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Education Bureau
Government Secretariat, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

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To: Supervisors / Principals of government, aided and caput secondary schools

Dear Supervisors / Principals,

**Fine-tuning the Medium of Instruction for Secondary Schools
Arrangements for the Third Cycle (2022/23 to 2027/28 School Years)**

This circular letter informs government, aided and caput secondary schools about the implementation details of the fine-tuned medium of instruction (MOI) arrangements for secondary schools in the third cycle.

Details

Background

2. The fine-tuned MOI arrangements have been implemented at junior secondary levels starting from the 2010/11 school year. Under the fine-tuned MOI framework¹, all schools have the discretion with varying degrees to, having regard to their school circumstances, make professional judgment to devise MOI arrangements in each of the school years within a six-year cycle. As such, students are provided with more opportunities to be exposed to, and use, English in schools in a progressive manner for preparation for further studies and work. Since then, the MOI arrangements at junior secondary levels have become more flexible and diversified, with schools adopting a student-centred approach to teaching in order to meet individual students' needs. For details, please refer to Education Bureau (EDB) Circular No. 6/2009 "Fine-tuning the Medium of Instruction for Secondary Schools".

¹ The prescribed criteria under the fine-tuned MOI framework include: (i) "student ability" (i.e. the average proportion of Secondary (S) 1 intake of a school admitted to a class belonging to the "top 40%" group (territory) in the "Secondary School Places Allocation" (SSPA) of the previous two years under a six-year cycle reaches 85% of the size of a class); (ii) "teacher capability" (i.e. teachers adopting English as the MOI should have Level 3 or above in English Language of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (or Grade C or above in English Language (Syllabus B) of the defunct Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) / Level 3 or above in English Language of the HKCEE in 2007 to 2011), or other recognised equivalent qualifications (e.g. Band 6 or above in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) (academic domain))); and (iii) "school-based support" (i.e. support measures provided by schools for students in adopting English as the MOI).

3. Under the fine-tuned MOI framework, schools fulfilling the “student ability” criterion may, having regard to other prescribed criteria (including teachers’ capability in teaching in the English medium and school support measures), exercise professional discretion to determine the MOI arrangements in the class(es) / group(s) concerned, such as adopting English as the MOI (EMI) for all non-language subjects, or adopting Chinese as the MOI (CMI) for some non-language subjects. To enhance the English learning environment of students in class(es) / group(s) adopting CMI for non-language subjects, schools may choose to use up to 25% of the total lesson time (excluding the lesson time for the English Language subject) to conduct extended learning activities (ELA) in English (if ELA are conducted for individual subject(s), the lesson time should also be capped at the aforementioned percentage of the total lesson time of the subject(s) concerned), or transform all 25% or a smaller percentage of the ELA lesson time into the adoption of EMI in up to a maximum of two non-language subjects (i.e. “allocation of time to subjects”). If schools implement both ELA in English and “allocation of time to subjects”, the lesson time involved together must not exceed 25% of the total lesson time (excluding the lesson time for the English Language subject).

Continuous Implementation of the Fine-tuned Framework

4. The fine-tuned MOI arrangements are approaching the third cycle, which will last from the 2022/23 school year until the 2027/28 school year. After reviewing the implementation in the past two cycles, the EDB considers that schools in general have professionally capitalised on the flexibility accorded by the fine-tuned arrangements and enabled students to benefit from diversified MOI arrangements, under which schools offered their students more opportunities for exposure to and use of English, while ensuring their efficacy in learning non-language subjects. Therefore, the EDB has decided to take forward the existing fine-tuned framework into the third cycle. Schools’ discretion on MOI arrangements in the third cycle will continue to be determined by the three prescribed criteria of “student ability”, “teacher capability” and “school-based support”, so that students can continue to benefit from the merits of fine-tuned arrangements.

Refinements to Implementation Details

5. In light of the recent changes in teaching environment, the EDB has decided to refine the implementation details of the fine-tuned MOI arrangements in the third cycle under the existing mechanism, so that schools can better cater for the needs of students. To minimise the impact of changes in S1 population on the stable environment for MOI arrangements, we will replace the “allocation class size” with the “average class size”² in the 2020/21 school year as the parameter for determining the number of places for which schools will be given professional discretion to determine the school-based MOI arrangements according to the current “student ability” criterion. In other words, if the average proportion of S1 intake of a school admitted to a class belonging to the “top 40%” group in the two years prior to the commencement of the third cycle (i.e. under SSPA 2020 and 2021) reaches 85%³ of the size of a class (with regard to the “average class size” of 27

² “Average class size” refers to the average number of students per class from S1 to S6 in all secondary schools in the territory.

³ For “through-train” secondary schools, the threshold percentage of 75% for S1 entrants from their “linked” primary schools will continue to be adopted while the threshold percentage for S1 entrants from other primary schools will be maintained at 85%.

students in the 2020/21 school year, 85% means 22 students), the school is deemed to have satisfied the “student ability” criterion and may exercise professional discretion on the MOI arrangements for the classe(s) / group(s) concerned, with regard to the prescribed criteria of “teacher capability” and “school-based support”. In early July this year, we will inform schools of the maximum number of places for which they will be given professional discretion in respect of MOI arrangements in each of the school years within the third cycle, with a view to facilitating their formulation of school-based MOI arrangements for the third six-year cycle (i.e. the 2022/23 to 2027/28 school years) commencing in September 2022.

6. To cater for schools’ actual needs and facilitate students’ smooth transition to the senior secondary curriculum, the EDB will allow greater flexibility in schools’ planning of the ELA and “allocation of time to subjects” in the third cycle. On top of the arrangements set out in paragraph 3 above, schools may opt to take the entire junior secondary learning stage (i.e. S1 to S3) as a unit, and adopt an orderly and progressive approach to make blanket allocation of ELA lesson time from S1 to S3 for the same cohort of students, up to 25% of the total lesson time (excluding the lesson time of the English Language subject) in the junior secondary learning stage; and make blanket allocation of subjects to be covered by “allocation of time to subjects” from S1 to S3 for this cohort of students, up to six counts of transformation of the ELA lesson time in the junior secondary learning stage (please refer to the Annex for illustrative examples). In the course of planning, schools should adopt an orderly and progressive approach and consider thoroughly whether the relevant arrangements can meet individual students’ ability and progress in learning through English as well as their needs, interests and aspirations. Schools should also ensure that the arrangements are able to complement their overall curriculum planning and maintain the consistency and coherence of the school curriculum.

Professional Assessment and Support Mechanism

7. Under the fine-tuned framework, if schools fail to meet the “student ability” criterion for maintaining their existing discretion over school-based MOI arrangements, they should adjust their school-based MOI arrangements in the third cycle. However, acknowledging that individual schools may have accumulated years of experience with fine-tuned MOI arrangements and hence may be able to complement the inadequacy in “student ability” by means of teachers’ capability and school-based support, it may not be beneficial to students’ learning if schools are required to adjust their school-based MOI arrangements in the third cycle solely because they fail to meet the prescribed criterion of “student ability”. As such, the EDB will introduce a professional assessment and support mechanism, under which schools not meeting the “student ability” criterion may submit an application in the form of a school proposal if they, after thorough consideration of school context, intend to carry on with their existing school-based MOI arrangements in the third cycle. With students’ learning efficacy as the primary concern, the EDB will scrutinise each case in a professional and rigorous manner and carefully review the circumstances of each applicant school, including the experiences accumulated with fine-tuned arrangements and their teaching effectiveness, before deciding whether an application should be approved. To ensure teaching effectiveness, successful applicant schools are required to join school-based support programmes and arrange for teachers to receive professional training. If schools fail to pass the assessment, they will have to adjust their school-based MOI arrangements accordingly in the third cycle under the mechanism.

8. Upon notifying schools of the maximum number of places for which they will be

given professional discretion to determine the school-based MOI arrangements for the third cycle in early July this year, the EDB will conduct professional dialogues with schools which should adjust their school-based MOI arrangements for failing to meet the “student ability” criterion, with a view to understanding the circumstances of the schools concerned and advise them on their school-based MOI arrangements. Schools should, after consultation with relevant stakeholders and reviewing their own circumstances, inform the EDB of their intention on whether or not to apply for maintaining their existing school-based MOI arrangements in the third cycle by the end of August this year. Applicant schools have to prepare a school proposal endorsed by the School Management Committee / Incorporated Management Committee detailing, among others, the support measures planned for the third cycle as well as an evaluation of the effectiveness of their existing school-based MOI arrangements. Details of the professional assessment and support mechanism will be announced in early July this year.

Monitoring and Transparency of Information

9. With respect to schools’ annual submission of school-based MOI plans for the third MOI cycle, the EDB will continue to engage schools in professional dialogues when required and schools shall review and revise their MOI arrangements where appropriate. The form for reporting the “School-based Medium of Instruction Plan for Junior Secondary Levels (Arrangements for Secondary 1 Students Admitted in the 2022/23 School Year)” for the first year of the third cycle will be attached to the letter on the maximum number of places with professional discretion to determine the school-based MOI arrangements for the third cycle to be issued to schools in early July this year.

10. In line with the School Development and Accountability Framework, schools are held accountable for their MOI arrangements in respect of students’ learning outcomes. Schools should incorporate their whole-school language policy (including the MOI arrangements) in the School Development Plan, and conduct annual review and include the findings in the School Report, which should be uploaded to the school website. For parents’ easy reference, information on schools’ MOI arrangements should also be included in the Secondary School Profiles and made available on the school website.

Professional Support and Research

11. To ensure the quality of classroom learning and teaching, the EDB will continue to provide various kinds of school-based support and teacher training programmes, with a view to consolidating the experience gained and promoting professional exchange. The EDB will also step up the support for language across the curriculum for the English medium and elevate teachers’ professional standards in the relevant aspects. In parallel, the EDB has planned to conduct in the third cycle a comprehensive review of the fine-tuned MOI policy for secondary schools, which includes reviewing the “student ability” criterion as well as students’ learning efficacy under different MOI arrangements, with a view to refining our policy according to review findings by the end of the third cycle to cater for the development and needs of the society.

Briefing Session

12. We will brief all government, aided and caput secondary schools on details of this circular letter in the end of May / early June this year. More information about the briefing

session will be announced in due course.

Enquiries

13. For enquiries, please contact your Senior School Development Officer or the Review and Planning Section:

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Ms Bonnie SIOW	(Tel. no. : 2892 6639):	Wanchai, Wong Tai Sin, Kwai Chung & Tsing Yi, North
Mr Ivan SO	(Tel. no. : 2892 6463):	Hong Kong East, Southern, Sham Shui Po, Yuen Long
Ms Christina KWOK	(Tel. no. : 2892 6625):	Central & Western, Kowloon City, Shatin, Tai Po

Yours sincerely,

Benjamin YUNG
for Secretary for Education

c.c. Chief School Development Officers

Examples on Adopting the Entire Junior Secondary Learning Stage as a Unit for Arranging Extended Learning Activities and “Allocation of Time to Subjects”

In planning for school-based MOI arrangements for the third cycle, schools may, having due regard to curriculum planning considerations and students’ gradual improvement in English language proficiency, opt to take the entire junior secondary learning stage (i.e. S1 to S3) as a unit, and adopt an orderly and progressive approach to make blanket allocation of ELA lesson time from S1 to S3 for the same cohort of students (e.g. S1 students admitted in the 2022/23 school year), up to 25% of the total lesson time (excluding the lesson time of the English Language subject) in the junior secondary learning stage. Likewise, schools may opt to make blanket allocation of subjects to be covered by “allocation of time to subjects” from S1 to S3 for the same cohort of students, up to six counts of transformation of the ELA lesson time in the junior secondary learning stage. If schools implement both ELA in English and “allocation of time to subjects”, the lesson time involved together must not exceed 25% of the total lesson time of S1 to S3 (excluding the lesson time of the English Language subject). Some illustrative examples are listed below for schools’ reference:

Example 1: Implementing ELA in S1, S2 and S3

School year	Level	% of total lesson time (excluding lesson time for English Language) allocated for ELA in each level	
		School A	School B
2022/23	S1	20%	15%
2023/24	S2	25%	25%
2024/25	S3	30%	35%

Example 2: Implementing “allocation of time to subjects” in S1, S2 and S3

School year	Level	Content subject covered by “allocation of time to subjects” transformed from ELA lesson time
2022/23	S1	Mathematics
2023/24	S2	Mathematics, Science
2024/25	S3	Mathematics, Science, Computer Literacy

Example 3: Implementing ELA in S1 and “allocation of time to subjects” in S2 and S3

School year	Level	% of total lesson time (excluding lesson time for English Language) allocated for ELA in each level / Content subject covered by “allocation of time to subjects” transformed from ELA lesson time
2022/23	S1	10% (Implementing ELA)
2023/24	S2	Mathematics, Science (Implementing “allocation of time to subjects”)
2024/25	S3	Mathematics, Science, Computer Literacy (Implementing “allocation of time to subjects”)