources/index.html	

IX. Contact Information

For enquiries about ESR, please contact the Quality Assurance Sections by post, fax or e-mail.

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