

Chapter 9

Fee Remission Scheme¹

Objective

This chapter sets out the details of the school's Fee Remission Scheme. 10% of the annual school fee income is to be set aside to provide fee remission/scholarship to ensure that students will not be deprived of the opportunity to join our school due to financial difficulties.

Eligibility Criteria

The following categories of students are eligible for fee remission:

Category 1	Students with financial difficulties
Category 2	Students who are children of staff members
Category 3	Students with outstanding academic/ non-academic achievements

Assessment Method

The "Adjusted Family Income" (AFI) mechanism is used to assess the eligibility of a family for student financial assistance and its assistance level. The AFI mechanism is based on the following formula:

$$\text{AFI} = \frac{\text{Gross annual income of the family}}{\text{Number of family members} + (1)}$$

Note: For single-parent families of 2 to 3 members, the 'plus 1 factor' in the divisor of the AFI formula will be increased to 2.

The AFI eligibility benchmarks for various levels of assistance in the 2014/15 school year are listed in the table below:

2014 / 15 school year - AFI Groups between (HK\$)	Level of Assistance
0 – 40,000	Full
40,000 – 60,000	Half
60,000 – 70,000	One-fourth
> 70,000	Ineligible

A simulation test is provided on the school's website for parents' reference.

¹ The updated guidelines were discussed and approved at the SMC Meeting on 25.6.2014 (Ref. No. SMCM 3/2013) pursuant to the consultation at the Parent Teacher Association General Meeting on 14.3.2014 (Ref. No. PTAM 2/2013).

Publicity

The school should provide in the admission application form and School Profile, a hyperlink through details of the school's fee remission scheme can be obtained on the school website. The information should be provided to current students in March and to new students as enclosed to the letter offering admission.

Submission of Applications

New students are required to submit their application on or before the commencement of a school year. Current students should submit their application by end-April. Applications should be submitted in person within office hours. Late applications will not be accepted. The school will notify parents of the result one month after the application deadline.

Processing Applications and Release of Subsidy

The fee remission applications should be processed by the Fee Remission and Scholarship Committee and approved by the Principal. Any exceptional cases to be processed not in accordance with these guidelines should be endorsed by the SMC.

Fee remission application is considered on a school year basis. Fee remission is granted effective from the start of each school year. No mid-year application should be entertained.

Since all newly admitted students are required to pay the first installment of the inclusive fees before the commencement of school year, the paid amount will be refunded in cash to those students granted fee remission by October.

Handling of Appeals and Complaints

Any appeal to the application result should reach the school within one month from the date of notification. The appeals will be reviewed by the Appeal Panel consisting of the Principal, the Vice-Principal and the Department Head of Student Affairs. The school will inform parents of the result within two months.

Record Keeping

Records of unsuccessful application documents should be destroyed 3 months after release of results.

Other records (including application forms and assessment) should be properly kept according to the *Guidelines on Record Management* (Chapter 18 of the Staff Administration Manual).

Enquiries

All enquiries on the fee remission scheme should be referred to Administration Officer (Student Affairs) or Department Head (Student Affairs).

DETAILS

Existing Arrangements

2. In order to ensure that students will not be deprived of the opportunity to attend DSS schools solely because of their inability to pay fees, each DSS school is required to offer to parents a fee remission/scholarship scheme with a set of eligibility benchmarks no less favourable than the government financial assistance schemes for needy students. In assessing the students’ eligibility for fee remission, no factors except the parents’ financial situation should be taken into consideration.

3. At least 10% of the school’s total school fee income should be set aside to provide fee remission/scholarship for deserving students. If a DSS school charges a school fee between $\frac{2}{3}$ (two-third) and $2\frac{1}{3}$ (two and one-third) of the DSS unit subsidy rate, the school should set aside 50 cents for the fee remission/scholarship scheme for every additional dollar charged over and above $\frac{2}{3}$ (two-third) of the DSS unit subsidy rate. The total amount of funds set aside for the fee remission/scholarship scheme as described above should be calculated on the basis of the school fee levels as set out in the Fees Certificate issued by the EDB.

New Measures Introduced in the 2011/12 School Year

4. In the light of the recommendations made by the Audit Commission (AC) and the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the Legislative Council in the Director of Audit’s Report No.55 and the PAC Report No.55 respectively about DSS schools’ fee remission/scholarship schemes, the EDB introduced in the 2011/12 school year various new measures that would further increase the transparency and access of information of the fee remission/scholarship schemes, and provide parents who are receiving the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) or with financial difficulties with the necessary information to facilitate them to make an informed choice of schools.

5. Details of the new measures implemented as from the 2011/12 school year are as follows:

- (a) DSS schools are required to consult their School Management Committee (SMC)/Incorporated Management Committee (IMC) or parent-teacher associations on the operation of their school fee remission/scholarship schemes and how the related information should be presented to ensure that it can be easily understood by parents and prospective parents of the schools;

- (b) DSS schools are required to clearly indicate in the application form for admission and the School Profile published by the Committee on Home-School Co-operation that needy students, including those from families receiving the CSSA and students receiving financial assistance provided by the Student Finance Assistance Agency (SFAA), could apply for school fee remission. DSS schools are also required to provide in the admission application form details of their school fee remission/scholarship schemes and in the School Profile, a hyper-link through which details of the school fee remission/scholarship schemes can be obtained on the schools' websites. Contact information including telephone number for enquiry about the schemes has to be included in both the application form and schools' websites;
- (c) DSS schools are required to provide details of their fee remission/scholarship schemes to all students newly admitted to the schools by enclosing such details with the letter offering admission;
- (d) subject to the availability of funds under the school fee remission/scholarship schemes, in principle, DSS schools are required to offer fee remission to students from families receiving the CSSA and those receiving assistance from the SFAA. This should be clearly set out in the details of the school fee remission/scholarship schemes for information of parents/prospective parents;
- (e) when notifying students of the application results for assistance from the SFAA, DSS schools are required to provide an application form for the school fee remission/scholarship schemes to each of the eligible students as well;
- (f) DSS schools should as far as possible complete processing the applications for school fee remission schemes from newly admitted students before the new school year begins so that those eligible students will not be required to pay the school fee in advance. Likewise, if applications are received during the school year, they should be processed as early as possible;
- (g) DSS schools are encouraged to provide a simulation test for school fee remission on their websites so that parents will know in advance the precise level of school fee remission their children will be granted. This will facilitate decision on school choice and/or whether to apply for remission; and
- (h) the EDB provides on its website hotlinks to the school fee remission/scholarship schemes of individual DSS schools to facilitate interested parents to get the information they need easily.

The Means Test

The SFAA will use the "Adjusted Family Income" (AFI) mechanism as the means test to assess the eligibility of a family for student financial assistance and its assistance level. The AFI mechanism is based on the following formula:

$$\text{AFI} = \frac{\text{Gross annual income of the family}}{\text{Number of family members} + (1)}$$

- Gross annual income of the family includes the annual income of the applicant and his/her spouse; 30% of the annual income of unmarried child / children residing with the family if applicable; and the contribution from relatives / friends if applicable.
- The members of a family normally refer to the applicant, his/her spouse, unmarried child / children residing with the family and the dependent parent(s) who are supported by the applicant and/or his/her spouse (Please refer to the Guidance Notes on Application for Assessment of Eligibility for definition of "Dependent Parent").
- For single-parent families of 2 to 3 members, the 'plus 1 factor' in the divisor of the AFI formula will be increased to 2.

Level of Assistance

The AFI eligibility benchmarks for various levels of assistance in the 2014 / 15 school year are listed in the table below. **Please note that the AFI is not the average monthly income of a family.**

2014 / 15 school year - AFI Groups between (HK\$)	Level of Assistance
0 – 34,193	FULL*
34,194 – 66,116	Half
> 66,116	Ineligible

* AFI thresholds for full level of assistance for 3-member and 4-member families are \$41,394 and \$38,082 respectively in the 2014/15 school year. For 2-member single-parent families and 3-member single-parent families, they are regarded as 3-member families and 4-member families respectively for determining the AFI thresholds for full level of assistance and calculation of AFI.