

10 October 2008

Education Bureau Circular No. 19/2008

Small Class Teaching in Public Sector Primary Schools

[Note: This circular should be read by

- (a) Supervisors and heads of all aided and government primary schools (excluding special schools) – for necessary action; and
- (b) Heads of primary schools under the Direct Subsidy scheme and special schools, and Heads of Sections – for information]

Summary

This circular sums up the administrative arrangements implemented in the past few months in support of the progressive implementation of small class teaching (SCT) in public sector primary schools, starting from the cohort of Primary One (P1) students in the 2009/10 school year. It also sets out the direction and details of other support measures, including the enrolment cap, provision of additional teaching posts to schools maintaining 30 students per class and professional development of SCT.

Background

2. The Chief Executive has announced in his 2007 Policy Address that the Government will, where circumstances permit, implement SCT in public sector primary schools by phases, starting from P1 in the 2009/10 school year and extending progressively to cover P1 to P6 by the 2014/15 school year.

3. Starting from the 2009/10 school year, schools implementing SCT will be allocated 25 students per class under the Primary One Admission (POA) System while other schools will be allocated 30 students per class.

4. Premised on the directions agreed by the stakeholders during the consultation, we should be pragmatic and flexible with the implementation of SCT, taking into account practical circumstances such as the availability of classrooms and trained teachers, as well as the wishes and needs of schools, parents and students when

assessing individual schools' readiness to implement SCT. As undertaken earlier, we will also provide those schools which have come forward for implementation of SCT in 2009/10 but could not so implement for the time being, as well as those which have yet to come forward, with additional teaching posts as an interim measure so that these schools may adopt alternative measures to enhance teaching and learning while maintaining a class size of 30. The provision is subject to the schools concerned drawing up plans for improving teaching and learning with the additional posts.

Implementation Details

Assessing whether SCT is feasible for individual schools

5. We have assessed the demand and supply of classrooms in each school net under the POA System for the first planning cycle (from the 2009/10 to 2014/15 school years), taking into account individual schools' readiness to implement SCT, the number of classrooms in the school nets and the latest school-age population projections, with a view to confirming whether it is possible to allow all schools which have opted for SCT in a particular school net to do so and at the same time ensure a sufficient supply of classrooms in the net to meet the projected demand across P1 to P6 over a six-year projection period. In other words, we have to ensure an adequate supply of classrooms not only for sustaining an SCT environment throughout P1 – P6 (i.e. until 2014/15 school year) for the 2009 cohort of P1 students enrolled in schools implementing SCT, but also for sustaining the continuation of SCT in the schools concerned for subsequent P1 cohorts.

6. In principle, schools that have been given approval for implementing SCT should not apply for a revision of their class size to 30 in subsequent years, so as to stabilise school development, facilitate parents in making school choices and enable long-term planning on the part of the Education Bureau (EDB).

7. Given that the actual demand and supply situation for each POA cycle may differ from the projection for the six-year period on which our current assessment is based, EDB will update the projections of demand and supply of classrooms and roll forward our six-year projection annually after each POA cycle, taking into account the updated number of approved classes and the latest population projections. To facilitate planning, EDB will, in March every year, invite schools which have opted to maintain a class size of 30 to indicate whether they would take forward SCT, and if so, the planned implementation year. We will then update our assessment as to whether schools' option for SCT, including those which have opted for SCT but could not so

implement due to the projected shortfall in classrooms in the school nets concerned, could be realized in the 2010/11 school year or thereafter.

Enrolment cap

8. We understand that public sector schools may wish to retain some flexibility to admit students outside the POA System. This notwithstanding, with the implementation of SCT, it is not appropriate for public sector primary schools to go for an intake per class which far exceeds the standard class size. Starting from the 2009/10 school year, an enrolment cap at 10% above the standard P1 class size is set. In other words, the enrolment cap per P1 class will be set at 27 for primary schools with 25 students as standard class size and 33 for those with a class size of 30.

Primary One Admission System

9. The projection in school-age population is subject to various limitations due to changing circumstances. Under the prevailing practice and to uphold the principle of vicinity, should the actual demand in any POA cycle exceed the supply of classrooms in the school net where a school situates, the Bureau may need to slightly increase the number of students allocated to each class in the school net concerned for that particular school year, as a temporary arrangement. Such practice will continue and discussion with the schools concerned will be arranged if and when necessary.

Additional teaching posts for schools maintaining 30 students per class

10. On implementation of SCT (i.e. 2009/10 school year), we will provide schools maintaining 30 students per class with additional Assistant Primary School Master/Mistress (APSM) posts by phases based on the total number of approved classes (excluding classes operated under the Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme) set out below. The objective is to facilitate the implementation of school-based measures that would provide teachers with appropriate classroom teaching conditions to enhance the quality of learning and teaching. Details are as follows:

Total number of approved classes (excluding classes operated under the Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme)	Total number of additional APSM posts to be provided
12 to 23	2
24 to 35	3
36 or above	4

In the 1st year when SCT is implemented (i.e. 2009/10 school year), schools which are approved two or more P1 classes will be provided with the 1st additional teaching post. Please refer to Annex 1 for the criteria for the provision of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th additional teaching posts.

11. Since the provision of the above additional posts is meant to be an interim measure, the posts will not be included in the normal teaching staff establishment while being provided on a regular basis. In other words, these additional APSM posts will not be included in the calculation of the number of senior teachers and the graduate teacher ratio of the schools. Appointment of teachers to these posts should be processed according to the Code of Aid for Primary Schools and the guidelines or circulars on appointment matters currently in force.

12. Should schools turn to implement SCT, or fail to meet the required number of P1 class set out in Annex 1 for the additional posts due to under-enrolment for two consecutive school years, or the number of the approved P1 classes be reduced to a level below the threshold in the September Headcount, or operate P1 classes at an average class size of 25 student or below, the additional teaching posts will be clawed back by phases (details are at Annex 2). Schools should be responsible for handling the surplus teachers based on the school-based criteria.

13. Schools should complete Annex 3 to indicate their intention to apply for the additional teaching posts. Schools intending to apply for the additional teaching posts should also state the school-based measures to be implemented for providing teachers with appropriate classroom teaching conditions to enhance their learning and teaching effectiveness. The completed Annex 3 should reach the EDB on or before 13 February 2009 (Friday). This will facilitate the Bureau to grant the additional teaching posts according to the arrangements set out in paragraph 10 above via the letter on “Class Organization and Staff Establishment”.

Professional development of SCT

14. SCT should not simply involve a sheer reduction in class size. Schools should enhance the learning effectiveness of students by making good use of the classroom environment with a reduced class size. EDB will organize various professional development activities, including seminars, workshops, experience-sharing sessions, establishing partner schools on a district basis, and continuation of the school-based professional support services etc., so as to help teachers devise appropriate pedagogical strategies and apply different teaching modes

in a small class teaching environment through theory learning, classroom practice and experience sharing etc. We will also make reference to the recommendations of the SCT Study to be completed in end 2008 and invite tertiary education institutions to organize more diversified in-service professional training courses. Details about the professional development activities will be provided in due course.

Enquiries

15. For enquiries, please contact the Research and Test Development Section on 2892 6628 or 2892 6611.

L B IP
for Secretary for Education

**Criteria for Providing Additional Assistant Primary School Master/Mistress Posts
to Schools Maintaining a Class Size of 30**

Schools maintaining 30 students per class and having met the following requirements will be provided with additional Assistant Primary School Master/Mistress (APSM) posts.

Timeline for maintaining 30 students per class	Requirements to be met			
	Number of approved <u>P1</u> classes required	Projected total number of approved P1 to P6 classes based on the number of registered classrooms in schools should reach		
		<u>12 classes or above</u>	<u>24 classes or above</u>	<u>36 classes or above</u>
1 st school year	2 classes or above	1 st APSM post	1 st APSM post	1 st APSM post
2 nd school year	2 classes or above in the 2 nd or 3 rd school year	---	---	---
3 rd school year		2 nd APSM post	2 nd APSM post	2 nd APSM post
4 th school year	4 classes or above in the 4 th or 5 th school year	---	---	---
5 th school year		---	3 rd APSM post	3 rd APSM post
6 th school year	6 classes or above in the 5 th or 6 th school year	---	---	4 th APSM post

In principle, the 1st school year when schools are provided with the 1st APSM post refers to the 2009/10 school year when SCT is first implemented. The provision of the 1st APSM post will be postponed with the 1st school year deferred if a school fails to meet the requirement for the provision of the 1st additional teaching post in 2009/10 (i.e. having less than 2 approved P1 classes). Subsequent to the provision of the 1st APSM, the 2nd, 3rd and 4th APSM posts will be provided to schools subject to the number of P1 classes approved for the relevant year as tabulated above, and so on.

**Criteria for Clawing Back
the Additional Assistant Primary School Master/Mistress Posts**

(I) For schools switching to Small Class Teaching (SCT)

Since it will also take six years to cover all classes from P1 to P6 if schools maintaining 30 students per class turn to SCT, the additional Assistant Primary School Master/Mistress (APSM) posts will be clawed back with reference to the criteria for providing the posts (details at Annex 1) as tabulated below:

School year to turn to SCT	Levels implementing SCT	Levels maintaining 30 students per class	Total number of additional APSM posts <u>already</u> provided	
			1 to 3 posts	4 posts
1 st year	P1	P2 – P6		Clawing back the 4 th post
2 nd year	P1 – P2	P3 – P6	Clawing back the 3 rd post	
3 rd year	P1 – P3	P4 – P6		Clawing back the 3 rd post
4 th year	P1 – P4	P5 – P6	Clawing back the 2 nd post	
5 th year	P1 – P5	P6		Clawing back the 2 nd post
6 th year	Full implementation of SCT		Clawing back the 1 st post	Clawing back the 1 st post

(II) For schools with under-enrolment

Criteria for clawing back the additional APSM posts:

- (a) Additional APSM posts will be clawed back if there is reduction in P1 classes or the average class size of P1 falls to 25 students or below;
- (b) To facilitate stable development of schools, the additional APSM posts will be clawed back only when under-enrolment occurs for two consecutive school years; and
- (c) For schools with reduction in P1 classes, the actual number of additional APSM posts to be clawed back is subject to the total number of approved classes as detailed in paragraph 10 of this circular.

Arrangements for clawing back the additional APSM posts from schools with reduction in approved P1 classes:

For schools maintaining 30 students per class and having been provided with the additional APSM posts as set out in Annex 1, the posts will be clawed back when the following situations occur:

- The 4th APSM post will be clawed back when
 - the number of approved P1 classes is less than 6 for two consecutive years; and
 - the total number of approved classes is less than 36.
- The 3rd additional APSM post will be clawed back when
 - the number of approved P1 classes is less than 4 for two consecutive years; and
 - the total number of approved classes is less than 24.
- The 2nd and 1st additional APSM posts will be clawed back when
 - the number of approved P1 classes is less than 2 for two consecutive years;
 - the total number of approved classes is less than 12; and
 - under such circumstance, the two additional posts will be clawed back by phases over a period of two years.

Arrangements for clawing back the additional APSM posts from schools with reduction in class size in P1:

For schools having an average class size of 25 students or below at P1 (i.e. de facto SCT) as recorded in the September Headcount for two consecutive years, the additional APSM posts will be clawed back following the arrangements set out in part (I) of this Annex.

[This Annex should be returned to the Education Bureau by post or fax on or before **Friday, 13 February 2009**]

To: Education Bureau
Rm 1138, 11/F Wu Chung House
213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, Hong Kong
(Attn: Research and Test Development Section
Education Commission and Planning Division)

Fax Number: 2574 0340

**Application for Additional Assistant Primary School Master/Mistress (APSM) Posts
to Implement School-based Measures to Enhance Teaching Effectiveness**

Name of School: _____(am/pm/whole-day*)

District of School: _____

Please put a "√" in the appropriate box.

According to the Education Bureau Circular of 10 October 2008, our school:

intends to implement school-based measures as illustrated below with the additional teaching posts to enhance teaching effectiveness

To arrange group learning to improve the learning and teaching of Chinese Language/English Language/Mathematics/General Studies*

To assist the Curriculum Development Team in curriculum planning/adaptation

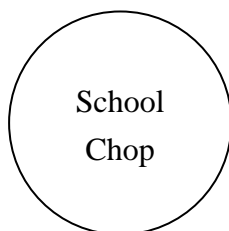
To adopt a diversified assessment approach to enhance learning

To practise co-teaching

To strengthen cross-curricular learning elements

Others (Please specify): _____

does not intend to apply for the additional teaching posts.



Signature of School Supervisor/Head*: _____

Name of School Supervisor/Head*: _____

Date: _____

* Please delete whichever is inappropriate.