

29 March 2019

**Education Bureau Circular No. 9/2019**  
**Grant for Supporting Non-Chinese Speaking Students with**  
**Special Educational Needs**

[Note: This circular should be read by –

- (a) Supervisors and Heads of all government, aided, caput and Direct Subsidy Scheme primary and secondary schools – for action; and
- (b) Heads of special schools and Heads of Sections – for information.]

**Summary**

This circular announces the provision of the Grant for Supporting Non-Chinese Speaking (NCS) Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) (NCS-SEN Grant) by the Education Bureau (EDB) starting from the 2019/20 school year to support schools further in catering for NCS students with SEN.

**Background**

2. The EDB has all along been committed to helping NCS students<sup>1</sup> adapt to the local school system and integrate into the community early, and enhancing their learning effectiveness through different support measures. At the same time, the EDB has been providing public sector ordinary schools with additional resources, professional support and teacher training, as well as encouraging schools to support students with SEN through the 3-Tier Intervention Model<sup>2</sup>. NCS students with SEN can benefit from support services provided for NCS students as well as those provided for students with SEN. However, owing to cultural, language and lifestyle differences, these students having SEN as well may encounter more complicated problems in learning and adaptation to school life than their peers.

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<sup>1</sup> Students whose spoken language at home is not Chinese are broadly categorised as NCS students.

<sup>2</sup> Tier-1 support refers to early identification and catering for all students with diverse learning and adjustment needs, including those with mild or transient learning or adjustment difficulties through quality teaching in regular classrooms; Tier-2 support refers to additional support/“add-on” intervention, such as small group tutoring, after-school remedial programmes and pull-out remedial programmes for students with persistent learning or adjustment difficulties; Tier-3 support refers to individualised intensive support for students with persistent and severe learning or adjustment difficulties, including drawing up of Individual Education Plans.

## Implementation details

3. Under the policy of integrated education, the EDB provides schools with the Learning Support Grant every school year according to the number of students with SEN reported by schools and the tier of support these students require, so that additional resources are available to schools for supporting students with SEN, including NCS students with SEN. To further support NCS students with SEN to adapt to school life and make smooth transition through different learning stages, the EDB will provide the NCS-SEN Grant<sup>3</sup> to public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools as well as those under the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) admitting NCS students with SEN from the 2019/20 school year, in order to help schools strengthen the emotional, communication and social support for the students concerned.

### Grant for Supporting NCS Students with SEN

4. The NCS-SEN Grant is a recurrent cash grant and will be disbursed under a three-tier structure according to the number of NCS students with SEN<sup>4</sup> enrolled in each school. The grant rates for the 2019/20 school year are shown in the table below, and they will be adjusted annually according to the change in the Composite Consumer Price Index:

Tier	Number of NCS students with SEN	Grant rate
1	1 to 9	\$100,000
2	10 to 25	\$200,000
3	26 or more	\$300,000

5. Schools should utilise the grant flexibly to support NCS students with SEN. If a deficit is incurred, the grant can be topped up by the schools with the use of other government funding, including surplus under the Operating Expenses Block Grant/Expanded Operating Expenses Block Grant (applicable to aided schools), school fee subsidy (applicable to caput schools) and DSS subsidy (applicable to DSS schools). If there remains a deficit after topping up, it should be made up by the schools' own fund/non-government funds. For government schools, the surplus under the Expanded Subject and Curriculum Block Grant may be used to cover the deficit.

6. For the use of the NCS-SEN Grant, please refer to [Appendix](#).

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<sup>3</sup> Implementation of the new measure is subject to the passage of the Appropriation Bill 2019 by the Legislative Council.

<sup>4</sup> Types of SEN include Specific Learning Difficulties, Intellectual Disability, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Physical Disability, Visual Impairment, Hearing Impairment, Speech and Language Impairment, and Mental Illness.

## **Disbursement**

7. To enable schools to estimate the amount of NCS-SEN Grant they will receive in each school year and facilitate their early planning and flexible arrangements of providing appropriate support for NCS students with SEN, the EDB will disburse the grant to schools before the commencement of every school year in August. The amount of grant to be provided will be determined by the number of NCS students with SEN admitted by the school in the preceding school year.

8. In view of this, schools are required to verify and, where necessary, update the information of their NCS students by making use of the Web-based School Administration and Management Systems (WebSAMS) or e-forms (for DSS schools) in a timely manner, and update and submit SEN information of NCS students via the Special Education Management Information System (SEMIS) by 30 November every school year. If, after the EDB's vetting, there is an increase in the number of NCS students with SEN that necessitates the adjustment of entitlement in that school year to another tier, the EDB will make up the difference in March (for aided, caput and DSS schools) or April (for government schools).

## **Evaluation and accountability**

9. When planning for the use of the additional grant to support NCS students with SEN, schools should discuss with teachers and parents the needs of the students to ensure the effective use of resources. Under the School Development and Accountability Framework, schools should embed the use of the grant and the support provided for the students concerned in their regular self-evaluation mechanism. To enhance transparency, schools should also enable different stakeholders (including parents) to understand how they support NCS students with SEN. In this connection, schools are required to state the amount of additional grant received and support services provided for the students concerned, etc. in their School Report and School Profile. The School Report should be uploaded onto the school's website.

10. To monitor and enhance on a continuous basis the school support provided for students with SEN, including the use of the NCS-SEN Grant and its effectiveness, schools are required to submit the "Whole School Approach to Catering for Students with SEN Year-end Evaluation Form at School Level" to the EDB via SEMIS by 31 August every year. The evaluation form is available on the EDB website and will be updated when necessary. The EDB will arrange regular school visits by professional staff, and organise training, inter-school sharing sessions, etc. to ensure schools' optimal

use of resources to cater for students with SEN, including NCS students with SEN.

### **Accounting arrangements and surplus retention**

11. Schools are required to keep a separate ledger account to record all income and expenditure under the NCS-SEN Grant. Transfer of funds under this grant to other accounts is not allowed. Aided, caput and DSS schools are required to comply with the EDB's requirements about submission of audited annual accounts as set out in the relevant circular memoranda and submit their audited annual accounts to the EDB for inspection. For government schools, the grant will be provided in the form of budget allocation. They are required to charge expenditure to the designated user codes and no overspending is allowed in a financial year. In addition, schools should pay attention to existing ordinances, regulations and circulars related to employment, procurement of outside services, handling of accounts, etc.

12. Schools should fully utilise the NCS-SEN Grant to address adjustment and integration problems with respect to their emotions, communication, socialisation and transition encountered by the students concerned of the relevant school year, and establish a regular mechanism to monitor expenditures under this additional grant. As such, schools in general should not have a large surplus from the grant. Aided, caput and DSS schools may retain an unspent balance up to 12 months' provision of the grant in a school year and carry it forward to the next school year. Any surplus balance in excess of the capped amount should be clawed back by the EDB, which will make clawback arrangement according to the schools' audited annual accounts. Government schools are subject to the same arrangements applicable to aided and caput schools, except that their grant should be accounted for on a financial year basis. If their accumulated surplus does not exceed the provision for the NCS-SEN Grant in the preceding financial year, the surplus may be carried forward to the next financial year. Any surplus in excess of the cap will lapse at the end of the financial year.

### **Enquiry**

13. For enquiries, please contact the Inspector of the respective Special Education Support Sections who is responsible for your school.

Godwin LAI  
for Permanent Secretary for Education

**Use of the Grant for Supporting NCS Students with SEN**

The Grant for Supporting NCS Students with SEN (NCS-SEN Grant) must be used on measures in support of NCS students with SEN. Schools should flexibly deploy the grant, and pool together various school resources to support the students concerned. Specifically, schools can:

- Employ additional teaching assistants who speak Cantonese and English/ethnic minority languages on a need basis to assist teachers in formulating transition plans (e.g. for transition from kindergarten to primary level and from primary to secondary level), designing activities and teaching materials, supporting students in classroom learning activities, and providing after-school support or emotional, communication and social support for students;
- Secure the support of other professionals through hiring of professional services, including collaboration with non-governmental organisations; procure translation service to strengthen communication with parents of NCS students; procure social and emotional management training designed specifically for NCS students with SEN (with focuses on providing them with emotional, communication and social support); procure career life-planning service designed for NCS students with SEN to enable their access to appropriate aptitude assessment, guidance and workplace experience. Schools must comply with the requirements set out in the EDB Circular No. 4/2013 “Procurement Procedures in Aided Schools” or the EDB Internal Circulars No. 1/2018 and No. 4/2018 when handling procurement matters; and
- Promote inclusive programmes to cultivate an inclusive learning environment in schools, strengthen professional training for teachers, and facilitate interaction and peer support among NCS students with SEN and local students to enable them to learn and thrive together and help NCS students with SEN integrate into school life.