

How to Support Children with Physical Disability

Education Bureau 2022

Introduction

Parents always wish to nurture their children's talents by providing them with a suitable living and learning environment. Early identification and support help children with special educational needs (SEN) adapt to everyday life and the learning environment, and develop their potential.

What is Physical Disability (PD)?

PD refers to the disability caused by diseases of central and peripheral neurological systems, traumas or other congenital diseases of the musculoskeletal systems, which lead to hindrance or limitations in one or more aspects in daily living. Physical disabilities mainly include the following categories: cerebral palsy, spina bifida, spinal muscular atrophy, muscular dystrophy, amputation, osteogenesis imperfecta, juvenile idiopathic arthritis, etc.

Roles of Parents

Give your child a positive environment and appropriate care

- Recognise and accept the disability and limitations of your child
- Family members should understand the needs of the child with PD; positively and actively share the responsibility of taking care of the child with PD
- Pay attention to the physical condition of your child, and regularly check the auxiliary aids fitted and replace them whenever necessary
- Accompany your child to receive rehabilitation therapy and continue training at home
- Provide the school with the SEN information of your child promptly and proactively, e.g. assessment reports, medical reports, etc.

- Maintain communication with the school's student support team, class teacher and subject teachers to understand your child's learning and social adaptation conditions in school; and discuss appropriate support strategies with the school when necessary to jointly support the growth needs of him/her

Guide your child to face challenges in learning and life with a growth mindset

- Enhance your child's self-esteem and efficacy by cultivating his/her independent ability
- Let your child understand that everyone has different strengths and weaknesses, and he/she can learn to accept his/her own physical conditions and limitations
- Teach and encourage your child to express his/her physical conditions to others, and enhance his/her self-acceptance and communication abilities with others
- Guide your child to face various challenges with a positive mindset, and give positive feedback on your child's effort and good performance
- Pay attention to your child's emotion, and help him/her find solutions to difficulties and regard setbacks as the experience of growth and learning

Encourage your child to develop his/her potential and plan his/her life

- Encourage your child to participate in different extra-curricular activities to help him/her understand and develop his/her interests and potential so as to enhance his/her sense of achievement and widen his/her social circle
- Be open-minded while discussing further study with your child, help him/her obtain the information needed; explore opportunities and support your child to plan his/her life according to his/her own interests, strengths and aspirations

For further information on supporting children with SEN, parents may refer to the “Parent Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education” on the Education Bureau website (see back page for the link).

Support Services and Strategies

In general, subject to the assessment and recommendation of specialists and with the consent of parents, students with more severe PD or multiple disabilities may be referred to special schools for intensive support services. Other students with mild PD may enrol in ordinary schools. Schools will provide the following support in accordance with the needs of students:

Special Schools

Schools for children with PD provide education services for students with more severe PD or multiple disabilities. Apart from providing academic curriculum, these schools also employ auxiliary and specialist staff to provide therapeutic services (physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, etc.), and procure rehabilitation equipment and devices so as to help students with PD develop their potential in full.

Ordinary Schools

Schools implement the tiered intervention model and provide support services to students with PD according to their individual physical conditions. As students’ needs for physical and mental support will change as their health status, ages or development stages change, schools should regularly consult relevant professionals, such as attending doctors, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, etc., and refer to the views of students and parents to arrange appropriate intervention tier and make specific arrangements for students. If Tier-2 “add-on” group support can’t meet the support needs of students in various aspects, schools will consider providing individualised Tier-3 intensive support for students and making “individual education plans” for them. In general, schools will provide the following support in accordance with the needs of students:

Campus culture and policies

- Teachers should build an inclusive learning environment by encouraging students to help each other according to students' special needs, e.g. carrying heavy objects, writing school diary, escorting students with PD to use lifts, etc.
- When necessary, various kinds of seminars should be held or information should be provided for students and parents to enhance their understanding of PD and enable them to understand the school policies.

Campus Environment

- Facilitate students' access to different corners of school and use of facilities through improvement works and purchase of auxiliary aids, etc.
- Arrange students with mobility impairment to sit near the classroom entrance and ensure that there is enough space for them to move around or place their auxiliary aids such as wheelchairs, crutches, etc.

Learning and Teaching

- Provide appropriate assistance or special arrangements for students with PD so that they can participate in various learning activities to enrich their learning experiences and realise their full potential
- Adapt and/or expand the school curriculum to cater for different needs of students
- Understand the functional limitations of students, consult students, parents, teachers and relevant professionals according to their actual needs so as to provide appropriate arrangements for students in learning and assessment, e.g. reasonable adjustment of time allowance or the provision of supervised breaks during assessment

Individual needs of students

- Examine students' support needs in self-image, emotion management, interpersonal relationships, etc. and provide follow-up as needed
- Contact related professionals whenever necessary to understand students' conditions and rehabilitation needs, and make timely adjustment
- Continuously observe and record students' conditions and rehabilitation progress, and report such information to related professionals so that they can make more appropriate treatment plans for students

Home-School Collaboration

- Maintain close contact with parents to understand students' conditions and needs for making timely adjustment to support strategies

Useful Websites and Telephone Numbers for Enquiry

Education Bureau

<https://www.edb.gov.hk/en>

Hong Kong Regional Education Office	2863 4646
Kowloon Regional Education Office	3698 4108
New Territories East Regional Education Office	2639 4876
New Territories West Regional Education Office	2437 7272
General Enquiries on Special Education	3698 3957

Educational Psychology Service Section

- Hong Kong 3695 0486
- Kowloon 3698 4321/ 3907 0949
- New Territories East 3547 2228
- New Territories West 2437 7270

“SENSE” Integrated Education and Special Education Information Online

<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/en/index.html>

- Information about supporting students with PD

<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/en/types-of-special-educational-needs/physical-disability/index.html>

- “Parent Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education”

<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/uploads/page/integrated-education/guidelines/ieparentguide.pdf>

- “Operation Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education”

https://sense.edb.gov.hk/uploads/page/integrated_education/landing/ie_guide_en.pdf

Department of Health

Child Assessment Service

<https://www.dhcas.gov.hk/en/>

Student Health Service

<https://www.studenthealth.gov.hk/eindex.html>

Social Welfare Department

<https://www.swd.gov.hk>