

Education Bureau Circular No. 9/2004

(Formerly referred as EMB Circular No. 9/2004)

Primary One Admission (POA) System

(Note: This Circular should be read by

- (a) Supervisors and heads of government primary schools, aided primary schools, Direct Subsidy Scheme primary schools, private independent primary schools and kindergartens – for action;
- (b) Supervisors and heads of secondary schools and Sections – for information.)

Summary

This circular announces the POA mechanism to be implemented from the 2005/2006 school year (i.e. for admission to Primary 1 (P1) in September 2005) onwards. In essence, the current POA mechanism will continue to be implemented. This circular supersedes Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) Circular (formerly known as Administrative Circular) No. 38/2002 on the same subject.

Details

2. As recommended by the Education Commission (EC) in the *“Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong”* published in September 2000, the reform of the POA system would be implemented in two stages: the short-term mechanism has been implemented from the 2002/2003 to 2004/2005 school years, while the long-term mechanism is scheduled to be implemented from the 2005/2006 school year onwards. The Government should review the Points System before putting in place the long-term mechanism.

3. The major difference between the short-term mechanism and the long-term mechanism lies in the discretionary places quota. Under the existing short-term POA

mechanism, 30% of a school's P1 places are earmarked as discretionary places for admission of applicants with siblings studying or parents working in the primary school applied for (Type A applicants) and 20% of its P1 places for admission of applicants according to the Points System (Type B applicants). If the number of Type A applicants is less than the earmarked quota, the unallocated places can be filled by Type B applicants. Under the proposed long-term mechanism, a school will be allowed not more than 20% of its P1 places for admitting Type B applicants while all Type A applicants will be admitted. All the remaining P1 places will be allocated centrally.

4. The Government has consulted the EC on the way forward for the POA mechanism and shared views on the issue with some key stakeholders, including the POA Committee, the relevant education bodies and parent representatives. There is a general view that the current POA mechanism has basically achieved the objectives of the reform to the mechanism, and there is no urgent need to change the mechanism which has operated smoothly and is progressively accepted by stakeholders.

5. Having taken into account the views, the Government has decided that the current POA mechanism, including the Points System and letting Type B applicants take up the unused quota of Type A applicants, should continue to be adopted from the 2005/2006 school year onwards. Schools are requested to note this decision and refer to the Appendix for details of the current POA system.

6. For enquiries on this circular, please contact the School Places Allocation Section of the Education and Manpower Bureau at 2/F Lui Kee Education Services Centre, 269 Queen's Road East, Wanchai, Hong Kong (Telephone 2832 7700).

Mrs LAM FAN Kit-fong
for Secretary for Education and Manpower

Primary One Admission System

The Primary One Admission (POA) System is primarily net-based. The whole territory is divided into a number of School Nets. Each primary school will earmark about 50% of its total number of P1 places as discretionary places. The remaining 50% places are centrally allocated by the Education and Manpower Bureau based on parental choices. A time schedule of the major procedures of the allocation cycle is attached at Annex A. As the smooth implementation of the POA System depends on the full co-operation of all parties concerned, heads of schools are requested to note the time schedule for necessary action. Where appropriate, schools will be further informed of the details of procedures and actions to be taken at different stages of the allocation cycle.

Participation

2. All government and aided primary schools are required to participate in the POA System.
3. Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) primary schools, private independent primary schools and primary schools of the English Schools Foundation do not participate in the POA System. They recruit their pupils before the central allocation of public-sector places.
4. All children with the right of abode in Hong Kong and reaching the age of 5 years 8 months (as at 1 September of the year of entry to P1) are eligible to participate in the POA System except those who are already attending a primary school or have been allocated a P1 place previously.
5. **Children who have accepted the offer of P1 places in DSS primary schools will not be allocated P1 places in government or aided primary schools through the POA System.**

School Nets

6. Based on broad geographical areas and the distribution of government and aided primary schools, some 40 School Nets have been drawn up so as to maintain basically the “principle of vicinity” in allocating school places.

7. Taking into consideration the movement of population, development of new towns, opening of new schools and other factors, School Nets will be adjusted where appropriate.

Application by Parents

8. Parents will be reminded through the press, television and radio in September every year that children aged six or above by September next year are required to attend primary schools. The minimum age of entry to P1 is 5 years 8 months.

9. Parents will also be advised that if they intend to send their children to a public-sector school to study in P1 in September the next school year, they should submit an Application Form in mid September. These Application Forms will be available free of charge from the kindergartens or child care centres where their children are studying. For children not attending kindergartens or child care centres, their parents can get the Forms from the District Offices, the School Places Allocation Section or Regional Education Offices of the Education and Manpower Bureau.

10. Completed Application Forms for discretionary places should be returned within the specified period **direct to the school applied for**. If parents do not wish to apply for a discretionary place in any school, they should return the Application Form to the School Places Allocation Section of the Education and Manpower Bureau.

11. Parents can submit **only one** Application Form in respect of one child. If more than one application in respect of the same child is submitted, the applications for the discretionary place will be rendered void.

12. If parents have indicated on the Application Forms that the applicants may require special education, the Education and Manpower Bureau will acquire relevant information from departments concerned so as to review the applicants' special education needs and to advise parents on appropriate educational provision for their children.

Discretionary Places

13. After the closing of the application for discretionary places, schools will have to go through the applicants' records carefully to verify the addresses and all the connections claimed.

14. A school must **admit all applicants with siblings studying or parents working in the school** (Please refer to paragraph 15). This category of discretionary places will take up about 30% of a school's P1 places and is not subject to any restriction on school nets. If the number of applicants is less than 30% of a school's P1 places, the remaining places will be allocated by the school according to the Points System (Please refer to paragraph 16). If such applications exceed 30% of its P1 places, the shortfall will be made up by the places reserved for the central allocation.

15. Schools may set their own criteria for staff to be regarded as "parents working in the school". The same criteria should be applied to all staff of the school and made known to them beforehand.

16. Each school will allocate not less than 20% of its P1 places to applicants according to the Points System (Page 2 of Annex B). These places are also not subject to restriction on school nets. If there are applicants with equal scores under the Points System and the number of applicants exceeds that of the remaining discretionary places, applicants should be selected by 'randomisation' and schools are encouraged to refer the applications to the Education and Manpower Bureau for processing. If schools decide to draw lots on their own, they should conduct it in a fair and just manner and use the computer software provided by the Education and Manpower Bureau as far as possible. Schools should also inform parents in advance of the detailed arrangements.

17. Under the Points System, interviews with the applicants are not required. However, if schools consider it necessary to meet with the applicants, they should make it clear to the parents that the interview has no bearing on the admission of the applicants. Schools are also required to inform the Education and Manpower Bureau in advance of the tentative dates of the interviews.

18. Schools should ensure that no tests of any sort are conducted at the interviews.

19. **If a school is not oversubscribed for its discretionary places, it should accept all the applicants.** If a school considers that an applicant may require special education, the school should admit the child first and then refer him/her to the Education and Manpower Bureau at a later stage.

20. All schools will release their discretionary places admission results by putting up a notice at their premises on specified dates. Schools are required to register the successful applicants on the dates specified by the Education and Manpower Bureau.

21. After the registration period, all schools must send a full list of the registered applicants to the Education and Manpower Bureau on specified dates. If it happens that a school eventually does not operate any P1 class in the following school year, alternative P1 places will be arranged by the Education and Manpower Bureau for the pupils admitted by the school during the Discretionary Places admission stage.

22. The Education and Manpower Bureau will conduct investigations if schools are found to have conducted the discretionary places admission improperly.

Recruitment by DSS Primary Schools and Private Primary Schools

23. As mentioned in paragraph 3 above, DSS primary schools and private independent primary schools do not participate in the POA System.

24. DSS primary schools and private independent primary schools (particularly those with a feeder or nominated school relationship to a public-sector secondary school) are expected to follow the 'Guidelines on Conducting Interviews' (Annex C) in their recruitment of P1 pupils. The Education and Manpower Bureau should be informed in advance of the tentative dates of interviews so that an officer can be arranged to be present at the interview to ensure that no tests of any sort are given.

25. If a DSS or private independent primary school with a feeder or nominated school relationship to a public-sector secondary school fails to follow the 'Guidelines on Conducting Interviews', the school may lose that relationship.

26. Children who have accepted the offer of P1 places in **DSS primary schools** will not be allocated P1 places through the POA System. DSS primary schools should arrange for parents of these children to sign an undertaking to the effect that they agree to give up their claim for P1 places (including P1 discretionary places) through the POA System. Schools are also required to forward a full list of these children to the Education and Manpower Bureau on the specified dates.

27. All **private independent primary schools** will be asked to submit to the Education and Manpower Bureau before the central allocation a list of children who have been offered a P1 place for the following September. To avoid wastage of P1 places and to enable private independent primary schools to have a more accurate estimate of their P1 enrolment in the coming school year, individual letters will be sent to the parents of these children for them to confirm whether their children still require a public-sector place. For children still requiring a public-sector P1 place, their names will be sent to the private independent primary schools concerned for

information. Those who agree to give up the claim for public-sector places will be deleted from the POA System, and the P1 places secured during the Discretionary Places admission stage will also be cancelled.

Central Allocation

28. Each government or aided primary school will earmark about 50% of its P1 places for the central allocation. **10% of the places for the central allocation (i.e. about 5% of the P1 places of a school) are for unrestricted school choices and parents may choose up to 3 schools within or outside the school net in which they reside.** The remaining places are for restricted school choices and parents should select schools available in their school net in order of their preference. The central allocation is computer-programmed and based on parental choices.

29. Based on the demand and supply of P1 places, the school list for each school net will be finalised before the central allocation. In some cases, it may be necessary for some schools to provide places for applicants in two school nets.

30. Children who have not previously applied for a discretionary place or who have not been successful in securing one will be allocated a place in the central allocation. The Education and Manpower Bureau will inform parents of these children in writing to go to the designated centres to make choices of schools.

31. Parents will be required to complete a “Choice of Schools” form. Part A of the form is for unrestricted school choices and parents may make 3 choices of schools within or outside the school net in which they reside. Part B of the form is for restricted school choices and parents will be advised to list, as far as possible, all the schools in their home net in order of preference. The completed “Choice of Schools” form should be returned to the same centre on the specified dates.

32. The computer-programmed central allocation will first process the unrestricted school choices (Part A) and then the restricted school choices (Part B). The allocation is primarily based on parental choices.

33. In the allocation process, the computer will consider all parents’ first choices in Part A first. For oversubscribed schools, a 'random number' will be generated by the computer for each applicant to decide the order of priority in allocating school places. This process of allocation will continue with parents’ second and then third choices. For those applicants failing to secure a place in this stage, the computer will repeat the same process for their restricted school choices (Part B). After processing

all parental choices, if there are still applicants not allocated a place, the remaining places in the net will be allocated to them until every applicant is allocated a P1 place.

34. Results of the central allocation will be released in early June every year. Parents are requested to register their children with the schools allocated on the specified dates. Parents who are unable to register during the specified period will be required to make alternative arrangements direct with the schools concerned. The Education and Manpower Bureau will fill the vacancies arising from children not reporting for registration with late participants or applicants transferring to a new school net due to removal. Heads of schools may fill any available vacancy from early July to end of August.

General

35. Participation in the POA System including application for discretionary places is free of charge.

36. Children already attending P1 in a school or who have been allocated a P1 place previously are not eligible to participate in the POA System. However, if a child is attending P1 in a private or DSS school and wishes to transfer to a government or aided school, he/she can apply to the school direct for a P2 place.

Time Schedule of Primary One Admission

- Early September : Issue of Application Forms
- Mid September : Parents to submit Application Forms
- Late September : Schools to check and return the original copy of the Application Forms to the School Places Allocation Section of the Education and Manpower Bureau
- Mid November : Schools to announce results of discretionary places admission
- Mid November : Schools to register children admitted to fill discretionary places
- Late November : Schools to submit to the Education and Manpower Bureau a full list of children admitted to fill discretionary places
- January : Parents to make school choices for children who participate in the central allocation
- Early June : The Education and Manpower Bureau to release the results of central allocation
- June : Schools to register children admitted through central allocation

Points System for Selection of Applicants to fill Discretionary Places

Number of Discretionary Places

1. In early September, each government or aided primary school will be informed of the quota of discretionary places for the following school year. The discretionary places quota comprises the number of discretionary places earmarked for applicants with sibling(s) studying or parent(s) working in the school (X) and the number of discretionary places which may be offered to applicants according to the Points System (Y). **All discretionary places may be offered to applicants from any school nets.**

2. The number of discretionary places is determined by the number of provisional P1 classes, which is calculated as the outgoing P6 classes or the number of classrooms divided by 6 (whichever is the greater and subject to the availability of classrooms).

$$X = \text{No. of P1 classes} \times \text{Standard class size} \times 30\%$$

$$Y = \text{No. of P1 classes} \times \text{Standard class size} \times 20\%$$

3. **All applicants with siblings studying or parents working in the school must be admitted.** Each school is required to earmark 30% of its P1 places for admitting applicants of this category. If the number of applicants in this category is less than the earmarked 30% places, the remaining places will be allocated by the school according to the 'Points System' (paragraph 4 of Annex B). If the number of applicants exceeds the earmarked 30% places, the shortfall will be made up by school places reserved for the central allocation.

The Points System

4. **Applicants other than those with siblings studying or parents working in the school** should be selected according to the following Points System:

(i)	Parent(s) teaching or working full time in the kindergarten or secondary section if it is of the same address as the primary school	(20 points)
(ii)	Sibling(s) studying in the secondary section if it is of the same address as the primary school	(20 points)
(iii)	Parent(s) being a registered school manager of the primary school	(20 points)
(iv)	Parent(s) or sibling(s) being a graduate of the primary school	(10 points)
(v)	First-born child	(5 points)
(vi)	Same religious affiliation as the sponsoring body of the primary school	(5 points)
(vii)	Parent(s) being a member of the same organization which sponsors the primary school	(5 points)
(viii)	Right-aged applicants (i.e. applicants who are between 5 years 8 months and 7 years old)	(10 points)

Applicants may claim **ONLY ONE of the relationships from (i) to (v) and ONE of the relationships from (vi) to (vii)**. Applicants will be awarded the appropriate points for the relationships claimed upon verification.

5. It is the responsibility of the primary school to verify the relationships claimed. Parent/child relationships can be proven either by producing a Hong Kong Birth Certificate or a Statutory Declaration to that effect. Past pupil records can be traced by the primary school. Parents should provide acceptable proof, such as the child's Baptism Certificate, to the school to establish the religious affiliation relationship. Likewise, parents should provide proof of membership of the same organization to the satisfaction of the school in order to qualify for the points for that relationship. If a claimed relationship cannot be proven or verified, the claimed relationship should not be given any points. An applicant who claims to be first-born should be the eldest child of a family irrespective of sex.

6. If the number of applicants in a particular school is less than the number of discretionary places, all applicants should be offered a discretionary place.

Unless the head of school provides a written explanation acceptable to the Secretary for Education and Manpower, no application for discretionary places should be rejected under such circumstances.

Anticipated P1 Repeaters

7. Heads of schools are required to inform the Education and Manpower Bureau of the number of P1 places to be reserved for the anticipated P1 repeaters.

General

8. Heads of schools are reminded to keep good records of all documents related to the selection of applicants for discretionary places for future reference.

Guidelines on Conducting Interviews by Private Independent Primary Schools and Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) Primary Schools

1. The main objective of the interview is to enable the school to have a general idea of the child's overall development, including his/her verbal ability. **Under no circumstances should it be administered in such a way that the interview becomes a test of the child's acquired curriculum knowledge.**
2. To allow the child to respond with ease, the interview should be conducted in a relaxing and casual atmosphere. It is recognised that if the child becomes nervous from pressure and expectation put on him/her by adults, he/she is likely to react with negative response. It is important, therefore, that parents and teachers should not put the child under undue stress.
3. To ease the tension of children attending an interview in an unfamiliar environment, it is advisable for the school to set up a waiting room for children to play with toys or read picture books while waiting for the actual interview.
4. **The interview should be conducted on an individual basis.** Consideration needs to be given to the physical setting in which the interview is conducted. A quiet room which fosters privacy and pleasant atmosphere is preferred. It is to be noted that a rigid and formal seating arrangement might cause unease to children. Some children might feel more comfortable sitting behind a desk/table than being 'exposed' in the middle of a large room.
5. To speed up the interview process, more than one interview team may be conducted in separate rooms. However, the number of parallel interviews thus organised should be controlled to maintain a reasonably uniform standard of assessment.
6. It is recommended that the interviews be conducted in the form of free and informal conversations (chatting with the child) rather than serious, structured questioning. In interviewing children of such an age range, it is important that the interviewer should be attuned to the child's thought process and experience, and be ready to ask questions that follow up on answers and leads given by the child.
7. The attitude of the interviewer should be warm and sympathetic. It is desirable that he/she should be encouraging and reassuring throughout the interview.

8. The time span for each interview should be short. An interview of about 5 minutes is considered to be adequate.

9. The language used in the interview should be that of the child's mother tongue.

Contents of the Interview

10. Interviews should relate to a child's everyday experience and should not include questions which involve skills or knowledge that have to be specifically learned, such as arithmetical operations, language skills (other than ability to converse) or general knowledge.

11. Basically, conversations during the interview would touch on three main areas:

- (i) About the child himself/herself, such as :
name, age & birthday,
name of parents,
family members,
home address, etc.
- (ii) The child's interest and everyday experience, such as :
going to the supermarket,
visit to the park/playground,
favourite toys/stories/TV programmes.
- (iii) The child's ability to extend his/her imagination and to cope with simple problems, for example :
“What would you do if you got lost?”
“What would you do if you saw a friend hurt and crying?”

12. During the interview, observation of the child could be made on both non-verbal and verbal aspects. While the former refers mainly to the child's physical and emotional development, including attitude and behaviours (mannerism), the latter refers to the child's ability to use information in response to questions, to report on everyday experience, to express his/her needs and ideas, to ask questions as well as to describe and project on happenings and their outcomes.

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