SPECIAL EDUCATION

Aim

The aim of special education in Hong Kong is to provide children having special educational needs (SEN) with education services to help them develop their potential to the full, achieve as much independence as they are capable of, and become well-adjusted individuals in the community.

Under the prevailing policy, subject to the assessment and recommendation of the specialists and with parents’ consent, children with more severe or multiple disabilities are placed in special schools for intensive support. Other children with SEN will attend ordinary schools.

Scope of Work of the Education Bureau

The Education Bureau is responsible for the planning, development, monitoring and operation of all special education services. It advises on organization, curricula, teaching strategies and school placement. Relevant officers of the Bureau have received training in their specialized fields, and can provide professional advice in these fields to public-sector ordinary schools and special schools, non-governmental organizations and other government departments.

Services provided by the Education Bureau

The Education Bureau provides school-based support services for children suspected of having SEN such as hearing impairment, speech and language impairments, learning, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, etc. The Bureau runs two Special Education Services Centres, located in Kowloon Tong and Kwai Chung, offering support services. The Special Education Resource Centre (SERC) located at the Kowloon Tong Education Services Centre also provides multi-media facilities, softwares and cliparts for the production of teaching materials and aids by teachers. Updated journals, magazines and books on special education as well as school-based teaching and learning packages are also available for teachers' reference. Furthermore, the website of SERC provides information and teaching resources on special education for the general public.
Assessment services include psycho-educational assessment, assessment of social adjustment and attainment testing for students with learning, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, and speech and language assessment for children suspected with speech and language impairments. The Education Bureau implements the early identification and intervention programme for primary one students in all public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools. The aim is for teachers to identify children with learning difficulties, and to provide timely support.

Support services include educational audiological services for children with hearing impairment, school-based speech therapy services for students with speech and language impairments, educational psychology service for students with learning, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, school placement and advice and professional support to parents and teachers on how to manage children with disabilities. The Education Bureau also provides hearing aids and earmould service for pre-school and school children with hearing impairment and advise them on the effective use of assistive listening systems in a learning environment.

The Education Bureau develops guidelines and resources packs for teachers to support education of students with SEN. Leaflets for parents and the general public to promote the understanding of SEN are also published.

Special Schools

At present, there are 60 aided special schools in Hong Kong:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total No. of Schools (as at Sept 2018)</th>
<th>No. of Schools with a Boarding Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School for Children with Visual Impairment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School for Children with Hearing Impairment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School for Children with Physical Disability</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School for Social Development</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School for Children with Intellectual Disability</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital School²</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total :</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>21 + 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All special schools receive subvention from the Education Bureau under the Code of Aid for Special Schools or Code of Aid for Aided Schools. The Bureau also provides subsidy for paramedical, social work, nursing and residential care staff for

¹ Residential services provided in schools for social development are subvented by the Social Welfare Department
² The hospital school operates classes at 18 hospitals
these schools. An annual block grant is made to the Hong Kong Society for the Blind for the operation of the Centralized Braille Production Centre which produces braille materials (including textbooks) for use by students with visual impairment.

**Class Size and Staffing Ratio in Special Schools**

The class size of special schools ranges from 8 to 15 per class, depending on the types of children served. The teacher-to-class ratio is 1.7 teachers per primary and junior secondary class, 1.9 teachers per senior secondary class for special schools for children with intellectual disability and 2 teachers per senior secondary class for special schools offering the ordinary curriculum. Starting from the 2017/18 school year, the current teacher-to-class ratio for public sector primary and secondary schools (including special schools) will be increased by 0.1 across the board to provide additional teaching staff for schools to take forward various education initiatives and enhance the quality of education. Besides, there are various types of additional teachers and specialists provided in these schools to cater for the different SEN of the students.

**Duration of Course in Special Schools**

In general, the age of admission of children to a special school is 6 and they are provided with free and universal basic education. With the implementation of the New Academic Structure (NAS) from the 2009/10 school year, special schools also offer free senior secondary education for their students.

**Fee**

Starting from the 2008/09 school year, all primary and secondary classes in special schools are free. The School Textbook Assistance Scheme administered by the Student Financial Assistance Agency supports needy parents of children attending such classes. There is a boarding fee for residential students and those needy students may apply for fee remission.

**Curriculum**

The Committee on Special Educational Needs under the Curriculum Development Council is responsible for formulating policy and overseeing curriculum development for students with SEN. The curriculum for these students takes the same aims of the Hong Kong School Curriculum and aligns with the implementation of inclusive education to provide the students with the similar learning experiences as their counterparts and develop their potential to the full. Related curriculum development work is executed by the Curriculum Development Institute.

On the principle of “One Curriculum Framework for All”, special schools in general adopt the Hong Kong School Curriculum framework and make reference to the Basic Education Curriculum Guide (BECG) and Secondary Education Curriculum Guide (SECG) to develop a school-based curriculum which is relevant to the learning
capabilities and characteristics of students with SEN. Also, effective learning and teaching strategies will be employed to cater for their diverse learning needs.

**Professional Support**

Since the 2007/08 school year, the Education Bureau has been providing structured training courses pitched at Basic, Advanced and Thematic levels (BAT Courses), for teachers of ordinary and special schools to enhance their professional capacity in catering for students with SEN. Starting from the 2012/13 school year, the Bureau offers a training course on “education for students with severe or multiple disabilities” for special school teachers to meet their training needs. From the 2017/18 school year onwards, the Bureau conducts the “Professional Development Programme for Mental Health” for primary and secondary school teachers to raise their awareness of mental health and enhance their professional knowledge and skills to identify and support students with mental health needs. Apart from the above, the Bureau also organises seminars, workshops, experience sharing sessions, etc. on supporting students with SEN for principals, teachers and teaching assistants in ordinary and special schools.

In addition, the Education Bureau operates the School Partnership Scheme. Under the Scheme, for the 2017/18 and 2018/19 school years, there are 10 Special Schools cum Resource Centres (SSRC), 7 SSRC (Schools for Social Development) (SSRC(SSD)) and 14 Resource Schools on Whole School Approach (RS-WSA) which aim to empower ordinary schools in supporting students with SEN and to set up support network. SSRC have proficient teaching experience and expertise in supporting students with SEN, particularly those with intellectual disability, physical disability, and emotional and behavioural difficulties. They work in close collaboration with their partner schools in enabling knowledge/skill transfer and to set up support network, so as to build up ordinary schools’ confidence and strategies for supporting students with SEN. SSRC(SSD) provide support for their leavers in their first year of returning to ordinary schools and for the ordinary schools concerned to facilitate the smooth integration of these students into the school life. RS-WSA have proficient experience in adopting the WSA, they work in close collaboration with their partner schools and organize district-based sharing on their experience and strategies in the implementation of the WSA to integrated education in catering students diversity.

On the other hand, schools can refer students with persistent and severe adjustment difficulties at school who show no significant improvement after receiving school-based support to attend the Adjustment Programmes organised by the Education Bureau. Through individual and group intervention, teachers will coach them suitable socio-adaptive and self-regulation skills and behaviours, hence facilitating their integration into ordinary schools.
Other Resources and Support provided for Schools

(1) A Learning Support Grant (LSG) is provided for ordinary primary and secondary schools in the public sector to support students with SEN. The provision of LSG is based on the number of students with SEN enrolled and the tier of support required. School could flexibly and strategically deploy the LSG, and also pool together various school resources to support students with SEN. Starting from 2017/18 school year, the LSG also covers students with mental illness, with a view to providing schools with additional resources to better cater for the learning, social, emotional and behavioural needs of these students.

(2) Starting from the 2017/18 school year, the Education Bureau will, by phases in three years, provide each public sector ordinary primary and secondary school with an additional teaching post in the teaching staff establishment (i.e. an Assistant Primary School Master/Mistress in primary schools or a Graduate Master/Mistress in secondary schools) to facilitate school’s assignment of a designated teacher to take up the role of Special Educational Needs Coordinator to support integrated education.

(3) An Enhanced Speech Therapy Grant (ESTG) is provided to ordinary public-sector primary schools to further enhance the service provision and support for students with speech and language impairments. With the ESTG, appropriate and timely school-based support will be provided to students with speech and language impairments so that their language difficulty will not develop into a persistent disability that hinders learning.

(4) School-based Educational Psychology Service (SBEPS) is provided for public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools. SBEPS is provided through regular school visits and aims at supporting school development to cater for students’ diverse educational needs at the school system, teacher and student levels.

(5) The Education Bureau actively promotes professional development and collaboration among special schools to assist the schools in enhancing the effectiveness of learning and teaching.

Education Bureau
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