

12 April 2019

Education Bureau Circular No. 13/2019

Enhanced School-based Speech Therapy Service

(Note: This circular should be read by –

- (a) Supervisors and heads of all government, aided, caput schools – for action
- (b) Heads of Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools, special schools and sections – for information)

Summary

This circular sets out the implementation of the Enhanced School-based Speech Therapy Service¹ (hereafter “the Enhanced SBSTS”) in the public sector ordinary schools by phases from the 2019/20 school year.

Background

2. Oral language is a tool for communication and learning. It is also the foundation of reading and writing. Early identification and timely intervention for students with speech and language impairment (SLI) will enable them to learn more effectively and develop better social skills through improvement to their speech, language and communication abilities. At present, the public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools mainly utilize the Enhanced Speech Therapy Grant (ESTG) and the Learning Support Grant (LSG) respectively to procure School-based Speech Therapy Service (SBSTS). As announced by the Chief Executive in the 2018 Policy Address, the Education Bureau (EDB) will, starting from the 2019/20 school year, create school-based speech therapist (SBST) posts in the public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools by phases in three years to allow schools to form clusters to employ SBSTs to enhance the support for students with SLI through the implementation of the Enhanced SBSTS.

Enhanced School-based Speech Therapy Service

3. The Enhanced SBSTS, covering the domains of prevention, intervention and development, assists schools, teachers and parents in supporting students with SLI.

¹ Implementation of the related measure is subject to the passage of the Appropriation Bill 2019 by the Legislative Council.

These include:

- Formulating and implementing school-based support programmes: In light of the actual needs of schools and students, work out and take forward SBSTS that dovetail with school policies, measures and culture;
- Developing support programmes for students with SLI: Conduct assessment for students suspected of having SLI, provide support to students with SLI through individualised intervention, group therapy and in-class support, etc. and evaluate post-therapy progress of students regularly, etc.;
- Devising curriculum-related support strategies: Work closely with teachers by matching with the content of the school-based curriculum to train students to overcome difficulties in and develop abilities of speech and language so as to achieve the learning goals; and
- Strengthening home-school cooperation: Adopt diversified strategies according to the needs of students to maintain communication with parents and enhance home-school cooperation.

4. SBSTs are a member of schools. They can provide schools with more stable, sustainable and comprehensive services. Specifically, with longer service time at schools, SBSTs can provide more diversified and intensive SBSTS at the student level. They will also have greater capacity in providing support for parents. SBSTs will have more opportunities in working closely with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator, members of the student support team, school-based educational psychologists, social workers, guidance personnel and teachers, etc., to enhance the communication, social and language skills and language-related learning abilities of students with SLI. For details of roles and arrangement of duties of SBSTs, please refer to the Guide on SBSTS.

5. Schools should make good use of the Enhanced SBSTS to ensure students with SLI receive timely and appropriate support, and parents are informed of the services and progress of therapy of their children. By adopting the Whole School Approach, schools should plan, promote and implement SBSTS in the domains of prevention, intervention and development in accordance to the situation of schools. Specifically, schools should collaborate closely with SBSTs to increase the awareness of teachers and parents regarding speech and language problems and help them early identify students with speech and language problems, encourage teachers and other school staff to collaborate with SBSTs in teaching, sharing strategies that enhance speech and language abilities, and incorporating these strategies into everyday teaching.

School Clusters and Base Schools

6. Starting from the 2019/20 school year, the EDB will arrange two to three

schools to form a school cluster according to factors such as the number of approved classes, number of students with SLI and their severity of SLI, previous experience in employing SBSTs and preference of schools, etc. One of the schools in each cluster will be the base school with an SBST post created. For schools with a greater number of students with SLI, an SBST post will be created individually for them to implement the Enhanced SBSTs. In principle, the base school should arrange the SBSTs for schools within the cluster according to the service ratio recommended by the EDB. Since the base school needs to organise and coordinate staff management and administrative matters regarding the SBST post, the base schools are entitled an addition of 20 non-school days on-site visits of the SBST. Schools within the same cluster could negotiate the above ratio in accordance to special circumstances and submit the adjusted result by the base school to the Speech ~~Therapy and Hearing~~ **Service** Section of the EDB for approval and record.

7. To maintain the stability of the professional team, schools within school clusters are not supposed to be changed arbitrarily. The EDB will keep reviewing the demand for SBSTs of schools within every cluster. If the demand for SBSTs of particular schools is consistently above or way below a certain percentage, we will discuss with the schools concerned, and re-assign schools for the school clusters or adjust the number of schools within the clusters, as far as circumstances allow. If schools have sound justifications, they could also initiate the request for the EDB to adjust the cluster arrangement.

Appointment, Leave and Performance Appraisal Matters of School-Based Speech Therapists

8. The SBSTs should hold a locally-awarded Bachelor's degree in Speech and Hearing Sciences or equivalent. The SBST post is a permanent post on the approved non-teaching establishment, with a remuneration from points 16 to 33 on the Master Pay Scale².

9. When considering the appointment of SBSTs³, schools should form a selection panel to examine the related applications. For school clusters, the members of the selection panel should comprise representatives from the base school and member schools. Schools should read Chapter 7 of the School Administration Guide on personnel matters and follow the principles and procedures therein. Schools are also required to strictly observe the procedures governing appointment and dismissal in the Codes of Aid.

² The entry pay of SBSTs with different lengths of experience needed to be assessed by the appointing schools and approved by the EDB. The SBST of this permanent post is entitled to the terms of appointment and benefits, as well as arrangements for temporary staff, including leave, Mandatory Provident Fund and retirement, etc., applicable to specialist staff of school remunerated by the Salaries Grant.

³ The SBST posts for government schools are created in the civil service establishment and the EDB is in-charge of the recruitment matters.

10. To ensure that the SBSTs appointed fully meet the appointment criteria, schools should carefully examine the qualification testimonials of the applicants. For the sake of the well-being of students, schools should straightly examine the personal integrity of potential SBST appointees and, in the course of appointment, make use of the Sexual Conviction Record Check scheme of the Hong Kong Police Force (<http://www.police.gov.hk/scrc>) and make reference to EDB Circular No. 16/2017 “Measures for Strengthening the Protection of Students: Appointment Matters of Schools” and EDB Circular Memorandum No. 179/2011 “Sexual Conviction Record Check Scheme”.

11. Regarding the length of experience and remuneration of SBSTs, schools and the EDB will assess and verify them in accordance with the requirements and principles set out in the Codes of Aid and the Guide to Salary Assessment for Aided Schools. Generally speaking, those who have been employed by the public sector schools (including remuneration by Salaries Grant or non-Salaries Grant), DSS schools, subvented non-governmental organisations and hospitals under the Hospital Authority, to carry out the duty of a speech therapist, their relevant experience, upon verification, may be considered for the calculation of incremental credits for experience (ICE).

12. For cases other than those mentioned in paragraph 11, if the speech therapists (STs) have provided SBSTS for the public sector schools or DSS schools procuring such services with grants (e.g. ESTG and LSG) through the arrangement of a private organisation, provided that sufficient and valid documents can be produced as proof, the experience of STs accumulated in providing SBSTS for the public sector schools or DSS schools, upon verification, may also be considered for the calculation of ICE.

13. In accordance with the existing procedures and requirements, STs applying for the SBST posts in the public sector schools implementing the Enhanced SBSTS, once appointed, should provide the appointing school with proving documents of their qualifications and previous services, etc., to facilitate schools with sufficient information for the purpose of salary assessment. If the appointed SBSTs are covered by paragraph 11 above, that is, those previously employed by the public sector schools (including remuneration by Salaries Grant or non-Salaries Grant) or DSS schools, the STs concerned should provide the certificate of service issued upon their departure by the former School Management Committee / Incorporated Management Committee. Please see a reference sample at Annex 1. For SBSTs covered by paragraph 12, that is those that have provided SBSTS for the public sector schools or DSS schools procuring such services with grants (e.g. ESTG and LSG) through the arrangement of a private organisation, since only the verified experience in providing SBSTS for these schools will be considered for the calculation of ICE, apart from providing the certificate of service issued by the organisations served, they should also provide supplementary information for the purpose of salary assessment. Please see a reference sample at Annex 2.

14. Schools should, based on the qualification testimonials, certificates of service and other relevant documents submitted by STs, and in accordance with the Codes of Aid and the Guide to Salary Assessment for Aided Schools, accurately work out the salaries of the SBST to be appointed, which will then be submitted to the EDB for verification to ensure accuracy in calculation. If the STs concerned fail to provide the schools or the EDB with the required information, their relevant work experience may not be considered for the calculation of ICE.

15. According to the established practice, the base schools or individual schools with the establishment of SBST posts should inform the Regional Education Offices and the Funds Section of the EDB the assumption of duty, termination of appointment, taking of no-pay leave, contribution to Mandatory Provident Fund, suspension of annual increment, etc. of the SBST. For details, please refer to EDB Circular No. 10/2015 “Payment of Salaries Grant for Teaching Staff and Non-teaching Staff in Aided Schools”. Schools within a school cluster should collaborate in determining and implementing an appraisal mechanism and related procedures for their SBST. When establishing the appraisal mechanism, schools can make reference to the appraisal system of their non-teaching staff and adopt or add appropriate items after taking into account the school background, characteristics and development, and could also make reference to the Guide on SBSTS for a thorough understanding of the roles and duties of SBSTs. Schools can also read the School Administration Guide and the notes on Teacher Performance Management to understand the general operation in appraising school personnel. For government schools, they can follow the existing regulations within the Government when handling related matters.

16. The leave entitlement of SBSTs is the same as those of non-teaching specialist staff of schools remunerated by the Salaries Grant. For leave covering a period of 30 or more days, schools may employ monthly term temporary staff⁴. Schools should follow the standing procedures in employing temporary school staff to employ temporary SBSTs. Schools may draw on their experience in procuring SBSTS with the use of grant and inquire the service providers regarding information of those who could be employed as temporary SBSTs.

Monitoring of School-Based Speech Therapy Service

17. Schools should establish a regular monitoring mechanism to ensure that the provision of Enhanced SBSTS supports students with SLI in a timely and appropriate manner. Through observing the performance of their SBSTs, reviewing documents and communicating with stakeholders (including students, parents and other professionals), etc., schools should regularly understand and review the implementation of SBSTS and give timely feedback to their SBSTs. SBSTs are required to maintain a complete student registry of students with SLI, detailed

⁴ The arrangements of monthly paid temporary staff for SBSTs in aided schools are not applicable to government schools.

assessment reports and therapy records, and the documents should be properly filed. If necessary, schools may discuss the matters with the Specialists (Speech Therapy **Service**) of the EDB.

18. Specialists (Speech Therapy **Service**) of the EDB will pay regular visits to schools to provide them with professional advice on SBSTS, the professional performance of their SBSTs, etc. They will also provide professional support for SBSTs through discussing more complicated cases with SBSTs, observing speech therapy sessions, understanding the treatment progress of individual students and discussing the direction of therapy. In addition, inspectors of the EDB will provide professional advice on integrated education in terms of culture, policy, support measures, teaching strategies, deployment of resources and home-school cooperation.

19. All public sector schools implementing the Enhanced SBSTS should input data of students with SLI onto the Special Education Management Information System (SEMIS) on or before 30 November each year. All schools (including base school and member schools within a school cluster) should submit to the EDB an annual plan on Enhanced SBSTS in December each year, and a review form and year-end report in August the next year. The EDB will continue to work with schools and provide them with support to ensure the quality of Enhanced SBSTS. Please refer to the Guide on School-based Speech Therapy Service for samples of relevant documents.

Professional Support

20. The EDB organises thematic talks, workshops and sharing sessions for SBSTs and school staff every year to enhance their knowledge and skills in supporting students with SLI. The EDB will also arrange meetings of professional learning communities for SBSTs, and organise induction programmes for those SBSTs new to the post, so as to assist SBSTs in facilitating schools to develop and implement the Enhanced SBSTS, and render effective support to students with SLI. Schools should make proper arrangements in encouraging SBSTs to participate in these professional development activities. Please refer to the notifications and Training Calendar System of the EDB regarding activity details and enrolment matters.

Use of Grant and Accounting Arrangements

21. The public sector schools implementing the Enhanced SBSTS for the first time will receive an one-off School-based Speech Therapy Set-up Grant (**SBST Set-up Grant**) in ~~September~~ of the first school year of **service** implementation (**Grant rate at \$20,000 for the 2019/20 school year**). **With effect from the 2026/27 school year, the SBST Set-up Grant for aided schools which have established an Incorporated Management Committee (IMC) (aided IMC schools) and government schools will be subsumed in the Expanded Operating Expenses Block Grant (EOEBG) and the Expanded Subject and Curriculum Block Grant (ESCBG) respectively. The surplus**

of the SBST Set-up Grant, if any, in the 2025/26 school year will be transferred to the EOEBG and ESCBG respectively. Aided schools without an IMC (Aided non-IMC schools) and caput schools should make good use of the grant as soon as possible to implement the Enhanced SBSTS. Schools may retain any unspent balance of the grant for valid reasons until it is fully utilised. Transfer of the grant and / or unspent balance to other accounts is not allowed. ~~and~~ Schools will also receive a School-based Speech Therapy Administration Recurrent Grant in each school year (~~Grant rate at~~ \$8,000 for the 2019/20 school year). Schools ~~are advised to~~ can use these grants to procure necessary resources and materials for speech therapy and meet related expenditures for the implementation of SBSTS. Base schools of school clusters will additionally receive a Base School School-based Speech Therapy Administration Recurrent Grant (~~Grant rate at~~ \$8,000 for the 2019/20 school year) in each school year to cover the administration costs incurred by coordinating the implementation of SBSTS amongst member schools. The School-based Speech Therapy Administration Recurrent Grant and Base School School-based Speech Therapy Administration Recurrent Grant ~~will be~~ were subsumed under the ~~Expanded Operating Expenses Block Grant (EOEBG) / Operating Expenses Block Grant (OEBG)~~ for aided schools ~~or~~ and the ~~Expanded Subject and Curriculum Block Grant~~ ESCBG for government schools⁵. Aided IMC schools and government schools can deploy various grants according to their development needs and priorities, thereby enabling versatile use of resources across various purposes, and achieving better synergy and efficiency.

22. ~~To meet the accounting and audit requirements, schools should keep a separate ledger account for all income and expenditure under the above grants. According to the standing regulations, all payment records should be kept for seven years. Government schools should comply with relevant Government rules and regulations and separately maintain a record for the grants received.~~ Aided non-IMC schools and caput schools should keep a separate ledger account for all income and expenditure under the above grants. With effect from the 2026/27 school year, aided IMC schools are not required to keep a separate ledger account under the above grants. However, schools should still follow the financial, accounting, and surplus retention arrangements for the EOEBG when using the aforementioned grants. Government schools should follow the guidelines on the usage of ESCBG issued by the EDB on 5 May 2026 and other relevant government regulations and requirements when using the aforementioned grants.

23. All schools should manage their financial expenditure in a prudent manner and keep records of income and expenditure, related receipts and invoices for at least seven years for auditing by the EDB when necessary. Except for government schools, all schools should adhere to the EDB's requirements on submission of annual audited accounts set out in the relevant circular memoranda/letters as well as their

⁵ ~~The rate of the above grants is not subject to adjustment in 2025/26 school year in accordance with the movement of the Composite Consumer Price Index (CCPI).~~

appendices in preparing ledger accounts and annual accounts, and submit the annual audited accounts to the EDB in accordance with the prevailing requirements. If schools fail to submit the annual audited accounts as at the date as specified by the EDB, they may be required to return the grant in full to the EDB.

2324. With the implementation of the Enhanced SBSTS, it is no longer necessary for the public sector primary schools to apply for ESTG and for the public sector secondary schools to utilize LSG for providing support for students with SLI. As for DSS schools, expenditures related to speech therapy services have been subsumed into the DSS unit subsidy for primary and secondary schools.

Arrangements for Transition from 2019/20 to 2021/22 School Year

2425. Starting from the 2019/20 school year, the EDB will, taking into consideration a basket of factors (including the number of students with SLI and their severity of SLI of a school, the number of classes of a school, the preference of the school and the possibility of forming a cluster by the school, etc.), arrange the public sector primary and secondary schools to implement the Enhanced SBSTS by phases in three years. Schools selected to implement the Enhanced SBSTS in the 2019/20 school year will be notified by the EDB in writing within this month.

2526. For the public sector primary and secondary schools not arranged to implement the Enhanced SBSTS in the 2019/20 school year, they should continue to support students with SLI by using the ESTG and LSG respectively to arrange SBSTS. In the 2019/20 and 2020/21 school years, the EDB will make arrangements for the remaining schools to implement the Enhanced SBSTS in the 2020/21 and 2021/22 school years, taking into the considerations mentioned in paragraph 2425 above.

2627. With the full implementation of the Enhanced SBSTS, the ESTG will be cancelled.

Enquiry

2728. For enquiries about appointment and administrative matters, please contact the respective Regional Education Office of the school. For enquiries about the duties of SBSTs and profession-related matters, please contact the respective Specialist (~~Speech Therapy~~)/ Inspector (**Speech Therapy Service**). ~~of the Speech and Hearing Services Section.~~

Godwin LAI

for Permanent Secretary for Education

SAMPLE

Annex 1

RESTRICTED

Certificate of Service **(For reference when departing staff member transfers to another school)**

Points to note for adopting the sample of Certificate of Service:

1. The School Management Committee / Incorporated Management Committee should issue to staff leaving the employment a Certificate of Service stating relevant employment particulars of the staff member so that when he/she transfers to another school for teaching, he/she could provide adequate information to the new employer for reference in assessing his/her salary, incremental date and sick leave benefits.
2. This Sample sets out the necessary employment information to be included in the Certificate of Service for schools' reference. Schools could amend the content of this Sample in accordance with the school-based situation.
3. On receiving a written request from the staff member, school may issue a Certificate of Service together with a Reference Letter without indicating some of the items (such as sick leave balance, no-pay leave taken and provident fund/severance payment/ex-gratia payment under the Early Retirement Scheme), so that when the staff member changes to another job, he/she could provide his/her basic employment information to the new employer of non-teaching sectors. However, the staff member must be informed that it is his/her responsibility to provide complete employment information to the new schools. If he/she transfers to another school but could not provide the relevant information, his/her sick leave balance / retirement benefits etc., may only be calculated according to the terms of a new recruit; his/her incremental date / salary point may also not be calculated accurately.

Name: *Mr/Miss/Ms _____

Identity Card No.: _____

Rank: _____
(e.g. CM, GM, LTII, ACO, RN, etc.)

* regular / temporary

* full time / part time () (Specify the fraction)

Source of Funding: *Salary Grant / Admin. Grant / Rev. Admin. Grant /
QEF / OEBG / CEG / General (Subscription) Funds /
Others _____ (Please specify)

Period of Service: From _____ to _____
(dd/mm/yyyy) (dd/mm/yyyy)

SAMPLE

Annex 1

No-pay Leave Taken: _____ days

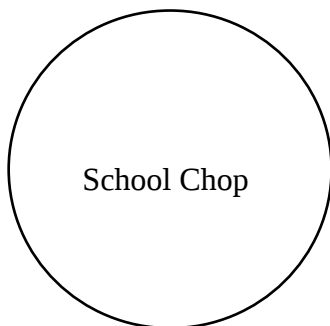
Last Monthly Salary: \$ _____
*MPS / TPS/ MOD I Point _____ [*Reference/Increment
(previously known as delinked/adjusted)]

Incremental Date: 01/ _____
dd/mm (inclusive of adjusted incremental date for taking no pay
leave/other reasons)

Sick Leave Balance: _____ days

Reason(s) for Leaving: (Resignation due to personal reasons/ Retirement/ Expiry of contract/
Dismissal/ Summary dismissal, etc.)

Others: Provident Fund ☐#
 Severance Payment ☐#
 Ex-gratia Payment under the
 Early Retirement Scheme ☐#
 (# Please ✓ if the payment has been / will be* claimed)



SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR

NAME OF SUPERVISOR

NAME OF SCHOOL

DATE

* Please delete if inapplicable.

SAMPLE

Annex 2

RESTRICTED

**Supplementary Information on School-based Speech Therapy Service
(applicable to private organisations)**

Name: _____ ***(Mr/Ms)** **Identity Card No.:** _____

This serves to provide supplementary information on the School-based Speech Therapy Service (SBSTS) rendered to the public sector schools or Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools during the period stated below by the above speech therapist through the arrangement of our organisation (please use separate sheet(s) if space is insufficient):

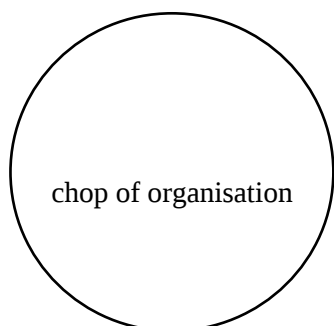
Period of providing SBSTS¹	Percentage share of providing SBSTS in daily work (%)²	Public sector or DSS schools served	No-pay leave taken³

¹ Please specify the starting and ending dates of providing SBSTS.

² Please specify the percentage share of total working hours that providing SBSTS for the school concerned under the arrangement of the organisation accounted for during the said period. The data provided should be calculated / filled according to the contract / agreement signed between the organisation and the speech therapist or the service contract signed between the organisation and the school.

³ If the speech therapist has taken no-pay leave during the period in which he / she provided SBSTS for the school, please specify the starting and ending dates of no-pay leave.

I confirm that the information provided above is true and correct. I understand that the Education Bureau reserves the rights to verify such information.



Signature of person-in-charge: _____

Name of person-in-charge: _____

Name of organisation: _____

Address of organisation: _____

Telephone of organisation: _____

Email address of organisation: _____

Date of signature: _____

* Please delete as appropriate.