

# **Code of Practice for Private Schools**

**(For private primary and secondary  
schools offering formal curriculum)**

Education Bureau

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## Foreword

As an international metropolis, Hong Kong is renowned for its education system which has long been recognised for its diversity, quality and inclusiveness. Against the national strategic backdrop of building China into a leading country in education, Hong Kong is actively leveraging its unique advantages under “One Country, Two Systems” and striving to build a vibrant international education hub. Being an important part of our education system, private schools offering formal curriculum (hereinafter referred to as “private schools”) have flourished in recent years, providing parents and students with a broader range of educational choices in addition to publicly-funded schools to address diverse learning needs. They also play a key role in promoting education innovation and enhancing teaching quality.

Private schools (including international schools) are operated on a self-financing market model and are generally not subsidised by public funds. However, their operation is governed by the Education Ordinance (“EO”) (Cap. 279), the Education Regulations (“ER”) (Cap. 279A), and other relevant laws, as well as guidelines issued by the Education Bureau (EDB). Their registration and collection of tuition and other fees from parents must be approved by EDB. At the same time, they are accountable to stakeholders for the effectiveness of their operation and prudent use of resources.

To further strengthen international competitiveness of Hong Kong education as well as promote higher-quality and more sustainable development of education in Hong Kong, the Code of Practice for Private Schools (hereinafter referred to as “the Code”) has been formulated in accordance with the provisions of the EO (Cap. 279) and the ER (Cap. 279A), as well as relevant guidelines on school management issued by EDB. It offers clear and practical management and operational guidelines for the school sponsoring bodies, school management, and teaching staff of private schools to ensure that schools are operated within a robust governance framework while continuously improving educational quality and management standards.

The implementation of the Code will help further enhance the ecosystem of private education in Hong Kong, enabling private schools to progress steadily in governance and professionalism. This will not only provide students with higher quality educational experiences but also lay a solid foundation for nurturing the talents Hong Kong needs for the future and strengthening its position as an international education hub, propelling the education sector towards new heights.

## Chapter 1

### General Principles

#### 1.1. Basis of formulation and objectives

The Code is formulated based on the relevant provisions of the Education Ordinance (Cap. 279) (EO) and the Education Regulations (Cap 279A) (ER) of Laws of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to provide clear management and operational guidelines for private schools, promote continuous improvement of education quality, and achieve the following objectives:

- **Establishing standards and ensuring quality:** To set clear and practical standards for schools in governance, learning and teaching, finance, and student support, laying the basis for self-regulation and self-improvement.
- **Student-centred approach and safeguarding students' well-being:** To accord the holistic development and well-being of students as the top priority, safeguarding their safety, health, and learning rights, while respecting and protecting the legitimate rights of parents and relevant stakeholders.
- **Enhancing transparency and promoting accountability:** To strengthen public accountability and the trust of stakeholders in schools through standardised operations and appropriate information disclosure.
- **Promoting quality and encouraging innovation:** To encourage schools to develop their characteristics and pursue excellence on the basis of compliance with fundamental standards, thereby contributing to the diverse and robust development of education in Hong Kong.

#### 1.2. Scope of applicability

- The Code is applicable to all private secondary and primary schools (including international schools) which are registered or provisionally registered under the EO and offering formal curriculum.
- The sponsoring bodies, school management committees (SMCs), supervisors, principals, all teaching staff and other relevant management personnel of the schools must familiarise themselves and comply with the relevant provisions of the Code.
- The provisions set out in the Code the basic requirements on good

practices. Apart from adhering to the Code, schools must, in their daily operations, comply with all relevant requirements under the laws and regulations of Hong Kong.

### 1.3. Core principles

The management, operation and development of schools should adhere to the following core principles:

- **Student-centered approach:** All teaching activities and management operations should prioritise the holistic development and utmost well-being of students as the primary consideration.
- **Professional autonomy:** Subject to compliance with the relevant legislations and the Code, schools shall enjoy professional autonomy and school-based flexibility to develop their own curricula and design learning and teaching activities in response to the needs of the school and students.
- **Accountability and transparency:** Schools should establish effective governance policies and communication mechanisms to ensure accountability to students, parents, and all stakeholders.
- **Fairness and justice:** The principles of fairness, justice, and non-discrimination should be upheld in student admission, teaching, academic assessment, and staff management.
- **Continuous improvement:** Schools should cultivate a culture of self-improvement and quality assurance, always striving to enhance educational quality, institutional governance and management standards.

### 1.4. Effect of the Code

- The Code aims to set out the basic requirements for good practices and provide clear guidelines to assist schools in operating in compliance with the relevant legislations and guidelines as well as promote self-discipline.
- The implementation of the Code will complement relevant policy circulars, guidelines, and administrative instructions issued by EDB, collectively forming the basic regulatory framework for schools.
- The Code sets out the basic requirements for good practices in relation to the provisions of the EO and ER concerning the management and

operation of schools, and does not replace or diminish the effect of any existing legislation. In the event of any inconsistency between the Code and legal provisions, the legal provisions shall prevail.

- Schools must also comply with other relevant legislations and regulations, including but not limited to the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance, Disability Discrimination Ordinance, Protection of Children and Juveniles Ordinance, and Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance.
- EDB will use the Code as a reference basis for school inspections, and monitoring and supporting schools. Compliance with the Code will be considered as one of the important factors in assessing the overall performance of schools.
- In the event of any discrepancy or inconsistency between the Chinese and English versions of the Code, the Chinese version shall prevail.

## 1.5. Consequences of non-compliance

- In the event that a school breaches the Code, depending on the severity of the breach and the specific circumstances, EDB may issue advisory or warning letters to the schools concerned, and will also take into account any previous cases of non-compliance when processing future applications submitted by the school under the EO and ER that requires EDB's approval (e.g. registration of schools, registration of school supervisors or managers, government subsidies, fee revision, collection of fees and charges, renewal of service agreements between the Government and the schools or school sponsoring bodies).
- If the management of a school is unsatisfactory, the Permanent Secretary for Education (PS(Ed)) may direct the school to take remedial measures in accordance with the EO and ER. If the situation is serious, PS(Ed) may order the school to cease operations and/or cancel the registration or provisional registration of the school.
- When considering whether the management and operation of a school is satisfactory and whether it promotes the education of students in a proper manner, PS(Ed) may take into account relevant references, including but not limited to whether the school and relevant personnel have breached the Code, and take action in accordance with the actual circumstances.
- EDB will seriously follow up on any non-compliance issues or illegal acts of schools.

## **1.6. Review and revision of the Code**

- EDB will review the content of the Code from time to time in response to educational developments, societal needs, and amendments of laws.
- Any revision to the Code will be announced through the official channels of EDB. Schools are responsible for keeping abreast of the latest circulars and guidelines issued by EDB and ensuring that their operations are in compliance with the revised requirements.

## **1.7. Effective date**

The Code shall take effect from the date of issuance and is applicable to private secondary and primary schools that are registered or provisionally registered under the EO, offering formal curriculum (including international schools).

## Chapter 2

### School Management

#### 2.1. Overview

- 2.1.1. Private schools (including international schools) are operated on a self-financing and market-driven basis. In general, they are not subsidised by public funds for capital costs and daily operation.
- 2.1.2. All schools are governed by the EO (Cap. 279) and ER (Cap. 279A), as well as other relevant legislations and instructions issued by EDB from time to time. Schools must apply to EDB for school registration under the EO as well as for approval to collect of school fees and other fees from parents.
- 2.1.3. Schools are required to be accountable to stakeholders for the effectiveness of their operations and proper use of resources.



#### 2.2. Requirements of school registration

- 2.2.1. The applicant is required to ensure that:
  - (i) The proposed annual school fees are not excessive after taking into account the costs of maintaining and operating the school and the standard of education to be provided;
  - (ii) The school is managed satisfactorily<sup>1</sup>; and
  - (iii) The content of the course to be offered is of satisfactory standard.

EDB may request the applicant to submit relevant documents in order to assess whether they meet the registration requirements.

- 2.2.2. Each school must apply to EDB and successfully obtain a registration certificate or a provisional registration certificate to operate legally in Hong Kong. Please refer



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<sup>1</sup> When considering whether the school management is satisfactory, EDB will take into account factors including, but not limited to, whether the school is in a good financial condition.

to EDB's webpage of "School Registration" for relevant details and procedures.

- 2.2.3. Schools shall only operate in the premises specified in the certificate of registration or provisional registration of the school, and must not operate in other locations.
- 2.2.4. Schools are required to exhibit certificate of registration or provisional registration in a conspicuous place in each of the premises specified in the certificate and prominently display a board or other form of notice at the main entrance of the school bearing in conspicuous lettering the registered name of the school.

### **2.3. Management and procedures for change of school name**

- 2.3.1. Where a school that is registered or provisionally registered wishes to change its name, it shall obtain prior approval of PS(Ed).
- 2.3.2. Before applying for a change of school name, the school is required to communicate with all stakeholders (including staff, students and parents), and fully consider their opinions.
- 2.3.3. EDB will consider each application for change of school name on a case-by-case basis, including whether the school has complied with the guidelines in EDB Circular No. 5/2025 on "Investment by Private Schools", to ensure that the school will be able to maintain a sound financial position and normal operations after the change of name, in order to safeguard the interests of students and parents.
- 2.3.4. No school shall self-proclaim or claim to be an "international school" until it has obtained EDB's formal recognition as an international school.



### **2.4. Governance structure and responsibilities**

- 2.4.1. Responsibilities of SMC:

Each school is managed by its SMC. SMC shall ensure that:

- the school is managed satisfactorily;
- the education of the students is promoted in a proper manner; and

- the school fully complies with the EO, ER, EDB circulars and other related legislations.

#### 2.4.2. Registration of **school managers**:

- When making an application for registration of a school, the applicant for school registration shall simultaneously arrange all the proposed managers for registration, in order to officially establish SMC. PS(Ed) may refuse the registration of the manager, if PS(Ed) is not satisfied that the person is fit and proper to be the manager.
- No person shall act as a manager or invoke the power of a school unless he/she is registered as a manager of the school.
- An application for registration as a manager of a school shall be made to PS(Ed) in the specified form. PS(Ed) may cancel the registration of a manager of a school in accordance with the grounds as specified in the EO, including when it appears to PS(Ed) that the person is no longer fit and proper to be a school manager.

#### 2.4.3. Appointment and duties of **supervisors**

- Appointment and approval
  - (i) The first supervisor shall be recommended by applicant for registration of the school, while SMC shall recommend the subsequent supervisors. PS(Ed) shall approve a person as the supervisor of a school. PS(Ed) may refuse to approve a person as the supervisor of a school if PS(Ed) is not satisfied that the person is fit and proper to be the supervisor.
  - (ii) In the event of any circumstances leading to a vacancy in the post of supervisor (including the supervisor ceasing to perform his/her duties), SMC shall within 1 month recommend for the approval of PS(Ed) another manager of the school to be the supervisor.
  - (iii) When the supervisor of a school is unable to carry out his/her duties for an expected period of not less than 28 days due to absence from Hong Kong and/or illness, SMC shall recommend for the approval of PS(Ed) another manager of the school to act as supervisor.
- Duties of statutory reporting: The supervisor shall represent SMC to conduct all correspondence in relation to the management of the school with PS(Ed) or any public officer. Among all, the supervisor

of a school shall within 1 month after the happening of such event give notice in writing to PS(Ed) if:

- (i) any person ceases to be a manager of the school;
- (ii) the supervisor ceases to perform the duties of the supervisor;
- (iii) the principal ceases to perform the duties of the principal;
- (iv) any teacher commences or ceases to teach at the school;
- (v) a change in any particulars with respect to any landlord or tenant of the premises in which the school is operated.

## **2.5. Operation and decision-making of school**

### **2.5.1. Basic principle**

SMC must operate the school under the premise of promoting the students' education, in a manner that complies with the all legislations and the requirements of EDB, and be accountable to stakeholders.

### **2.5.2. School-based flexibility**

Schools enjoy greater flexibility in aspects such as financial arrangements, resource utilisation, curriculum design, medium of instruction, admission arrangements, and mode of operation. SMC should formulate open, fair and transparent school-based policies, and keep stakeholders informed.

### **2.5.3. Responsibility on national security**

- Schools are required to fully implement the National Security Law, review continuously and strengthen the measures related to safeguarding national security and national security education, with a view to maintaining a safe and orderly learning environment in schools and nurturing students to become good law-abiding citizens.
- Schools play a significant role in preventing acts and activities that endanger national security and implementing national security education. It is incumbent on them to devise appropriately and review continuously the measures related to safeguarding national security and national security education in respect of school planning and



management, staff management, learning and teaching, student guidance, discipline and support, and home-school co-operation, etc. to facilitate students' effective learning. For details, please refer to EDB Circular No. 9/2023 "National Security: Maintaining a Safe Learning Environment Nurturing Good Citizens".

## **2.6. Financial management, collection of fees and accountability**

### **2.6.1. Mode of operation**

Private schools (including international schools) are operated on a self-financing market model. In general, they are not subsidised by public funds for capital costs and daily operation.

### **2.6.2. Approval of collection of charges**

Schools must apply to EDB for approval under the EO and ER to collect school fees, funds for long-term school development (e.g. capital levies, debentures, and nomination right fees), and other charges (such as various miscellaneous fees). According to ER, other than the annual school fees as printed on the fees certificate, schools shall not charge or accept any fees without the prior approval by PS(Ed), and cannot amend the annual school fees.

### **2.6.3. Accountability for the use of resources**

SMC should ensure the proper use of resources for providing quality education. SMC should ensure that the annual school fees charged by the school are not excessive having regard to the cost of school operation and to the standard of education provision. All use of funds should put the interests of students as the prime concern, be justified and clearly accountable to their stakeholders

## **2.7. Prohibition on collaborating with other entities to offer formal curriculum**

### **2.7.1. Unless approved by EDB in prior, school must not**

- (i) allow any entity other than the school (hereinafter referred to as "**other entities**") (regardless of whether it is located in or outside Hong Kong) to offer formal curriculum (including public examination courses) in the name of the school in any manner;

- (ii) collaborate with, or assist other entities in offering formal curriculum (including public examination courses) in any manner;
- (iii) arrange for parents or students to pay fees for education courses to the any person or entity apart from the school.

2.7.2. In case a school discovers that any person claims that an unauthorised entity has any form of collaborative relationship with the school, the school is required to promptly submit a real-name report to EDB as far as practicable.

## **2.8. Promotion requirements**

### **2.8.1. Promotion before registration is granted**

Before obtaining the provisional registration or registration of school, schools are not allowed to operate in Hong Kong. However, if any such school intends to advertise, the school must state clearly in all promotional materials (including websites, social media and promotional leaflets) that, “the application for registration of this school is in progress”, and they must not include any false or misleading information, to avoid misleading the public.

### **2.8.2. Promotion after registration is granted**

Any advertisement (including promotional leaflet or webpage) shall not claim that the school is operating in premises other than the premises specified in the certificate of registration or provisional registration of the school, or contains any other information otherwise concerning the school which is false or misleading.

## **2.9. Internal control and decision-making**

### **2.9.1. Governance structure**

Schools shall put in place a proper internal control and reporting mechanism with rigorous checks and balances in order to ensure that the school operation is satisfactory. SMC members should comprise different key stakeholders such as principal, school staff, parents, etc. to enhance accountability and transparency.

#### 2.9.2. School-based policies

SMC is required to formulate, review regularly and update school-based policies and procedures for major matters, and keep proper records, and ensure that relevant staff understand the policies and make them accessible to stakeholders (e.g. available on school webpage). The scope of major policies should include but is not limited to the following:

- (i) Financial management and procurement policies;
- (ii) Staff administration policies;
- (iii) Internal control system (including the arrangements for conflict of interest);
- (iv) Procedures for crisis management;
- (v) Student enrolment policies (criteria for students' promotion, repetition and graduation); and
- (vi) Mechanism of handling complaints.

#### 2.9.3. Integrity and corruption prevention

Schools are required to attach importance to integrity management, make reference to the corruption prevention guidelines published by the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) (such as the "Best Practice Checklist on Governance and Internal Control in Schools"), formulate and implement various measures to prevent corruption.



#### 2.9.4. Right to use the premises

Schools must ensure stable rights to use their premises to prevent any interruption to educational services due to property ownership or lease issues. Schools that do not have self-owned premises are required to pay rent on time, and endeavour to secure long-term leases and plan ahead for timely lease renewal arrangements.

## **2.10. Mechanism of handling complaints**

### **2.10.1. School-based mechanism**

Schools should establish a set of clear and fair school-based procedures for complaint handling, assign suitable personnel to deal with complaints, and respond in a timely manner.

### **2.10.2. Principle of confidentiality**

All contents and information of complaints are required to be kept strictly confidential and restricted to internal reference on a need-to-know basis.

### **2.10.3. Continuous improvement**

School should encourage complainants to give constructive suggestions to promote continuous improvement of school administration. Schools may refer to the “Guidelines for Handling School Complaints” for publicly-funded schools to establish appropriate mechanisms according to their school-based circumstances.



## **2.11. Cessation of operation and students' well-being**

- 2.11.1.** All arrangements for ceasing operation must prioritise the best interests of students as paramount consideration.
- 2.11.2.** If the school sponsoring body or SMC decides to cease the operation of the school or certain level(s) of the school, they are required to:
  - (i)** Communication with stakeholders: inform stakeholders (including teachers and parents) immediately, and respond actively to their opinions and questions.
  - (ii)** Immediate reporting: inform EDB immediately after the decision is made, and set out details of the timeline and transitional arrangements, etc. To ensure students have sufficient time to transfer to other schools, the school shall finalise the arrangement for ceasing operation and inform the parents at least 6 months prior to the commencement of the proposed school year of cessation.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Financial Management, Fees and Internal Control**

#### **3.1. General principles**

##### **3.1.1. Goals and accountability**

- (i) Proper use of school funds is a fundamental principle underpinning the effectiveness, credibility and operational capability of a school. As schools may collect school fees and other fees, they are accountable to parents, students, and relevant stakeholders for ensuring proper use of such resources to provide quality education.
- (ii) Schools are required to exercise professional judgement in deploying their funds to meet educational and school development needs.
- (iii) All use of funds must be fully justified, clearly defensible to stakeholders and in compliance with the EO, the ER, EDB circulars, Service Agreements (where applicable), and other relevant legislations and regulations.
- (iv) When assessing whether the school management is satisfactory, EDB will take into account if the school's financial position is sound.

##### **3.1.2. Basis for collection of fees**

- (i) The total school fees charged by the school should not be excessive, taking into account the cost of maintaining and operating the school and the standard of education to be provided.
- (ii) Unless otherwise permitted by PS(Ed), the school shall not charge any fees whatsoever other than the inclusive fees as printed on the certificate inclusive fees, and the annual school fees cannot be changed.

### **3.2. Management of school fees**

#### **3.2.1. Exhibiting the certificate**

Schools are required to keep conspicuously exhibiting the Fees Certificate issued by EDB at a prominent position in the school.

#### **3.2.2. Means of collection**

- (i) The annual school fees shall be calculated on an equal monthly basis and collected on or after the first school day of each month of the period during which the course is conducted.
- (ii) Schools are not allowed to collect full school fees in advance as a lump sum. The first monthly instalment may only be collected no earlier than 1 month before the commencement of the educational course.

#### **3.2.3. Fee revision**

- (i) Any change of the school fees must be approved by PS(Ed) in prior.
- (ii) Schools planning to adjust their school fees for the new school year are required to submit written applications to EDB at least 4 months before the commencement of the new school year. For the procedures and requirements, schools are required to refer to the “Points to Note on Fee Revision Application of Private Schools”.



### **3.3. Charges collected to raise funds for long-term school development**

#### **3.3.1. Scope of application and approval**

- (i) If schools would raise funds for the long-term financial needs of learning and teaching, school development, school facilities and infrastructural projects, etc. (such as capital levies, debentures and nomination rights fees), they must strictly comply with the Education Regulations, the requirements set out in EDB Circular No. 15/2023 “Application and Approval Mechanism for Collection of Other Charges by Private Schools”, and apply to EDB in advance. Without receiving EDB’s prior approval in



writing, the school should not charge any such fees.

- (ii) Schools are required to submit an application at least 6 months before the start date of the proposed collection. If the school itself engages a related party to act as the agent for collecting the charges on behalf of the school, such schools are required to submit an application at least 9 months before the start date of the proposed collection.
- (iii) In operating its fund-raising initiatives for long-term development, the school must ensure compliance with the Education Ordinance (Chapter 279), the Education Regulations (Chapter 279A), and other relevant legislation (if applicable), such as the Companies Ordinance (Chapter 622), the Companies (Winding Up and Miscellaneous Provisions) Ordinance (Chapter 32), and the Securities and Futures Ordinance (Chapter 571).
- (iv) SMCs are required to ensure the sound governance of the school's operations. The school is required to formulate long-term financial plans to ensure that its funds can meet future development needs. The collection of any other charges by the school must be discussed and approved by SMC, with the participation of parent representatives as appropriate.
- (v) The school must consult or inform key stakeholders (especially parents) in advance regarding the collection of any other charges and provide essential information about these fees. This includes, but is not limited to, the type of fee, amount, specified purpose and characteristics, the name of the receiving party, payment methods, redemption arrangements (if applicable), the use of the funds raised, the rights and interests of the paying party, and the terms of the agreement. Furthermore, the school should properly address the concerns of payers (especially parents), enabling them to make informed decisions, such as whether to enroll their children in the school, and to assess the risk factors involved before participating in any fund-raising initiative.
- (vi) The school should establish a comprehensive financial management mechanism to ensure that all funds raised are used appropriately. The school should also formally implement both internal and external monitoring systems to properly account for all income and expenditures. The school should regularly report (at least annually) to stakeholders

(especially parents) on the usage of the funds raised for their designated purposes and the status of related plans.

### 3.3.2. Collection responsibilities and disclosure

- (i) If the school is not the payee of the charge(s), a contractual agreement on the principal-agent relationship between the school and the payee is required. The payee shall agree that the school shall disclose the terms of the agreement to the payers. The relevant terms are detailed in Schedule 3 of the application schedules of EDB Circular No. 15/2023 “Application and Approval Mechanism for Collection of Other Charges by Private Schools”.
- (ii) The school shall remain wholly liable to the payers and be responsible for all acts and omissions of the payee.



### 3.3.3. Financial warning and remediation

Should there be a going concern, insolvency issue and/or any qualification in respect of the payee of the charge(s) and/or the school as reflected in the latest audited accounts, remedial measures must be agreed as appropriate to address the issue. EDB should be informed as soon as possible with details of the relevant remedial measures provided.

## 3.4. Other miscellaneous fees

### 3.4.1. Application for collection

Charges of mandatory items and/or services in relation to students’ education in schools should be subsumed into the annual school fees as far as possible. If schools find the fees not feasible to be subsumed in the school fees into the annual inclusive fees, they may apply to EDB for collection of these fees. Applications, in accordance with type of school curriculum, must be submitted to EDB at least 4 months before the start date of the proposed collection as stipulated in EDB Circular No. 25/2024 “Collection of Other Fees by Private Schools Offering Local Curriculum” or EDB Circular No. 26/2024 “Collection of Other Fees by Private Schools Offering Non-Local Curriculum”.



### **3.5. Sale of school items and provision of paid services**

Schools offering parents or students optional school items (e.g. textbooks, exercise books, school uniforms, and stationery) and paid services (e.g. extracurricular activities and school bus services) are required to strictly comply with the requirements as stipulated in EDB Circular No. 17/2003 on “Guidelines on Sale of School Items and Provision of Paid Services in Private Schools”.



### **3.6. Fund-raising**

#### **3.6.1. Statutory restrictions**

In accordance with the ER,

- (i) No person shall in school premises, without the permission in writing of PS(Ed), appeal to any pupils of a school for subscriptions or make any collection among any pupils of a school.
- (ii) No manager or teacher of a school shall in any way whatsoever, without the permission in writing of PS(Ed), appeal for the above subscriptions or make any collection.

#### **3.6.2. Permitted fund-raising activities and guidelines**

For conducting and the accounting requirements of approved fund-raising activities, schools are required to strictly adhere to the guidelines on “Fund-raising Activities in Schools”.



### **3.7. Investment management**

#### **3.7.1. Basic principle**

Schools should not carry out speculative investment. Should schools make investments that involve risks, they should be mindful of the level of risks involved and make informed decisions with well documented reasons.

### 3.7.2. Guidance on financial stability

When making investment, the school management is required to observe closely the guidance stipulated in EDB Circular No. 5/2025 on “Investment by Private Schools”, including:



- (i) to accumulate, at all times, operating reserve sufficient to meet at least 4 months of operating expenses of the school (unless otherwise specified by the Government);
- (ii) to ensure good governance in school operation, with a long-term financial plan in place so that school funds will be made available for deployment to meet future development needs;
- (iii) all investments by schools should be considered and approved by the school management, with the involvement of parent representatives as appropriate. The consideration and approval process should be clearly documented.

### 3.7.3. Disclosure requirements on realised investment losses

To uphold financial accountability and enhance transparency of investments made, schools are required to regularly disclose the following information to stakeholders, in particular parents, at least annually:

- (i) to report/update if there are any realised investment losses incurred as revealed in the school’s audited accounts for the recent five school years, if so, the amount;
- (ii) to report if the school should make good the realised investment losses in the concerned school year(s) if there are net investment losses after summation of all realised investment gains/losses, interest income and dividend income over the five-year period, and when the make good will be completed; and
- (iii) if the school should make good the net investment losses, to declare that it was/will be done by sources other than school funds and that the losses have not been charged to any of the school’s accounts.

### **3.8. Procurement procedures**

#### **3.8.1. Procurement guidelines**

Schools should procure goods/services from suppliers/contractors through open, fair and competitive quotation/tender and ensure that the quality, price, safety and other specifications of the selected goods/services have complied with the publicised criteria.

#### **3.8.2. School-based policies**

Schools shall formulate school-based procurement policies by making reference to the guidelines and procedures in the “Best Practice Checklist on Governance and Internal Control in Schools” issued by the Independent Commission Against Corruption.



### **3.9. Hiring of accommodation by external organisations**

#### **3.9.1. Opening up principles**

Schools are encouraged to open up their facilities for hire to external organisations to foster collaboration between schools and the community.

#### **3.9.2. Preliminary checking and school-based mechanisms**

If schools consider opening their school premises to other groups/individuals, they must first ascertain the provisions of the land lease, the service agreement signed with EDB, and tenancy agreement, etc. and then formulate and keep reviewing and refining the school-based mechanism, charges and guidelines.

#### **3.9.3. Record keeping**

A log book should be maintained to record details of all hirings, whether free or chargeable.

### **3.10. Accounting records and financial control**

#### **3.10.1. Submission of accounts**

Schools must submit annual audited accounts of their schools to EDB in accordance with the terms of the land leases, government leases, service agreements signed with EDB (if any), etc.

### 3.10.2. Record keeping and inspection of accounts

The management authority of school is required to

- (i) keep proper accounts;
- (ii) make the accounts and any vouchers relating to the accounts available at all reasonable times for inspection by PS(Ed) or any inspector of schools; and
- (iii) retain the accounts and vouchers for a period of not less than 7 years.

### 3.10.3. Scope of records

Schools are required to keep proper accounts to record all approved collections (such as school fees, charges collected to raise funds for long-term school development, miscellaneous fees), donation, investment income and expenditures for accounting and auditing purposes.

## **3.11. Internal control system**

### 3.11.1. Purpose of the system and responsibilities

An effective accounting system and internal control procedures will minimise fraud and negligence and ensure the proper use of school resources. It is the responsibility of SMC to determine the accounting and internal control system with regard to its circumstances, ensuring the compliance with the EO, ER and the circulars issued by EDB.

### 3.11.2. Compliance with recommendation

Schools are required to follow the internal control procedures recommended by PS(Ed) or their auditors.

## **3.12. Retention and disposal of accounting records**

### 3.12.1. Permanent record keeping:

Records of a permanent nature, e.g. fixed asset register, annual accounts, inventories, records of capital expenditure, records in connection with school building funds/donations, must be properly kept permanently and shall not be destroyed without the prior approval of PS(Ed).

### 3.12.2. Periodic record keeping:

The following records may be destroyed after a certain period of retention, as specified below:

- (i) Minimum period of retention: 7 years: books of accounts (cash books, Ledgers, etc.), all types of vouchers, bank statements.
- (ii) Minimum period of retention: 2 years: quarterly returns (duplicates), Paysheets (duplicates), school attendance registers, register of hire of school accommodation.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Personnel Management**

#### **4.1. General principles**

##### **4.1.1. Responsibilities of employers**

SMC is the employer of all school staff and bears the responsibilities to all personnel management matters.

##### **4.1.2. Formulation of school-based policies**

- (i) SMC should lay down clear, fair and transparent policies and procedures for personnel matters (including but not limited to staff recruitment, remuneration, appraisal, promotion, discipline and termination of service).
- (ii) All policies and procedures should be made known to all staff, and their implementation should be fair and transparent to avoid any actual or perceived conflict of interest.

##### **4.1.3. Statutory basis**

Schools are required to refer to the documents listed in the **Annex** and strictly comply with the EO, ER, Employment Ordinance, Prevention of Bribery Ordinance, Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance and other related legislations when drawing up and implementing their personnel policies.

#### **4.2. Staff appointment**

##### **4.2.1. Appointment of teaching staff**

- (i) Statutory qualification: Schools must observe the requirements for Registered Teacher/Permitted Teacher in the EO and ER when they appoint teachers.
- (ii) Measures for protection of students: Schools are required to strictly comply with all the requirements set out in EDB Circular No. 14/2023 [“Measures for Strengthening the Protection of Students: Appointment of Teaching and Non-teaching Staff in Schools”](#).



(iii) Background check:

- a. Schools must request the staff who are self-employed or deployed to work in schools by the outsourced service providers to:
  - declare whether he/she has been convicted of any criminal offence in Hong Kong or elsewhere, or whether they are involved in any ongoing criminal proceedings or investigations (including but not limited to arrest or apprehension by the police), and to provide the details; and
  - undergo Sexual Conviction Record Check and pass their check results to schools.
- b. The above requirement applies to all the staff working in schools, even if they are not directly employed by the schools.

(iv) Professional requirements for teachers:

- a. Schools offering non-local curriculum: Teachers are required to comply with the professional requirements of the institutions or accreditation institutions affiliated with relevant courses.
- b. Schools offering local curriculum: Teachers are required to comply with the requirements of EDB, including but not limited to:

- EDB Circular Memorandum No. 74/2024 “Enhanced Language Proficiency Requirement (LPR) for Teachers of English/Putonghua”



- Standards set out on EDB's “Language Proficiency Requirement (LPR)” webpage



- EDB Circular Memorandum No. 54/2004 “Implementation of Recommendations of Standing Committee on Language Education and Research on Language Teacher Education and Qualifications”
- EDB’s “Teachers’ Eligibility to Teach Physical Education” webpage



#### 4.2.2. Appointment of principal

SMC shall recommend for the approval of the PS(Ed) a teacher to be the principal.

#### 4.2.3. Appointment of non-teaching staff

(i) Appointment with prudence: When employing non-teaching staff, the school shall make reference to the relevant guidelines in EDB Circular No. 14/2023 to carry out the appointment procedures with prudence and ensure that the job applicants have met the requirements.

(ii) Requirements of conduct: Schools may stipulate requirements of staff conduct with reference to the “Guidelines on Teachers’ Professional Conduct” for non-teaching staff (including the specialists and personnel of different grades in special schools), so as to safeguard the well-being of students.

a. Regarding the detailed arrangement of staff appointment, please refer to:

- EDB Circular No. 14/2023 “Measures for Strengthening the Protection of Students: Appointment of Teaching and Non-teaching Staff in Schools”;
- EDB’s “Appointment Matters” webpage



#### 4.2.4. Management of teacher information

(i) Responsibilities on information management: Except English Schools Foundation and international schools with alternative arrangements, all schools are required to manage the personal information of the teachers via the [e-Services Portal](#).

(ii) Detailed requirements:

- Create accounts for all monthly-paid teachers and other staff with teaching load.
- Properly verify all the information submitted by teachers.
- If there are any changes of serving teachers' information or departing teachers, schools are required to update relevant teachers' information as soon as possible.
- For details, please refer to: EDB's "Teacher Registration webpage" and EDB Circular Memorandum No. 62/2025 "[e-Services Portal – Management of Teachers' Personal Profiles](#)".



#### 4.3. Teacher registration

##### 4.3.1. Statutory requirements

- No person shall teach in a school unless he/she is a registered teacher or a permitted teacher.
- Any person who is not a registered or permitted teacher to teach in a school and the person who employs or permits him to teach is also guilty of an offence (except conditions exempted from legislation).

##### 4.3.2. Management responsibilities

Supervisors and principals are required to ensure that all teachers have undergone the registration formalities. For details, please refer to EDB's "[Teacher Registration](#)" webpage and EDB Circular No. 11/2007 "[Revised Procedures for Teacher Registration](#)".



4.3.3. Restrictions on persons who have had their registration cancelled/have been refused registration:

- Unless with the permission in writing of PS(Ed), persons who have had their teacher registration cancelled/refused shall not enter or remain in any school.
- Persons whose teacher registration have become invalid should no longer teach or take up non-teaching duties in a school and the school should not employ these persons by any means.

#### **4.4. Employment contract**

4.4.1. Signing the contract

- SMC shall be responsible for issuing to all teacher letters of appointment that set out conditions of service, salary scale and conditions of termination of appointment.
- The supervisor is required to, on behalf of SMC, sign on the original and every copy of the letter of appointment for teachers.

4.4.2. Legal effect

- Any term of a contract of employment which purports to extinguish or reduce any right, benefit or protection conferred upon the employee by the Employment Ordinance shall be void.

4.4.3. Procedures on signing the contract

- Schools should allow reasonable time for the teaching and non-teaching staff to read through and enquire about the contents of the letter of appointment and conditions of service before signing the contract, and provide a signed copy to the staff for retention.

#### **4.5. Staff rights, benefits and protection**

4.5.1. Protection of the rights of the employees

SMC is required to familiarise themselves with the Employment Ordinance, to protect the rights of the employee for unreasonable dismissal, unreasonable variation of the terms of the employment contract, and unreasonable and unlawful dismissal.

#### 4.5.2. Occupational safety and health

- Employers have a general duty to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the safety and health of their employees at work.
- Employees at work are required to observe the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance, ensure the safety of others and co-operate with the employers.
- Schools should make reference to the “Occupational Safety and Health in Schools Guide” issued by the Labour Department, and adopt precautionary measures to prevent accidents and occupational diseases in schools.



#### 4.5.3. Compensation on injury on duty

Staff injured on duty will be paid periodical payments and compensation in accordance with the Employees’ Compensation Ordinance.

#### 4.5.4. Procurement of insurance

To safeguard the interests of teachers, students and the school, supervisors are advised to seriously consider the need for acquiring adequate insurance to cover public liabilities for damages arising from fire, accidents and injuries as well as the employees’ compensation as required by the Employees’ Compensation Ordinance. For details, please refer to EDB Circular No. 16/2004 “Insurance in Schools”



#### 4.5.5. Rights on leaves

Schools are required to grant statutory leaves such as sick leaves, maternity leaves and paternity leaves, to staff according to the requirements in the Employment Ordinance.

## 4.6. Staff conduct, discipline and conflict of interest

### 4.6.1. Professional conduct

- Conduct Guidelines: Schools should require all staff to study and comply with the “Guidelines on Teachers’ Professional Conduct” promulgated by EDB to make themselves fully understand the expectations of the community on teachers’ professionalism and conduct.
- Follow up on matters relating to job performance and conduct: Schools should timely follow up on matters relating to job performance and conduct of school staff in accordance with the school-based staff management policies and appraisal system.
- Reporting on criminal investigation: Schools should remind teachers to report to the schools as soon as they know that they are involved in any ongoing criminal investigation or proceeding (including arrest or apprehension by the police), and also report results of such investigation or proceeding upon its conclusion.
- Reporting on serious misconduct cases: Schools must report all suspected serious offence or misconduct cases to EDB for considering whether any further action is necessary, including but not limited to reviewing the teacher registration status of the teacher concerned.



### 4.6.2. Conflict of interest and prevention of bribery

- (i) Prevention of bribery: All staff are required to comply with the Prevention of Bribery Ordinance. No staff may accept an advantage without the permission of SMC. Any member of staff who wishes to accept an advantage must consult the principal, who may, if so authorised by SMC, give permission or refer the matter to SMC for decision.
- (ii) Outside work
  - SMC may consult staff and formulate their school-based personnel management policies defining the scope of acceptable outside work.
  - If the school staff intend to engage in the following outside work, they are required to apply to SMC:
    - a. all paid outside work (regardless of whether it is within normal school hours);

- b. any unpaid outside work during normal school hours; and
- c. outside work, which may constitute actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest with his official duties, or may affect his effectiveness of performing his normal duties.

(iii) Formulation of policies

Schools should formulate their policies and provide staff clear guidelines on the avoidance of conflict of interest and the appropriate course of action to be taken in case a conflict or perceived conflict of interest arises.

(iv) Reference on integrity

SMCs may make reference to Best Practice Checklist on Governance and Internal Control in Schools – “[Sample Code of Conduct for School Managers](#)” and “[Sample Code of Conduct for Staff of Schools](#)” issued by the ICAC when formulating the guidelines on entertainment and the use of confidential information.



## 4.7. Management on resignation of permitted teacher

### 4.7.1. Employment cessation of a Permitted Teacher

- When a Permitted Teacher ceases to be employed in the school specified in the permit, the school is required to immediately update the record of employment of the teacher through the e-Services Portal.
- If the Permitted Teacher does not have an e-Services Portal account, the school is required to inform the Teacher Registration Section of EDB in writing about the details of the Permitted Teacher who has ceased his/her employment.

### 4.7.2. Return of permit

Starting from the 2023/24 school year, the school must collect the teacher's copy of the Permit to Teach, and return both the copy and the original to EDB. If he/she fails to return the copy of the Permit to

Teach, the school is required to document the reason for not returning the copy properly in writing.

#### 4.7.3. Schedule and consequence

The school is required to return the documents mentioned in paragraph 4.7.2 to the Teacher Registration Section of EDB, by the end of the school year. If schools are unable to return the required documents as scheduled, EDB will approach the schools to learn about their situation and may take necessary follow-up actions. For details, please refer to EDB Circular No. 14/2023 [“Measures for Strengthening the Protection of Students: Appointment of Teaching and Non-teaching Staff in Schools”](#).



## **Chapter 5**

### **School Premises Safety, Crisis Management and Facility Management**

#### **5.1. Basic responsibilities for school premises safety**

##### **5.1.1. Responsibilities of SMC**

SMC is responsible for maintaining the school premises in a safe and hygienic condition, ensuring compliance with relevant legal standards.

##### **5.1.2. Legal basis**

SMC is required to ensure that the operation and management of premises comply with the requirements set out in the EO, ER, Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance, Fire Services Ordinance, and any other relevant Ordinances and Regulations.

#### **5.2. Security and safety measures**

##### **5.2.1. General Security**

###### **(i) Security Measures:**

Schools should formulate and implement appropriate security measures to safeguard school property and prevent misuse, damage, theft and burglary.

###### **(ii) Classroom sign:**

- a. At the entrance to every classroom there shall be a board or sign bearing an identification number or letter for such room.
- b. In every classroom there shall be exhibited in a prominent place a notice specifying the maximum number of students permitted in that room, and no more than such maximum number shall be permitted in that room.

#### 5.2.2. Closed-circuit television and monitoring system

If schools consider installation of closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems or covert monitoring a necessary means to prevent crime having regard to its special environmental circumstances, the measures it takes to that end must be in compliance with the “[Guidance on the Use of CCTV Surveillance](#)” published by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data, and respect privacies of individuals.



#### 5.2.3. Safety nets

Any stair wells or other kinds of light wells on school premises may pose a risk for students or school users in falling from height. Schools should construct safety nets on every floor for the sake of the safety. For details, please refer to EDB Circular No. 23/2001 on “[Safety Nets at Stair Wells in School Premises](#)”.



#### 5.2.4. Information Security

When implementing e-learning, schools are responsible for taking appropriate IT security measures to protect the IT systems and data of their schools. For details, please refer to EDB webpage “[Information Security in Schools - Recommended Practice](#)”.



### 5.3. Fire prevention measures

#### 5.3.1. The statutory responsibilities of the principal

##### (i) Evacuation plans and drills:

- a. Draw up a practical scheme for the evacuation of the school premises.
- b. Ensure that fire drill including the use of all exits from the school premises is carried out by the teachers and students at least once in every 6 months.
- c. Keep a written record of all such drills in a school log book. The written record shall record the time taken to evacuate the school premises during each fire drill.

(ii) Clear access:

Ensure that exits from all classrooms and the school premises are free from obstruction at all times.

(iii) Equipment maintenance:

Ensure that all fire service installation or equipment in the school premises is kept in good condition at all times.

#### 5.3.2. Fire safety equipment requirements

(i) Fire extinguishing equipment:

- a. All schools, as required by Fire Services Department, shall be equipped with fire extinguishers which should be kept in easily accessible places and be properly maintained.
- b. Additional fire extinguishers and/or fire blankets shall be provided for laboratories, design & technology/art rooms and computer classrooms in accordance with the Fire Safety Requirements.

(ii) Fire escape routes:

Fire escape routes are required to be displayed in all classrooms and dormitories (if applicable).

(iii) Fire drills

Fire drills, during which all students must leave the school building and roll calls be taken, should be recorded in a log book. Fire drills shall also be held for the boarding section (if applicable) regularly.

#### 5.3.3. Naked flame usage and smoking ban

(i) Restriction of naked flame usage

Unless approval is obtained from the Director of Fire Services and/or other relevant government departments, no one shall use naked flame for unapproved activities in any places of the school premises.

(ii) Smoking ban in schools

Smoking is prohibited in schools. For details, please refer to EDB Circular No. 20/2025 on [“Smoking Ban in Schools”](#).



## 5.4. Crisis management

### 5.4.1. Principles of crisis management

(i) Definition of crisis:

School crises include the suicide of a student or staff, accidental death, a critical injury, a violent incident and natural disasters which may affect the normal operation of school.

(ii) Principles of response:

In the event of a crisis, schools should give due priority to the safety of all students and staff, and exercise professional judgement to take appropriate actions as the specific situation warrants.

(iii) Crisis Management Team:

Schools should set up a Crisis Management Team to formulate school-based mechanisms, procedures, guidelines and contingency plans, which should be regularly reviewed.

### 5.4.2. Guidelines for handling specific crises

(i) Body injury:

- a. When students are in serious body injury, life-threatening situation, or situation requiring immediate support, schools are required to dial 999 promptly for emergency assistance.
- b. For other non-emergency assistance (for example non-serious injury), schools may call the nearby police stations or ambulance service. For details of calling ambulance, please refer to the relevant guidelines “[How to call an ambulance](#)” issued by the Fire Services Department.



(ii) Medical emergency:

- a. If any student falls sick or suffers from the attack of illness (for example, asthma attack, epilepsy attack or chest/heart discomfort) at school and is unable to continue attending classes, the parent or guardian should be informed at once. The school is required to make immediate arrangements to send the student concerned to a hospital for treatment.
- b. The school is required to consult parents and inform them of the measures adopted by the school on sending students to Accident and Emergency (A&E) Department of public hospitals for medical treatment so as to ensure that timely and proper treatment to students in case of emergencies.

(iii) Prevention of communicable diseases:

- a. Schools should refer to and comply with "Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Schools/ Kindergartens/Kindergartens-cum-Child Care Centres/Child Care Centres" issued by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP). 
- b. The relevant Guidelines and health information can be downloaded from the "CHP" website. 

(iv) Fatal suicide cases:

- a. Principals are required to report promptly to their respective Senior School Development Officers (SSDOs) or the relevant Education Officer of Infrastructure and International School Section of all student fatal suspected suicide cases which come to their knowledge.
- b. The school is required to promptly activate its Crisis Management Team to assess the impact, formulate a crisis management plan.
- c. The school may refer to "School Crisis Management: Handbook of aftermath intervention and psychological support" for information on crisis aftermath intervention and psychological support. 

d. When a crisis is over, the school is required to conduct an evaluation on the effectiveness of its crisis management work and adopt appropriate precautionary measures.

(v) Gas leakage:

a. In handling incidents involving odours of gas (including those from unknown sources), schools are required to promptly dial 999 for emergency assistance, give the students proper attention, notify the parents and alert the SSDOs of respective district or the relevant Education Officer of Infrastructure and International School Section.

b. The principal is required to keep full records of the classes and persons affected with date, location and time. For details, please adhere to the “Guidelines on measures to be taken in case of incidents involving odours of gas including those from unknown sources”.



(vi) Bomb calls:

- a. If bomb calls are received, unless it can be definitely and reasonably assumed that the threat is a hoax, the school should handle it with prudence and call 999 to report to the police immediately.
- b. Under no circumstances should a suspect item be touched or handled in any way.
- c. The police will advise whether an evacuation of students is necessary for a search of the premises.

## 5.5. Maintenance of school premises

### 5.5.1. Regular inspections and maintenance

(i) Maintenance responsibilities:

All school premises shall at all times be kept in a satisfactory state of repair.

(ii) Inspection policy:

The principal is required to arrange regular inspection of the school premises, including both school building and slopes

under the maintenance responsibility of the school, if applicable, and take prompt actions to keep the building/slopes in good condition.

(iii) Facility maintenance:

School's particular attention is drawn to the requirements on the inspection and maintenance of facilities as imposed by various government departments, e.g. inspection and maintenance of fire services installation, lift, building and window.

#### 5.5.2. Slope safety

Schools with or near a slope must carry out timely slope repairs and conduct regular maintenance. For details, please refer to EDB Circular No. 25/1998 on [“Administrative Procedures for Safety of Schools in the Vicinity of Slopes”](#).



### 5.6. Alterations to school premises and works

#### 5.6.1. Improvement and extension to school buildings

(i) Prior approval:

Approval by PS(Ed) shall be sought on improvement and extension to school buildings involving structural alteration and conversion.

(ii) Application procedure:

Schools are required to submit applications to EDB with layout plans drawn to scale for the proposed works.

(iii) Planning buffer:

When developing relocation plans or extension to school buildings plans, schools should allow sufficient time for construction works and processing the applications of extension of premises (such as new floors or new annex buildings), and develop contingency plans to safeguard the interests of students.

5.6.2. Change of room use

- (i) Discretionary authority: Subject to the following conditions, SMC may decide on the change of room use without prior approval from PS(Ed):
  - a. adequate classrooms, special rooms and facilities are available in the school for the effective learning and teaching of all the subject groups or areas of learning and experience; and
  - b. the change of room use does not involve any structural alterations to the school premises, any alteration to the latrine accommodation or the sanitary arrangements of the school or in the ventilation or lighting of a room and/or subdivision of a room.
- (ii) Notification and reporting obligations:
  - a. Before proceeding, schools are required to give prior notice to EDB of the proposed change of room use.
  - b. Report to EDB in writing upon completion of the project.
  - c. If necessary, a new Certificate of Accommodation will be issued to schools subsequently.

## Chapter 6

# Curriculum, Learning and Teaching, and Academic Planning

### 6.1. Overview: Autonomy and responsibility in curriculum and teaching

#### 6.1.1. Autonomy and flexibility in school operation

- (i) Schools have been enjoying flexibility in terms of the medium of instruction, curriculum arrangements, choices for public examinations, etc. They may offer local and/or non-local curricula according to their mission.
- (ii) Schools should develop a feasible whole-school curriculum, which is based on the schools' strengths, its mission as well as the curriculum aims.

#### 6.1.2. Systematic planning

Schools are required to conduct systematic and strategic curriculum planning to ensure that all teaching and management personnel collaborate towards shared educational goals.

### 6.2. School-based planning for local curriculum (applicable to schools offering local curriculum)

#### 6.2.1. Basis of curriculum framework

##### (i) Guidelines:

Schools offering local curriculum and their teachers are required to observe the curriculum documents prepared by the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) and published for use in schools by EDB, and the guidelines issued by Curriculum Development Institute, in developing and making adaptations to their school-based curriculum.

##### (ii) Reference resources:

For details of curriculum framework and guidelines, please refer to "Ongoing Renewal of the School Curriculum" accessible from EDB's webpage.



### 6.2.2. Guiding principles in curriculum design

In planning the school-based curriculum, schools must observe the following guiding principles:

(i) Learn how to learn:

Nurturing students' independent learning capabilities to achieve the goals of lifelong learning and whole-person development.

(ii) Learner-centred approach:

A learner-centred approach must be adopted in the best interests of student learning and in line with the curriculum documents prepared by the CDC.

(iii) Education for all:

All students have the ability to learn, though they might have their own ways of learning. Therefore, they should be entitled to opportunities for learning experiences for whole-person development, as well as opportunities for developing diverse potentials.

(iv) Broad and balanced:

Both the primary and secondary curricula must be broad and balanced, comprising five essential learning experiences and eight Key Learning Areas (KLAs), in order to lay a good foundation for students' future life, employment, further studies and lifelong learning.

(v) Diversified choices:

The senior secondary curriculum should be broad and balanced with diversification and sufficient choices, providing students with a variety of options for some specialisation to cater for their different interests, aptitudes and abilities.

(vi) Continuous improvement:

Curriculum development should be a continuous improvement process. The school-based curriculum should keep up with the times and be updated timely in response to

the school contexts, and the interests, abilities and needs of students.

#### 6.2.3. Five essential learning experiences

Students should be entitled to the five essential learning experiences that correspond to the aims of “moral, intellectual, physical, social and aesthetic” development in education:

- (i) Values Education:
  - to foster proper values and attitudes so as to face various opportunities and challenges in their life and to practise appropriate behaviours;
- (ii) Intellectual Development:
  - to enrich and extend learning in KLAs and cross-curricular studies to lay a firm foundation of knowledge;
- (iii) Community Service:
  - to nurture care and respect for others, and to develop commitment and responsibility;
- (iv) Physical and Aesthetic Development:
  - to develop an active and healthy lifestyle and aesthetic appreciation; and
- (v) Career-related Experiences:
  - to provide information on vocational and professional education and training (VPET) and the world of work for developing career aspirations and nurturing work ethics.

The five essential learning experiences listed above must be fostered continuously across all stages of schooling.

### 6.3. National security education

#### 6.3.1. Statutory responsibilities and goals:

- (i) According to the National Security Law, all schools have a significant role to play in preventing acts and activities that

endanger national security. In particular, preventive efforts should be accorded priority.

(ii) Schools are required to help students gain a correct understanding of the legislative background, importance and significance of the National Security Law as well as the concepts covered by national security, so as to enhance students' national security and law-abiding awareness, thereby nurturing them to become good law-abiding citizens.

#### 6.3.2. Guidelines of implementation

Schools are required to strictly implement and comply with the guidelines on school administration and education in EDB Circular No. 9/2023 on "National Security: Maintaining a Safe Learning Environment Nurturing Good Citizens".



### 6.4. National flag, national emblem, national anthem, regional flag and regional emblem education

#### 6.4.1. Educational obligations

For the national flag, national emblem, regional flag and regional emblem, all primary and secondary schools (including special schools) must educate students on:

- the history and spirit of the national flag and national emblem.
- the symbolic significance of the regional flag and regional emblem.
- the regulation of displaying and using the national flag and regional flag.
- the etiquette to be followed in a national flag raising ceremony and any related ceremony when a regional flag is raised.

For the national anthem, all primary and secondary schools must:

- enable students to learn to sing the national anthem.
- enable students to understand the history and spirit of the national anthem, as well as to observe the etiquette when the national anthem is being played and sung.

#### 6.4.2. Reference resources:

Schools are required to refer to EDB Circular No. 6/2024 on “National Flag, National Emblem, National Anthem, Regional Flag and Regional Emblem” and EDB’s thematic webpage “Getting to know the National Flag, National Emblem, National Anthem, Regional Flag and Regional Emblem” for the relevant instructions and support measures provided.



### 6.5. School assessment and assignment policies

#### 6.5.1. Principles of policy formulation

- (i) Each school should formulate appropriate assessment and assignment policies to cater for learner diversity and take the initiative to create space for students to facilitate their whole-person development.
- (ii) Schools must strike a balance between the quality and quantity of assignments, ensuring students have sufficient leisure time after school to participate in social, physical and aesthetic activities that are beneficial to their physical and mental well-being, to develop their personal interests, and to have sufficient rest and sleep for building an active and healthy lifestyle.

#### 6.5.2. Resources

- (i) EDB Circular No. 18/2015 on “Guidelines on Homework and Tests in Schools – No Drilling, Effective Learning”.
- (ii) Schools offering local curriculum should also refer to the points listed in Annex 3 of EDB Circular No. 17/2024 on “Ongoing Renewal of the School Curriculum: The Primary Education Curriculum Guide (2024) — Cultivate Values for Leaders of Tomorrow Create Space to Foster Whole-person Development”.



## **6.6. Selection and management of textbooks and learning and teaching resources**

### **6.6.1. School-based selection and professional gatekeeping**

- (i) Under the principle of school-based management, schools may, taking into consideration students' needs, choose textbooks and learning and teaching resources that are in line with the aims, objectives and content of the curriculum.
- (ii) Schools are responsible to play the role of professional gatekeepers, regularly review all the learning and teaching resources, including textbooks, school-based teaching materials, library collections and other reading materials.
- (iii) Schools are required to ensure all teaching and learning materials do not contain any content that endangers national security or is otherwise unsuitable for student learning.
- (iv) If these learning and teaching resources are found to involve serious crimes or moral impropriety, potentially breach the law or contain elements that endanger national security or are contrary to the interests of national security, they must be removed or withdrawn from use immediately so as to avoid causing negative impacts on students.

### **6.6.2. Selection guidelines**

Schools offering local curriculum should refer to EDB Circular Memorandum No. 38/2025 on “Schools' Selection of Quality Textbooks and Learning and Teaching Resources” for the key points when selecting textbooks and learning and teaching resources.



## Chapter 7

### **Student Affairs, Students' Well-being and Safety Management**

#### **7.1. Responsibility of schools on student affairs**

##### **7.1.1. Responsibility on the holistic development and safety security**

SMC should ensure that schools provide a safe, hygienic and healthy learning environment, where all educational activities effectively promote the all-round development of the students, and that safety measures are taken in all school activities.

##### **7.1.2. Upholding right to education**

Schools have a fundamental responsibility to uphold students' right to education. Schools should in light of their actual circumstances and students' backgrounds, flexibly devise school-based policies on student attendance and related matters, in order to encourage student's punctual attendance, foster positive student behaviors, promote harmonious teacher-student relationship, and create a caring school atmosphere and establish close home-school partnership.

##### **7.1.3. Promoting students' education**

SMC shall ensure that the school is able to promote students' education in a proper manner. When considering whether a school promotes students' education in a proper manner, EDB will take into account factors including but not limited to the management of student' attendance and non-attendance.

##### **7.1.4. Providing students data**

Whenever required by PS(Ed), schools shall submit the required information concerning students, including the attendance and absence records.

#### **7.2. Management of admission, attendance and absence**

##### **7.2.1. Policy formulation and transparency**

Schools are required to lay down a clear policy on school attendance, which should be clearly communicated to students, parents, teachers

and the Student Guidance Personnel (SGP) and effectively implemented.

#### 7.2.2. Policies and procedures for student admission

- (i) Impartiality and fairness: Schools are required to formulate school-based policies and procedures for student admission to ensure the admission procedures are fair, just and transparent.
- (ii) Legal compliance: The admission requirements must be in compliance with the legislations of Hong Kong, and administrative directives issued by EDB from time to time, including legislation on equal opportunities such as the Disability Discrimination Ordinance and Race Discrimination Ordinance. When handling admission matters, schools are also required to comply with the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance and/or Prevention of Bribery Ordinance where appropriate.
- (iii) Admitting non-local children: Schools shall observe the principles set out in EDB Circular No. 16/2025 "Entry of Non-local Children and Children Holding a Form of Recognizance to Schools in Hong Kong" when admitting students.
- (iv) Management of student records
  - a. Schools are required to keep proper and maintain timely records of each student. These records, among the necessary personal information, provide important information such as information of students' leaving (e.g. reasons), personal learning experiences, conduct and achievements.
  - b. Schools are recommended to maintain the activity records for individual students for progression to further studies.
  - c. When handling students' personal data, it is essential to ensure the collection purposes, methods, usage, security and access of such data, etc., fully comply with the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance.

#### 7.2.3. Time-table and attendance management

- (i) Directions of time-table
  - a. PS(Ed) may give directions in writing to the responsible person of school in respect of the time-table of work of

any class and may require submission for his/her approval any of such time-table.

- b. Schools are required to keep EDB informed of any changes in the hours of school work or time-table arrangements.
- c. Schools are required to keep all parents fully informed of the school hours, time-table arrangements and days during which students do not need to attend school.

(ii) Notification of staying after class

Schools are required to lay down clear procedures to ensure that parents are notified in a timely manner when if students are required to stay behind after normal school hours.

(iii) Attendance record

Schools are required to record the attendance and absence of students in detail in attendance registers. A separate attendance register for each class must be kept in a form approved by PS(Ed).

#### 7.2.4. Following up and reporting non-attendance cases

- (i) School-based follow-up mechanism: SMCs should formulate school-based mechanism to follow up student non-attendance cases and require the parents or guardians to provide reasonable explanations and appropriate documentary proof (e.g. medical certificate).
- (ii) Reporting requirements: It is of utmost importance that principals are required to comply strictly with the requirements of reporting the case without delay to EDB on the 7th school day of the student's continuous absence disregard of their age, class level and reasons for absence, as required in EDB Circular No. 21/2024 "Upholding Students' Right to Education". EDB will strictly review all cases of student absences and reasons. 
- (iii) Inter-departmental referral: If the students or their families are found to have problems or needs other than non-attendance, the cases should be referred to the Social Welfare Department, relevant social service organisations or the Hong Kong Police Force for follow-up as appropriate.

### 7.2.5. Expulsion of students and suspension from class or school

Schools should not expel students or suspend them from class or school, and may refer to the requirements in EDBC No. 21/2024 “Upholding Students’ Right to Education” if the need arises.



## 7.3. Promotion, repetition and graduation

### 7.3.1. Policy formulation

SMCs are required to draw up policies on student promotion, repetition and graduation, and specify the requirements. The policies have to be endorsed by SMC and properly recorded.

### 7.3.2. Principles of promotion

- (i) Students should normally be promoted at the end of each academic year.
- (ii) Retention of a student in a particular class to repeat a whole year’s work should be the exception rather than the rule. Schools are discouraged from allowing internal or transferred students to repeat.
- (iii) Academic certificates and requirement descriptions
  - a. Schools should clearly inform stakeholders (including prospective students and parents, current students and parents) about the requirements and standards for students to complete the relevant academic stage.
  - b. If a student is absent for the entire year or for an extended period, fails to complete the examinations, or does not meet the required standards in conduct or academic assessments, the school must consider carefully the school-based arrangements, including whether to issue academic certificates to the student.

## 7.4. Management on student safety, health and activities

### 7.4.1. Principles on safety and health

All school activities should be provided with sufficient student safety and health measures. Schools can refer to the “Checklist of Student Safety and Health Measures” issued by EDB (uploaded to EDB’s webpage of “School Safety & Insurance”), and adapt for their use as appropriate.



### 7.4.2. Laboratory and special education facilities safety

#### (i) Requirements for equipment and personnel:

Schools must ensure that all laboratory equipment and installations are properly installed and maintained by qualified personnel. Students should not be allowed to perform dangerous practical experiments. All reasonable precautions must be taken to minimise risks of experiments and to guard against accidents.

#### (ii) Management of hazardous items

All hazardous chemicals/poisons must be clearly labelled, kept in a locked room, or a locked cupboard (located at laboratories or chemical storerooms), and checked regularly by qualified personnel.

#### (iii) Management of radioactive sources

If schools possess sealed radioactive sources for teaching purposes, the schools are required to strictly comply with the “Code of Practice on the Use of Sealed Radioactive Sources for Teaching Purposes in Schools” to carefully handle the procurement, storage, issuance, return and disposal, etc. The custodian is required to arrange “Wipe Test” for all sealed sources at intervals not exceeding 12 months.



#### (iv) Safety guidelines on Science and Technology Education activities:

Schools must make reference to the related safety guidelines when arranging inquiry activities in Science and Technology Education, including but not limited to:

a. [“Safety Handbook for Primary Science” \(2024\)](#) (Chinese version only) - safety guidelines for conducting inquiry activities in Primary Science



b. [“Handbook on Safety in Science Laboratories” \(2013\)](#) - laboratory users’ safety precautions to be taken



c. [“Safety Guidelines on Microbiology and Biotechnology Experiments in School Laboratories” \(2021\)](#) - safety precautions to take when conducting experiments related to microbiology and biotechnology in the school laboratories



d. [“Technological Subjects - Safety in School Workshops” webpage](#) - latest information about safety in school workshops



e. [“Teaching Technology and Living/Home Economics in Secondary Schools Safety Booklet” \(2010\)](#) - safety precautions during lessons in Technology and Living



#### 7.4.3. Safety for extra-curricular activities and study tours outside Hong Kong

##### (i) Priority for safety:

Schools must ensure that all activities, whether they are organised at school or outside school (including study tours outside Hong Kong), are conducted safely.

##### (ii) Informed consent from parents:

Schools must inform parents/guardians of the details of organised extra-curricular activities and obtain their consent. For activities

held at school, adequate members of staff should be on duty to monitor the conduct of the activities and make reference to the relevant safety guidelines.

(iii) Planning of activities held outside school:

Before conducting the activities outside school, schools must get familiar with the detailed arrangements of the activities (venues, routes, safety facilities, etc.), and formulate a contingency plan to deal with emergencies that may occur.

(iv) Outdoor activities and study tours guidelines:

- a. When conducting outdoor activities, schools are required to follow the “[Guidelines on Outdoor Activities](#)”, including obtaining prior consent from the parents, notifying the police, and bringing along an emergency contact list .
- b. When arranging study tours outside Hong Kong, schools are required to refer to “[Guidelines on Study Tours Outside Hong Kong](#)”.



(v) Adverse weather

Schools should formulate a contingency plan in advance to deal with suspension of classes due to inclement weather. Measures to be taken under such weather conditions are set out in circular issued by EDB, the latest issue of which is EDB Circular No. 5/2022 “[Tropical Cyclones and Heavy Persistent Rain Arrangements for Kindergartens and Day Schools](#)”.



7.4.4. Physical education activities safety

Schools should make reference to “[Safety Guidelines on Physical Education Key Learning Area for Hong Kong Schools](#)” when conducting Physical Education lessons and Co-curricular Physical Activities.



7.4.5. Prevention and handling of school bullying

(i) “Zero tolerance” policy

EDB adopts a zero tolerance stance for bullying in schools in any form (including verbal, physical and cyber bullying) on any grounds (including physical build, ability, religion, race and sexual orientation).

(ii) School-based policies and procedures

Schools should formulate policies and procedures to prevent and handle bullying in schools, create a harmonious school environment, intervene as soon as possible and handle each school bullying incident proactively and seriously.

(iii) References

Please refer to EDB Circular No. 18/2008 “Creating Harmonious School”, EDB Circular No. 101/2025 “Harmonious School: One-Stop Hotline and Counselling Services”, and “Flowchart for Handling Bullying Incidents in Schools”.



#### 7.4.6. Students' mental health and risk support

(i) Identification and intervention of suicidal risk:

- a. If students are suspected to have suicidal risk, schools should arrange school guidance personnel (for example, Student Guidance Teacher/Student Guidance Personnel or School Social Worker) promptly for support.
- b. If necessary, schools should solicit professional support from educational psychologists, clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, medical and/or police officers.

(ii) References:

Schools may refer to EDB Circular No. 215/2025 “[Three-tier School-based Emergency Mechanism and Key Measures for Strengthening the Promotion of Mental Health at Schools](#)”, “[Three-tier School-based Emergency Mechanism](#)” and “[A Resource Handbook for Schools: Detecting, Supporting and Making Referral for Students with Suicidal Behaviours](#)”.



(iii) Handling on the spot:

Should a student display abnormal emotional or behavioural reactions at school, before professional assistance is available, on-site personnel should help to stabilise the student’s emotions but they themselves should keep calm and assess the situation carefully. In case there are students having serious injury or in a life-threatening situation; or situation requiring immediate support, schools should activate its crisis management mechanism and take appropriate actions promptly, including dialling 999 for emergency assistance.

7.4.7. Protecting children from abuse

(i) Statutory responsibilities:

Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Ordinance (Cap. 650) effective on 20 January 2026 mandates statutory responsibility of the specified professionals in sectors including education to report serious child abuse cases.

(ii) Identification and intervention

Schools shall pay attention to students’ conditions from time to time for early identification and intervention of suspected cases of child abuse/maltreatment and domestic violence.

(iii) Compliance with guidelines

Schools are required to comply with the relevant legislation (including Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Ordinance), and make reference to the “Protecting Children from Maltreatment – Procedural Guide for Multi-disciplinary Co-operation” and “Guide for Mandated Reporters” issued by the Social Welfare Department as well as EDB Circular No. 15/2025 “Handling Suspected Cases of Child Abuse/Maltreatment and Domestic Violence”.



7.4.8. Prevention and control of communicable diseases

(i) Compliance with the guidelines

Schools should refer to “Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Schools/Kindergartens/Kindergartens-cum-Child Care Centres/Child Care Centres” issued by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP), or download the related guidelines and health information from the CHP website, to prevent and control communicable disease outbreaks in schools.



(ii) Access to information

Schools may visit EDB’s “Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Schools” webpage for the latest information.



(iii) Reporting an outbreak

Schools are required to inform Central Notification Office of CHP (Tel: 2477 2772; Fax: 2477 2770) when signs of outbreak of communicable diseases or abnormal upsurge in the number of absentees with similar symptoms in the school is detected. When submitting the “Suspected Infectious Disease Outbreak in School/Kindergarten/KG-cum CCC/Child Care Centre Notification Form” to the Central Notification Office, schools are required to send a copy to EDB for reference and follow-up.

## **7.5. Preparation on first aid**

Schools are required to be fully equipped with preparation and arrangement for first aid in accordance with the Education Regulations, to ensure that they can promptly handle the sudden medical situation in the school.

## **7.6. Procurement of insurance**

According to EDB Circular No. 16/2004 “Insurance in Schools”, in the interests of teachers, students and the school, the supervisors are advised to seriously consider the need for acquiring adequate insurance to cover public liabilities for damages arising from fire, accidents and injuries to students and other persons as well as the employees’ compensation as required by the Employees’ Compensation Ordinance.



## **Conclusion**

The issuance of the Code marks a new stage of heightened standardisation and transparency, as well as high-quality development in private school education. EDB will continue to collaborate with all private schools to jointly realise the spirit of the Code, nurturing outstanding talents and solidifying Hong Kong's role as an international education hub.

## Annex

### Reference documents on Personnel Management

Schools are required to refer to the following, and any other relevant legislation, in drawing up their personnel policies or procedures:

- (i) Education Ordinance and Education Regulations (Cap. 279 and 279A, the Laws of Hong Kong)
- (ii) Employment Ordinance (Cap.57, the Laws of Hong Kong)
- (iii) Employees' Compensation Ordinance (Cap.282, the Laws of Hong Kong)
- (iv) Minimum Wage Ordinance (Cap.608, the Laws of Hong Kong)
- (v) Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap.486, the Laws of Hong Kong) and the Code of Practice on Human Resource Management issued by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data 
- (vi) Legislation on equal opportunities, such as the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 480, the Laws of Hong Kong), the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 487, the Laws of Hong Kong), the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 527, the Laws of Hong Kong), the Race Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 602, the Laws of Hong Kong), and the related Codes of Practice on Employment issued by the Equal Opportunities Commission; 
- (vii) Code of Practice against Discrimination in Employment on the Ground of Sexual Orientation issued by the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau; 
- (viii) Prevention of Bribery Ordinance (Cap. 201, the Laws of Hong Kong)
- (ix) Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Ordinance (Cap.485, the Laws of Hong Kong)
- (x) Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance and the subsidiary legislation (Cap.509, the Laws of Hong Kong)
- (xi) Guidelines on Teachers' Professional Conduct 

(xii) Best Practice Checklist on Governance and Internal Control in Schools issued by ICAC



(xiii) relevant EDB circulars, webpages and guidelines