External School Review: Information for Schools

I.   Key points about External School Review

- The School Development and Accountability (SDA) framework has been introduced by the Education Bureau (EDB) since the 2003/04 school year in supporting schools to implement school-based management (SBM).   The SDA framework emphasises that school self-evaluation (SSE) is a core element of schools for their perpetual improvement.   The SSE, complemented by school inspections (including External School Review (ESR) and Focus Inspection), helps promote schools' continuous development and strengthen accountability through putting in place a systematic Planning-Implementation-Evaluation cycle.

- To strengthen the SBM, the EDB announced the implementation of the enhanced SDA framework in the 2022/23 school year to bolster the accountability of staff in publicly-funded schools in providing quality school education and enhancing the national education through the adoption of a whole school approach in particular.   For details, please refer to the EDB Circular No. 15/2022.

- The ESR is an ongoing measure that complements the SSE.   It aims at validating the effectiveness of the SSE and giving schools suggestions for improvement.

- The EDB conducts the ESR in a school-specific and focused manner, with emphases on the priority areas and needs in school development.   A flexible approach to addressing different school contexts is adopted in arranging related work.

Schools are **unique** in terms of:	When reviewing school performance, the ESR Team **focuses** on:
- the school context, including: - the school mission - the school culture - the school size - the student background - the priority areas in school development	- the effectiveness of the SSE in enhancing continuous development - the measures taken to follow up on the suggestions made in the previous ESR report or Comprehensive Review[1] report

- The ESR Team gains an understanding of the progress of school work from multiple perspectives through different means, such as document review, observation and discussion with stakeholders; and validates the effectiveness of the SSE in accordance with the school's sharpened focus on the seven learning goals under the enhanced SDA framework during the SSE.   The documents that the school needs to prepare before the ESR are in fact the existing documents, and excessive preparation is unnecessary. There is no need to write, rewrite or compile additional documents.

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[1] Applicable to schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS).

II.   Team composition and duration of ESR

- To increase the transparency of the ESR and promote professional exchanges, an ESR Team comprises the EDB officers and two External Reviewers (ERs) (mostly serving school heads).   The ERs provide their professional views from the front-line perspective.   Before the ERs take up their duties, they must complete relevant training (e.g. Refresher Course for ERs).

- Depending on the school size and context, the duration[2] of an ESR ranges from three to five days.

III.   Pre-ESR arrangements

- About 12 weeks before an ESR, an EDB officer informs the school of the ESR period by phone.

- The school is required to submit the following documents to the ESR Team, including the latest two School Development Plans (SDP), Annual School Plans (ASP) and School Reports (SR)[3].   If there are any updates on the data of the Key Performance Measures (KPM) after annual submission, the school should submit the updated KPM data via the E-platform for SDA prior to the ESR.

- Prior to the ESR, a Pre-ESR Introduction Session on the ESR arrangements is conducted by the ESR Team representative(s).   All school personnel are invited to attend.

- The school head is invited to the Pre-ESR Meeting to give a presentation on the school's recent development and effectiveness of the SSE work.   He/she may be accompanied by no more than three school personnel.

- The Team Leader (TL) discusses with the school to confirm the dates of the Pre-ESR Introduction Session, Pre-ESR Meeting and ESR, and sends a notification letter to the school around six weeks before the ESR.

IV.   Arrangements during ESR

- Reviewing existing school documents and student assignments

  ➢ The ESR Team reviews existing school documents and student assignments to understand how the school implements the development plan, monitors the work progress and evaluates the impact of related work on student learning.   In addition, the Team collects evidence on how the school enhances students' academic and non-academic performance through continuous SSE and self-improvement.

  ➢ The school should make available six to eight samples of marked student assignments, covering different Key Learning Areas/ subjects and levels, for illustration of curriculum and assessment strategies.

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[2] Seven to eight days for a "through-train" school.

[3] For information on the writing guidelines and templates, please access the following website: http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/sch-admin/sch-quality-assurance/sse/index.html

- Observation of learning and teaching activities[4]

  ➢ The ESR Team observes school activities, such as morning assemblies and after-school activities.

  ➢ The focus of lesson observation is mainly on the effectiveness of learning and teaching. The ESR Team does not set out to look for any prescribed modes of teaching. Teachers are encouraged to conduct lessons as usual and there is no need to submit lesson plans.

  ➢ The TL informs the school of the observation schedule of face-to-face and/or real-time online lessons before the commencement of lessons on the day of observation.

  ➢ The ESR Team observes the lessons of no less than 50% of the teachers.

  ➢ Brief post-lesson observation sharing is arranged by the ESR Team for the teachers observed as far as possible. The purpose is to provide an opportunity for the teachers observed to reflect on their teaching.

- Meetings/ interviews

  ➢ Meetings/ interviews with different stakeholders, for example, representatives of the Incorporated Management Committee (IMC)/ School Management Committee (SMC)[5], parents, middle managers, specialists, teachers and students are flexibly arranged on a need basis to understand the implementation of the school plans and its effectiveness.

  ➢ The ESR Team also conducts meetings/ interviews with students. The TL informs the school of the students to be invited during the ESR. The students selected may include student leaders. The school should help inform the students and their parents of the meeting arrangements.

- Corporate judgment and oral feedback

  ➢ On the last day of the ESR, the ESR Team conducts an oral feedback session with the school to share the major judgements based on the corporate judgement made during the ESR.

  ➢ The School Supervisor/ SMC Chairperson, school head, key school personnel responsible for school development and teacher representatives are invited to take part in the oral feedback session. The total number of school personnel should not exceed 12 as far as possible.

  ➢ Officer(s) of the Regional Education Offices will be invited to attend the oral feedback session.

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[4] Learning and teaching activities include activities/ lessons conducted in face-to-face and/or online mode. Flexible arrangements are made for observation of related activities in accordance with the actual circumstances of the school.

[5] Officer(s) of the Regional Education Offices is/are invited to attend the meeting with representatives of the IMC/ SMC.

V.   Post-ESR arrangements

- Upon receiving the draft ESR report, the school management should lead all teachers to discuss the inspection findings and suggestions for improvement, and encourage them to provide views on the ESR to the EDB by completing the anonymous "Online questionnaire on ESR" through the E-platform for SDA.

- The school's written response to the draft ESR report, signed by the School Supervisor /SMC Chairperson, should be sent to the TL **within four weeks**.

- Upon receiving the school's response, the final ESR report is issued to the School Supervisor/ SMC Chairperson.   The school's written response is included as an appendix to the final ESR report to facilitate the stakeholders' understanding of the school situation from multiple perspectives.

VI.   Follow-up on ESR

- Upon receiving the final ESR report, the school should release the ESR findings to the stakeholders.   To uphold accountability and transparency, starting from the 2023/24 school year, the EDB has been uploading the concluding chapter of the ESR reports of the respective school year to its website and schools are required to make their ESR reports available on the school premises for reference and easy access of key stakeholders, including parents.   Schools are **strongly encouraged** to upload their full ESR report (excluding the appendices) to the school website to manifest spirit of professional accountability.

- The school management should lead the school personnel to follow up on the recommendations made in the ESR report.

- The Regional Education Offices of the EDB continue to support school development through the SSE, advising schools on the formulation and implementation of the SDP and the improvement strategies to follow up on the recommendations of the ESR.

VII.   ESR for DSS schools

- The ESR procedures and requirements for DSS schools are the same as those for government/ aided/ caput schools.

VIII. Reference materials

- Schools may obtain detailed information relating to the SSE and ESR by visiting the following websites:

EDB Circular No. 15/2022: The enhanced School Development and Accountability framework	https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/sch-admin/sch-quality-assurance/circulars-letter/EDBC22015EN.pdf	
Guidelines on the compilation of SDP, ASP and SR and related templates	http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/sch-admin/sch-quality-assurance/sse/index.html	
Performance Indicators for Hong Kong Schools and SSE Tools	http://edb.gov.hk/en/sch-admin/sch-quality-assurance/performance-indicators/index.html	
Professional Support/ Online Resources	https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/sch-admin/sch-quality-assurance/professional-support-online-resources/index.html	

IX. Contact information

- For enquiries about the ESR, please contact the Quality Assurance Sections.

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