

(Translation)

Minutes of the 7th Meeting of
Social Welfare Committee (6/24-25)

Date : 20 February 2025
Time : 4:30 p.m.
Venue : Main Conference Room, Tsuen Wan District Office

Present:

Mr CHU Tak-wing, MH (Chairman)
Ms LAM Yuen-pun (Vice Chairlady)
Ms WONG Shuk-fan, Luparker
Mr KOO Yeung-pong, MH
Mr NG Chun-yu
Mr CHOW Sum-ming
Ms CHEUNG Man-ka
Mr CHAN Chun-chung
Ms CHAN Shun-shun
Mr MOK Yuen-kwan
Mr TSANG Tai
Mr FUNG Cheuk-sum
Ms WAH Mei-ling
Mr WONG Kai-chun
Mr KOT Siu-yuen, MH
Mr CHENG Chit-pun
Mr LAU Chung-kong
Mr CHAN Shing-jee

Government Representatives

Mr KWAN Chun-kit, Eric	Assistant District Officer (Tsuen Wan), Tsuen Wan District Office
Ms YUEN Mo-kuen, Monita	Assistant District Social Welfare Officer (Tsuen Wan/Kwai Tsing)3, Social Welfare Department
Miss CHONG Yin-fai	Social Work Officer 3 (Planning & Coordinating), Social Welfare Department

Tsuen Wan District Council Secretariat Representatives

Miss LEUNG Wai-ching, Clementine (Secretary)	Executive Officer (District Council)1, Tsuen Wan District Office
Miss WONG Yuen-chee, Connie	Executive Assistant (Community Involvement)5, Tsuen Wan District Office

In Attendance:

For discussion of item 3

Ms CHAN Sui-wun, Wendy

Senior School Development Officer
(Tsuen Wan)1, Education Bureau

Mr CHAN Pak-woon

Senior School Development Officer
(Tsuen Wan)2, Education Bureau

I Opening Remarks and Introduction

The Chairman welcomed Members and representatives from government departments to the 7th meeting of the Social Welfare Committee (SWC).

2. The Chairman said that no Member had submitted an application for absence from this meeting.

3. The Chairman stated that according to the requirements stipulated in the Tsuen Wan District Council Standing Orders, if a District Council (DC) Member found that he/she had any direct personal or pecuniary interests in a discussion item or relevant matters when attending a meeting of the Council or dealing with matters related to the Council, the DC Member should declare the interests. The Secretariat had not received any declaration of interests prior to this meeting. The Chairman enquired whether Members had to make declarations of interests immediately. No Member made a declaration of interests immediately.

II Item 1: Confirmation of Minutes of the 6th Meeting held on 19.12.2024

4. The Chairman said that the Secretariat had not received any proposed amendment prior to this meeting. The Chairman enquired whether Members had to put forth proposed amendments immediately. No Member put forth a proposed amendment immediately. Members unanimously endorsed the captioned minutes.

III Item 2: Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meetings

5. The Chairman said that there were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

IV Item 3: Concern about the Support for Students with Special Educational Needs in Tsuen Wan District

(TWDC SWC Paper No. 11/24-25)

6. The Chairman said that Mr MOK Yuen-kwan, Mr KOO Yeung-pong, Mr NG Chun-yu, Mr WONG Kai-chun, Mr TSANG Tai, Mr LAU Chung-kong and Mr CHAN Chun-chung submitted the paper. The representatives from the department attending the meeting were:

- (1) Ms CHAN Sui-wun, Wendy, Senior School Development Officer (Tsuen Wan)1 (SSDO(TW)1), Education Bureau (EDB); and
- (2) Mr CHAN Pak-woon, Senior School Development Officer (Tsuen Wan)2, EDB.

7. Mr MOK Yuen-kwan introduced the paper.

8. SSDO(TW)1 of the EDB responded as follows:
- (1) with a view to assisting public sector ordinary schools in catering for students with special educational needs (SEN), the EDB would provide schools with additional resources apart from disbursing regular subvention. Among the students studying at public sector ordinary secondary and primary schools in the 2023/24 school year, students with SEN accounted for 13.1% and 12% respectively, and the numbers of non-Chinese speaking ethnic minority students with SEN were 623 and 402 in secondary and primary schools respectively;
 - (2) the EDB had been planning for the training in special education holistically based on the training needs and training progress of teachers across the territory, as well as the development of integrated education. It provided serving teachers with structured training programmes, i.e. Basic, Advanced and Thematic Courses (BAT Courses), and set training targets to enhance teachers' professional capacity in catering for students with SEN. The EDB had provided a new round of BAT Courses for the school years from 2021/22 to 2026/27. By the end of the 2026/27 school year, each public sector ordinary school should achieve the prescribed training targets. At present, most schools had arranged teachers to take the relevant courses in a systematic manner according to the school-based continuing professional development plan for teachers;
 - (3) the additional resources provided to public sector ordinary schools by the EDB were mainly the Learning Support Grant (LSG). The LSG was calculated based on the number of students with SEN in the school and the tier of support required by students. It would also be adjusted annually according to the change in the Composite Consumer Price Index. All public sector ordinary secondary and primary schools (including schools in Tsuen Wan district) had been provided with the LSG based on the aforementioned criteria;
 - (4) the EDB had been continuously enhancing the arrangement for the LSG, and had substantially increased the unit grant rate for tier-3 since the 2019/20 school year. Moreover, when the total amount of a school's LSG reached a specific threshold, the school would be provided with one to three additional regular post(s) for basic rank graduate teacher in the establishment. That teaching post was designated as Special Educational Needs Support Teacher (SENST);
 - (5) the EDB had all along been encouraging ordinary schools to adhere to five basic principles, namely early identification, early intervention, whole school approach, home-school cooperation and cross-sector collaboration, to cater for students with SEN. The EDB would continue to explore more evidence-based support strategies, strengthen teachers' training in special education and promote home-school cooperation as well as cross-sector collaboration, so that teachers could more aptly cater for students with SEN to foster their growth and learning;
 - (6) the EDB had always been adopting diversified strategies, including

enhancing schools' hardware and providing resources as well as training for teachers, for schools to formulate school-based plans to facilitate the practice of e-Learning according to their own conditions and development needs, and to make effective use of information technology to enhance the efficacy of learning and teaching; and

- (7) in order to further assist schools in utilising new technologies to support students with SEN, the EDB was developing and launching a series of learning and teaching resources that incorporated information technology strategies and interactive multimedia in phases. It provided a more diversified mode of teaching and learning to suit the characteristics and interests of students with SEN. The EDB would also continue to develop a wider range of learning and teaching resources targeting different SEN.
9. The views and enquiries of Members were summarised as follows:
- (1) a Member was concerned that students with SEN would be affected by the labelling effect, and enquired about the solutions offered by the EDB for addressing the issue concerned;
 - (2) a Member enquired whether communication in regard to students' needs would take place between schools when students with SEN were promoted to secondary schools from primary schools;
 - (3) a Member opined that the places in the special education training courses provided for teachers by the EDB were insufficient, and hoped that the EDB would increase the number of training places for teachers, especially in the Advanced and Thematic Courses, having regard to the situation of schools. The Member also pointed out that the Basic Course which adopted the online mode of training and learning were conducive to attracting participation from more teachers; and
 - (4) a Member enquired about the number of students with SEN in schools in Tsuen Wan district and that of students who had switched from local ordinary schools to schools for social development.
10. SSDO(TW)1 of the EDB responded as follows:
- (1) schools would cater for different learning needs of students through the 3-tier Intervention Model and promote an inclusive school culture. Tier-1 support referred to early identification, which involved catering for diverse learning and adjustment needs of all students, including those with mild or transient adjustment difficulties, as early as possible through quality teaching in regular classroom. Tier-2 support referred to the arrangement of additional support/the provision of "add-on" intervention for students with persistent learning or adjustment difficulties, such as small group learning, after-school remedial programmes and pull-out remedial programmes. Tier-3 support referred to the provision of individualised intensive support for students with persistent and severe learning or adjustment difficulties, including drawing up of Individual Education Plans. Under the 3-tier Intervention Model, the tier of support for students with SEN would be adjusted from time to time according to their learning progress and learning

needs at different development stages. Schools had to decide on the tier of support required by students based on their needs and flexibly arrange for adjustments as well as support in areas of teaching, curriculum and assessment;

- (2) to enable secondary schools to learn about the SEN of relevant students as early as possible for the arrangement of appropriate support, when the Primary Six students concerned were promoted to secondary schools, the EDB would forward the basic information on the SEN of the students concerned (including the type of the SEN and the tier of support required) electronically to the recipient secondary schools via the Special Education Management Information System upon the annual release of the results for the Secondary School Places Allocation according to the options of parents. The primary schools should also seek parents' consent and transfer the information of the students concerned (such as medical reports) to their recipient secondary schools, so as to ensure that the secondary schools were aware of students' special needs as soon as possible, thereby providing appropriate support and facilitating their smooth integration into secondary school life;
 - (3) the EDB noted Members' views on teachers' training and would convey such views to the relevant sections. At present, in addition to making arrangements based on the order of course registration by teachers, the EDB would also accord priority to teachers whose schools were in urgent need to take the relevant courses at discretion; and
 - (4) when providing schools with additional resources, the EDB would base its decisions on a number of criteria, such as the number of students with SEN in the school, the level of support required by those students and the applications from individual schools based on their needs. However, it was not related to the district where the school was located. Therefore, the EDB did not maintain relevant statistics categorised by district.
11. The views and enquiries of Members were further summarised as follows:
- (1) a Member enquired about the qualification requirements for SENSTs, such as whether they must hold a diploma or degree in special education;
 - (2) a Member suggested that the EDB should review and enhance the self-assessment mechanism conducted by schools annually on the LSG, consider to introduce modes that could invite parents to participate in the assessment together and encourage schools to embrace new technologies, such as digitalising students' information and using artificial intelligence, etc.;
 - (3) a Member suggested that the EDB should invite the school management with extensive knowledge and experience in learning and teaching adaptation, diversified assessments and campus life management to share and promote their practices with other schools; and
 - (4) a Member enquired about the relevant statistics on improvements made by students in various areas (such as social skills and learning performance, etc.) with the support of schools.

12. SSDO(TW)¹ of the EDB gave a consolidated response as follows:
- (1) schools were required to appoint teachers in the staffing establishment who had completed at least the Advanced or Thematic Courses (or equivalent qualifications) under the BAT Courses as SENSTs. If teachers had not fulfilled the relevant special education training requirements when being appointed as SENSTs, they must complete the relevant training within the first three school years of their appointment;
 - (2) in regard to the monitoring mechanism for the LSG and the review of students' progress, under the School Development and Accountability Framework, schools were required to conduct self-assessment annually to review the effectiveness of the policies, measures and utilisation of resources in supporting students with SEN, thereby formulating the support mode for the next year. At the end of each school year, schools were required to submit a self-assessment report on implementing the whole school approach to integrated education, and the EDB would conduct external school reviews for validation. With a view to further enhancing transparency, it was necessary for schools to list out how the resources had been utilised to support students with SEN in the school report every school year and to upload relevant information to the school website; and
 - (3) in addition to the BAT Courses and the professional training courses arranged for Special Educational Needs Coordinators, the EDB had also organised different thematic training activities, including talks, workshops and sharing sessions, for teachers on an on-going basis so as to keep teachers abreast of the latest development of integrated education and to let them share with peers about the good measures on catering for students with SEN.
13. The views and enquiries of Members were further summarised as follows:
- (1) a Member opined that apart from the EDB, society, families and other government departments should coordinate with one another to jointly support students with SEN. The Member enquired about the collaboration between the EDB and Social Welfare Department (SWD) in this regard; and
 - (2) a Member said that the students concerned had different SEN and hoped that they could all receive appropriate professional support. Although educational psychologists provided regular stationing services at schools, the number of their working days was rather limited. The Member suggested that the EDB should increase the number of stationing days of educational psychologists.
14. Assistant District Social Welfare Officer (Tsuen Wan/Kwai Tsing)³ of the SWD responded that the Government had all along been providing support services for students with SEN through cross-sector collaboration. The SWD provided a series of pre-school rehabilitation services for children aged zero to six who were mainly assessed by the Child Assessment Centres of the Department of Health (DH) as needing early professional intervention. Services were provided mainly through Early Education and Training Centres, Special Child Care Centres, Integrated Programme in Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres and On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services.

15. SSDO(TW)1 of the EDB responded that the EDB noted Members' views, and said that schools could also integrate as well as utilise various resources flexibly to hire additional staff or engage professional services for providing appropriate support for students with SEN. Moreover, with a view to enhancing the interface between kindergarten and primary school, the EDB had established a collaborative mechanism with the SWD, DH and Hospital Authority to ensure that primary schools would take note of the special needs of students entering Primary One as early as possible and help them integrate into the learning environment at school.

16. The Chairman pointed out that the number of primary school students with speech and language impairment was far more than that of secondary school students (3 650 for primary school students and only 760 for secondary school students). He enquired whether it was because relevant symptoms had improved or disappeared by the time the students concerned entered secondary schools after they had received speech therapy at the primary level. Besides, the number of secondary school students suffering from mental illness was significantly higher than that of primary school students (170 for primary school students and 1 110 for secondary school students). He enquired whether it was related to the increased pressure faced by secondary school students.

17. SSDO(TW)1 of the EDB responded that the EDB did not have the relevant information at present and would provide supplementary information after the meeting. (Post-meeting supplementary information: Upon receiving school-based speech therapy services, the speech and language problems of students with speech and language impairment would be improved, some would even be cured. Therefore, the number of students who persistently suffered from speech and language impairment at the secondary level would be reduced. As regards students suffering from mental illness, studies on neuropsychology found out that structural changes in the development of the brain during adolescence would increase the risk of having mental illness. If social, interpersonal, sexual and other developmental challenges as well as physiological changes occurred simultaneously at this stage, the likelihood of developing mental illness would increase correspondingly.)

18. The Chairman said that the age of three to six was the golden recovery period for improving children's language abilities and rectifying other disabilities. If schools could supplement support measures at the same time during the course of growth, it was believed that the problems could be greatly alleviated. He was aware that there were cases of bullying of students with hearing and visual impairment, and opined that schools should pay extra attention to the situation concerned and step up their efforts in the relevant work, with a view to avoiding such kind of situation from recurring again.

V Adjournment of Meeting

19. The Chairman reminded Members that the next meeting was scheduled for 23 April 2025 (Wednesday) and the deadline for submission of papers was 3 April 2025

(Thursday).

Tsuen Wan District Council Secretariat
10 March 2025