

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers
Concerning the New Measure of
“One School Social Worker for Each School” in Primary Schools

Q1: What is the aim of the Education Bureau (EDB) to implement the new measure of “one school social worker for each school”?

A1: The new measure of “one school social worker for each school” aims at ensuring at least one school social worker (SSW)¹ with professional qualifications will be available in each public sector school to meet the needs of the schools. The new measure is implemented on the basis of the Comprehensive Student Guidance Service (CSGS) to provide schools with more resources to enhance student guidance services in terms of quality and stability.

Q2: Will schools with fewer than five classes benefit from the measure?

A2: Under the measure of “one school social worker for each school”, each school will be provided with one unit of social work service resources even if there is only one class in the school. Schools may opt to create a regular Primary School Assistant Social Work Officer (Primary School ASWO)² post or receive an equivalent School Social Work Service Grant (SSWSG) to hire services or employ at least one full-time school-based registered graduate social worker³. Also, schools will be provided with a Consultation Service Grant (CSG) to purchase consultation, supervision and other relevant support services for their school social workers.

Use of the grants

Q3: Can schools use the CSG to purchase other CSGS?

¹ School Social Worker (SSW): Under the New Funding Mode, schools create a regular Assistant Social Work Officer post on the approved staff establishment or receive the School Social Work Service Grant to employ a graduate social worker or hire service of a graduate social worker from a social work service provider.

² Primary School Assistant Social Work Officer (Primary School ASWO): Under the New Funding Mode, schools create a regular Assistant Social Work Officer post on the approved staff establishment.

³ School-based Registered Graduate Social Worker: Under the New Funding Mode, schools receive the School Social Work Service Grant to employ a graduate social worker or hire service of a graduate social worker from a social work service provider.

A3: Schools can combine the SSWSG, Top-up Student Guidance Service Grant (Top-up Grant) and CSG with other school resources flexibly according to the school-based needs to purchase social work services from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or employ at least one graduate social worker and arrange consultation/supervision services for the social worker. Schools may also hire more school-based guidance personnel or purchase diversified student guidance services from NGOs.

Q4: Can schools invite tenders for the SSWSG, Top-up Grant and CSG together with the Understanding Adolescent Project (UAP)?

A4: Under the principle of school-based management, schools can flexibly deploy or combine different grants to purchase the services they need on the premise that they meet the basic requirements set by the EDB for various services. For example, hiring at least one full-time school-based registered graduate social worker and providing the social worker with consultation and supervision services.

Q5: When will schools be informed of the actual amount of the SSWSG, Top-up Grant and CSG in the new school year?

A5: The rates of the SSWSG and CSG are subject to adjustment according to the movement of salary in September while the rate of the Top-up Grant is subject to annual adjustment in accordance with the movement of the Composite Consumer Price Index (CCPI). Schools are advised to read the circular memorandum regarding the adjustment of grants to be issued by the Bureau in August as well as the Guide on CSGS to learn about the grant amount in the new school year.

Q6: Can schools use the SSWSG and/or Top-up Grant to employ a school-based registered graduate social worker, and then use the remaining grant to employ registered teachers to take over the original teaching duties of existing teachers so that they can devote their time to assume the roles and functions of school-based registered graduate social worker?

A6: Yes. When redeploying the functions of staff as mentioned above, schools have to ensure that teachers acting as the SGP are confirmed to have qualifications and experiences in guidance so as to implement the CSGS effectively.

Q7: Under the New Funding Mode, can schools use the remaining grant after employing school social workers (SSW) to employ Teaching Assistants and/or Programme Assistants?

A7: No. In employing Other Student Guidance Personnel (SGP)⁴ using the remaining amount of the above grants, schools must comply with the principles and procedures of using the Student Guidance Service (SGS) Grant (including the Top-up Grant) as mentioned in paragraph 3.2 of the Guide on the CSGS which is hyperlinked to the EDB Circular No. 2/2012 dated 23 April 2012 to employ registered social workers, registered teachers with qualifications in guidance and other professionals in guidance with equivalent qualifications.

Q8: After the implementation of the measure of “one school social worker for each school”, are schools only allowed to hire graduate social workers instead of non-graduate social workers or registered teachers with qualifications and experiences in guidance as SGP?

A8: After employing a full-time SSW, schools can continue to deploy flexibly the grant (or combine the grant with other school resources) to employ other SGP or purchase services from organisations. However, the appointed SGP must be registered social workers, registered teachers with qualifications in guidance or other professionals with equivalent qualifications in guidance.

⁴ Other Student Guidance Personnel (Other SGP): Schools use the top-up Grant of New Funding Mode, Student Guidance Service Grant and Top-up Grant of Old Funding Model to employ graduate/non-graduate social workers, registered teachers with qualifications and experiences in guidance, professionals in guidance and experience.

School social workers

Q9: What are the academic qualification requirements for a regular Primary School ASWO under the New Funding Mode?

A9: To be eligible for appointment as a regular Primary School ASWO, a candidate must hold a recognised degree awarded by a local university with Social Work as major or equivalent; or hold a recognised degree awarded by a local university or equivalent, and have successfully completed a recognised post-graduate programme in Social Work offered by a recognised institution/hold a recognised master's degree in Social Work or equivalent. For details of the qualification requirements, please refer to Annex 1 of Education Bureau Circular Memorandum No. 36/2018.

Q10: What are the responsibilities and areas of work of SSWs under the New Funding Mode?

A:10 SSWs are the ex-officio members of the guidance team and they play an important role in the CSGS. Apart from assisting schools in drawing up the student guidance policy and the annual CSGS plan, they should also render assistance to schools in implementing student guidance services in the following areas: personal growth education, support service for parents and teachers, and responsive service for students with specific needs. These remedial, preventive and developmental student guidance services include: casework, group work and programmes, consultation and coordination of community resources.

Q11: How are the work experiences and salary of a regular Primary School ASWO calculated?

A11: All along, the EDB has been using an established mechanism to verify the entry salary of social workers (including ASWOs) upon appointment in special schools laid down by the Codes of Aid and the Guides to Salary Assessment. We will continue to use this mechanism to consider each case on its own merits with reference to the information submitted by every newly-appointed regular Primary School ASWO in aided primary schools. Generally speaking, the years of service as an Primary School ASWO in an aided school paid by Salaries Grant

will be counted for incremental purpose. For those personnel employed by schools and designated to perform student guidance service related duties under non-Salaries Grant (including those student guidance personnel employed to work in schools through purchase of services from NGOs), their related years of service may also be counted for incremental purpose if the entry requirement and job nature of their previous posts are verified as equivalent to that of ASWOs employed by the Government even if their job titles are not specified as Primary School ASWOs.

Q12: What are the arrangements in respect of benefits and leave for regular Primary School ASWOs?

A12: Regular Primary School ASWOs are regarded as specialist staff under non-teaching staff. According to article 7.5.3.b of the School Administration Guide, specialist staff (including regular Primary School ASWOs in aided primary schools) are not entitled to school holidays while the arrangements in respect of their benefits and leave (including the Provident Fund/Mandatory Provident Fund Scheme, paid sick leave, hiring of supply staff to cover absence over a long period of leave) shall be in line with the provisions applicable to non-teaching staff in the Codes of Aid, the Compendium to Code of Aid for Aided Schools and the School Administration Guide.

Q13: What are the arrangements for the overtime work of regular Primary School ASWOs?

A13: School can determine or adjust the arrangement for the overtime work of regular Primary School ASWOs according to the needs of individual schools.

Q14: Is there any probationary period for regular Primary School ASWOs appointed by schools?

A14: Regular ASWO posts have long been created in special schools and the post-holders are regarded as specialist staff under non-teaching staff. Regular Primary School ASWOs in aided primary schools will be offered similar terms of appointment to those applicable to ASWOs in special schools, including a

two-year probationary period. For details, please refer to the relevant Codes of Aid or the Compendium to Code of Aid for Aided Schools.

Q15: Under the New Funding Mode, if schools purchase consultation/supervision services for their SSWs/other SGP, do the supervisors have to chair the “Multi-disciplinary Case Conferences on Protection of Child with Suspected Abuse (MDCCs)”?

A15: The supervisors are required to provide timely advice and support for the SSWs / other SGP to handle the suspected child abuse cases. If agreement is reached among the concerned school, NGO and SWD, the registered social worker employed by a NGO of a primary school may take up the role as the case manager as stipulated in Chapters 3 of the “*Protecting Children from Maltreatment – – Procedural Guide for Multi-disciplinary Co-operation (Revised 2020)*” (“Procedural Guide”) while the supervisor of the SSWs/other SGP should render professional guidance and advice on the handling of their "known case", and to chair MDCC to formulate the follow-up plan for the student and his/her family. (Please refer to Chapter 11 of the Procedural Guide for information).

If necessary, Family and Child Protective Services Units (FCPSUs) of the Social Welfare Department will provide support and assistance to the Chairperson who is not experienced in conducting MDCC. If the supervisor is not available or suitable to be the Chairperson of MDCC, he/she can enlist the assistance from the social worker of the respective FCPSUs. For details, please refer to Chapters 11 of the Procedural Guide.

Contract

Q16: Can schools terminate their contracts before the expiry dates so that the transition to the New Funding Mode can take place as soon as possible?

A16: The stability of student guidance service is very important. Schools should not terminate their contracts before the expiry dates for the sake of switching to the New Funding Mode. Schools are encouraged to give priority to continue to employ

the existing guidance personnel and make suitable arrangements in the three-year transitional period provided by the EDB. In case schools are not able to switch to the New Funding Mode after the three-year transitional period owing to the need for more time to handle personnel matters in respect of their serving SGP, including retaining their serving SGP due to special needs, they may discuss with the EDB separately.

Q17: If the service contract of a SGP signed with the non-government organization has not yet expired in the new school year, can schools still choose to receive the SSWSG in the new school year?

If the SGP employed for providing school-based social work service is a graduate social worker, schools are qualified to adopt the New Funding Mode and switch to the New Funding Mode in the new school year without the need to sign up a new contract. However, schools need to invite tender to purchase additional consultation and supervision services to support the professional development of the graduate social worker.

Q18: Do schools need to pay school-based registered graduate social workers employed by their own according to the pay scale?

A18: Schools use the SSWSG to employ their own school-based registered graduate social workers may make reference to the pay scale and clearly list out the salary in the contract upon mutual agreement.

Student Guidance Teacher (SGT)

Q19: Do schools that employ SGTs need to switch to the New Funding Mode within the 3-year transitional period?

A19: Schools that employ SGTs currently are not required to switch to the New Funding Mode within the 3-year transitional period. If a SGT resigns or retires, schools may employ a new SGT.

Q20: Will schools now employing SGTs be provided with the CSG in addition to the Top-up Grant?

A20: Schools now employing SGTs will not be provided with the CSG. The CSG aims at facilitating schools to purchase consultation, supervision and other support services for SSWs/other SGP employed under the New Funding Mode in accordance with the needs of the social worker grade. The SGT has all along been one of the teachers under the guidance of the school principal. If necessary, schools may use the Top-up Grant to purchase services from NGOs as needed.

Q21: What are the arrangements for the Top-up Grant for schools that employ SGTs?

A21: Starting from the 2018/19 school year, each school employing SGT will be provided with additional 6 units of Top-up Grant on top of those under the old arrangement (i.e. a Top-up Grant for each class starting from the 5th class or 18th class).

Others

Q22: Will schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) also benefit from the new measure of “one school social worker for each school” in primary schools as other public sector schools starting from the 2018/19 school year?

A22: The recurrent expenditures for SGTs, SGS Grant and Top-up Grant in aided schools are subsumed under the recurrent government subsidy for DSS schools. Starting from the 2018/19 school year, the Government will provide extra resources to public sector primary schools and special schools with a view to strengthening their social work and guidance services. DSS primary schools will also benefit from the new measure. The EDB will include the additional cost arising from the implementation of the measure of “one school social worker for each school” in aided primary schools in the DSS unit subsidy rate.

Q23 : If a school has already created a regular Primary School ASWO post or is in receipt of SWSG, can it apply for switching to another resource allocation mode in the new school year?

A23 : Under normal circumstances, schools having migrated to the New Funding Mode may, subject to the provision of adequate justification (e.g. resignation of the regular Primary School ASWO employed, expiry of the contract signed with the service provider or school-based registered graduate social worker), apply for switching to another resource allocation mode in the next school year. For the application method, please contact the respective Senior School Development Officer/School Development Officer of the Guidance and Discipline Section.

School Administration Division, Education Bureau
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