

A Longitudinal Study on the Performance and Adjustment of Children Discharged from On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services (OPRS) to Primary One

FINAL REPORT



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Chapter 1

Executive Summary

- 1.1 The present study aims at examining the sustainable impact and transition needs of children beneficiaries of the Pilot Scheme on “On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services” (OPRS) launched by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) from November 2015 to September 2018 and regularised since October 2018. The three research objectives are: (a) to evaluate whether improvements of children can be sustained upon discharge from OPRS to primary education and identify key factors which sustain such improvements; (b) to identify effective transition support services and other support services which facilitate smooth transition; and (c) to recommend appropriate service modes and support measures for children with special needs for progressing from kindergarten to primary education.
- 1.2 The study was conducted over three time points: Time 1 from June to December 2019, with a total of 75 children cases and their parents, 56 class teachers from kindergartens and 21 OPRS operators participated; Time 2 from December 2019 to August 2020, with a total of 71 children cases and their parents, 37 class teachers from primary schools, a control group of 22 children, 22 parents and 20 class teachers, and 21 OPRS operators participated; Time 3 from September 2020 to February 2021, with a total of 60 children cases (55 of their parents completed the questionnaires while 5 did not), 30 special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) from corresponding primary schools, and 19 OPRS operators participated while 2 new operators did not join due to no served children being promoting to primary one (P1) yet.
- 1.3 Regarding the developmental outcomes of children who have promoted to P1, their development in the domains of cognition, language and social cognition could still remain at average level despite the school suspension in the 2019/20 school year. Both qualitative and quantitative findings from teachers indicated that children generally adapted well after entering P1, with disruptive behaviours rarely observed and prosocial behaviours sometimes demonstrated in classroom. Their major difficulty was attention problem.
- 1.4 When examining children who have shown improvements in child developmental domains, stronger parental support was observed among all those cases, with parents who are more willing to spend time on participating in online speech and occupational therapy as well as homework tutorial with their children. Class teachers, SENCOs, subject teachers and educational psychologists from primary schools held regular meetings to review the progress and effectiveness of support measures. Besides, school support is also a key factor. Teaching assistants were also arranged to sit in class for providing guidance to children until children gradually adapted to primary school life. To ensure children’s smooth transition into primary education, teachers regularly communicated with parents and kept them informed of children’s progress via a variety of channels such as phone, face to face and online conversations and student handbooks, and established good collaborative relationship with parents.

- 1.5 The study has identified the following effective transition and other support services: adaptation training for P1 organised by operators in kindergarten, SENCOs and SEN support teachers conducting classroom observation at the beginning of P1, providing additional support to individual needy students (e.g., resources or learning packs for P1 adaptation; additional therapy services arranged by parents), continuing parent education, and promoting all-round development of children and providing them with a variety of such learning opportunities. The above services are effective.
- 1.6 It is recommended that transition support services for children with special needs can be provided in two phases: (a) in pre-primary stage, operators organise on-site adaptation activities or training in various modes for pre-school children to facilitate their smooth transition into P1 in September. (b) in the early period of primary education, school personnel from primary schools with reference to the contents of the “Comprehensive Development Progress Report for Pre-school Children” (hereinafter “Progress Report”), could understand more about the special needs of the children and to gather important information about the relevant support measures and necessary remedial equipment for the children, and to formulate preventive measures and adaptation strategies to cope with the possible learning, social, emotional and behavioural problems so as to foster a smooth transition from kindergarten to primary school for the benefits of students, teachers and parents. If needed, schools may also contact the operators for professional communication according to the correspondence information in the report.
- 1.7 The provision of transition support service for students with SEN should continue to adopt a tripartite cooperation model which involves family, school and community. This will allow the multi-disciplinary professional team comprising KGs/KG-cum-CCCs, service operator and learning support team from primary school to provide timely support for children and parents before and after promotion to primary school in the aspects of adaptation to primary school learning as well as development and growth in all domains so that children can fully realise their potentials and develop their abilities, in line with the guiding principles and directions stipulated in “The Persons with Disabilities and Rehabilitation Programme Plan” published by the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee in June 2020.

Chapter 2

Longitudinal Study

Introduction

- 2.1 Building on the consultancy’s Evaluative Study on the Effectiveness of the “Pilot Scheme on On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services” (OPRS) completed in 2018, the present study follows children beneficiaries of OPRS, evaluates their progress in the developmental domains of cognition, social cognition, emotion, language and communication, fine motor and gross motor functions in order to examine their situation during the transition from kindergarten to primary school and evaluate whether their improvements can be sustained upon discharge from OPRS to primary education. The study also analyses the key factors which help sustain the improvements, collates the effective transition and other support services which facilitate the smooth transition, and recommends appropriate service modes and support measures for provision of transition support services for children with special needs.

Time and Sampling Method

- 2.2 The study was conducted over three time points. Regarding Time 1, the original plan was to collect data from June to August and analyse data from September to November 2019. Data collection was later rescheduled to the period of June to December 2019, with a total of 75 children cases and their parents, 56 kindergarten class teachers and 21 OPRS operators participated. Data collection for Time 2 was rescheduled from the period of December 2019 to February 2020, to the period of December 2019 to August 2020, with a total of 71 children cases and their parents, 37 class teachers from primary schools, a control group of 22 children, 22 parents and 20 class teachers, and 21 OPRS operators participated. The last data collection for Time 3 was subsequently rescheduled from the period of April to June 2020 to the period of September 2020 to February 2021, with a total of 60 valid children cases and 55 of the parents (5 parents did not join), 30 SENCOs from corresponding primary schools, and 19 OPRS operators participated (2 operators did not participate in Time 3 because there were no children progressing to P1 at this stage).
- 2.3 In the present study, longitudinal sampling method was adopted. The consultancy team followed children’s development in cognition, social cognition and emotion, language and communication from KGs/KG-cum-CCCs to primary school. All children beneficiaries of OPRS at K3 of KGs/KG-cum-CCCs in the 2018/19 school year were eligible for participating in the present study. Invitations for participation were made through parents and OPRS operators. The children cases are required to meet the following criteria: OPRS users in the 2018/19 school year; participants of the Evaluation Study on the Effectiveness of the Pilot Scheme on OPRS; and students eligible for promoting to P1 in September 2019.

Research Limitations

- 2.4 The consultancy team submitted the preliminary report in August 2019 and had a preliminary meeting with all stakeholders including OPRS operators, KGs/KG-cum-CCCs, primary school teachers and parents, etc. on 21 September 2019.
- 2.5 Time 1 of the study coincided with social events along with the impact on transport and school suspension so data collection from children, parents and teachers was behind schedule (August 2019) by four months and was completed in December 2019. Due to the pandemic, school suspension and social distancing policies, Time 2 data collection was also behind schedule (March 2020) by about five months and could only be completed in August 2020. With the persistence of the pandemic along with half-day schooling arrangements for primary schools and KGs/KG-cum-CCCs, data collection for Time 3 (originally June 2020) was postponed by eight months and was completed in February 2021. The time of data collection was affected by social events and the pandemic and so was the research progress. Compilation of the progress report and final report were therefore later than planned.
- 2.6 Other limitations of the study include the following: (a) Out of 500 upcoming P1 students who finished joining OPRS in 2018/19, 60 of the children cases and their parents, 56 class teachers from KG-cum-CCCs, 57 class teachers from primary schools and 30 SENCOs were included in the present study. In other words, about 12% of the beneficiaries were sampled and the percentage was very modest. (b) Whereas 75 children participated in Time 1, 4 of them withdrew in Time 2 and 11 of the children could not complete the Time 3 study. The overall rate of withdrawal was 20%. (c) Due to social and pandemic factors along with school suspension, the age of the participants has exceeded the age for which the assessment instruments are suitable. (d) Although the assessment instruments can cover all child developmental domains, they are applicable to a limited range of age. (e) The inference drawn from the present findings only applies to children discharged from OPRS and may not apply to children of other pre-school rehabilitation services.

Chapter 3

Evaluation of Children's Improvements and Factors

Introduction

- 3.1 This chapter will refer to the data collected from 60 children and their parents, 37 teachers from the experimental group and 20 teachers from the control group, with the use of research instruments such as assessment scale for children, scale on teacher observation of children's behaviour, qualitative interview for parents and teachers. The evaluation of child development aims to examine whether the improvements of children can be sustained upon discharge from OPRS to primary education. The major findings can be divided into two parts: children's developmental domains and classroom adaptation. Children's developmental domains were assessed by researchers with the use of objective and standardised assessment instrument applicable to Hong Kong children. Classroom adaptation was assessed by class teachers for individual children from experimental and control groups to ensure data validity.
- 3.2 Time 1 data was collected from June to December 2019 with 75 participants, with distribution of their types of special needs in Appendix A. Time 2 lasted from December 2019 to August 2020, with data from a total of 71 participants, 54 of whom were boys (76%) and 17 were girls (24%), with distribution of their types of SEN in Appendix B. The sex distribution is exactly the same as that in the Evaluation Study on the Effectiveness of the Pilot Scheme on OPRS. Four of the cases withdrew in Time 2 and the rate of withdrawal was 5.33%. In Time 2, a typical child of same sex and similar age, with class number prior or next to the child case, together with the respective parent, was drawn by teacher to fill in the scale as control group for comparison. For information about the family background of children from the control group, see Appendix C. In Time 3 from September 2020 to February 2021, data was collected from a total of 60 children cases, of those cases whose parents completed the questionnaires, 43 were boys and 17 were girls, with information about their family background and characteristics in Appendix D. 11 of the children cases withdrew and the rate of withdrawal was 15.49%. 5 parents did not fill in the questionnaire. Since some parents did not complete the entire questionnaire, the number of parent samples changed. (For the distribution of the types of special needs of withdrawn cases and cases with questionnaires yet to be completed, please refer to Appendix E). For the types of special needs of these 60 children, please see Table 1 below.

Table 1

Distribution of types of special needs of children in Time 3 (all participated from Time 1 to Time 3 of the study) (N = 60)

Types of special needs	<i>n</i>
At risk of special learning difficulties	
Diagnosed	10
Suspected	1
Intellectual disability	

Diagnosed	2
Suspected	0
Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)	
Diagnosed	24
Suspected	4
Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)	
Diagnosed	17
Suspected	6
Speech impairment	
Diagnosed	33
Suspected	1
Fine motor delay	
Diagnosed	5
Suspected	0
Gross motor delay	
Diagnosed	1
Suspected	0
Global developmental delay	
Diagnosed	3
Suspected	0
Borderline developmental delay	
Diagnosed	2
Suspected	2
Other impairment ^a	
Diagnosed	0
Suspected	10

Note: Each child could have more than one special need. The types of special needs and diagnosed or suspected cases were provided by parents.

^a Including social and emotional problems as well as sensory integration impairment.

3.3 The above table indicates that the major types of special needs that children of the experimental group have been diagnosed are speech impairment (55% of Time 3 sample), followed by Autism Spectrum Disorder (40%), and then by Attention-Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (28.33%) and specific learning difficulties (16.67). Certain number of children have been diagnosed with fine motor delay (8.33%), global developmental delay (5%), borderline developmental delay (3.33%), intellectual disability (3.33%), gross motor delay (1.67%), and some have suspected social and emotional problems and sensory integration impairment (16.67%).

Performance of Children

Summary of extract

3.4 The present study adopts “The Hong Kong Comprehensive Assessment Scales for Preschool Children” (HKCAS-P, Department of Health, HKSAR, 2014). The scale is a locally developed, validated and standardised comprehensive diagnostic instrument for children and was published by Child Assessment Service, Department of Health. It consists of seven components, including cognition, language, social cognition, fine and gross motor functions, perceptual function and ability, literacy skills and numeracy skills. It is applicable to the assessment

of preschool children. The assessment results help professionals to make referral for treatment, training or educational services, and monitor children’s progress of development, evaluate treatment outcomes for children and compare the ability development of children aged from 3 years 4 months to 6 years 3 months. The present study will adopt its scale items on cognition, language and social cognition to monitor progress of child development. With regard to children with special needs and goals of intervention, each child would be assessed on at least one of the seven scales. For example, an autistic child might be measured on scales of language and social cognition. In Time 1, all children were assessed on the three domains of cognition, language and social cognition. Children with special needs in fine and gross motor development would be included in the test group of “fine and gross motor functions” and their fine and gross motor functions would also be assessed. Raw scores of children cases in all developmental domains would be transformed to scaled scores before comparison. According to scaled scores, performance of children in all items were divided into five ability indicators: obvious difficulties (scaled score 3 or below), relatively weak (scaled score 4-6), average (scaled score 7-13), relatively strong (scaled score 14-16) and good (scaled score over 16). The development scale is applicable to the maximum age of 6 years 3 months and so the scaled scores indicated below are compared with children aged 6 years 3 months.

- 3.5 The progress of the study was seriously affected by the pandemic that the age of the cases exceeds that for which the scale is suitable. In the aspect of progressive assessment, the outcomes of individual children cases in the three time points can be compared with themselves. In the aspect of summative assessment, the performance of children cases can be compared with children aged 6 years 3 months.
- 3.6 In the comparison of Time 1 and Time 3, children cases were still in kindergartens in Time 1 with age ranging from 5.83 to 7.17 years. Most of them were of age 6, with a mean of 6.37. When they were about to complete OPRS and promote to primary school, the performance of the children cases in cognition (mean of scaled score = 10.61), language (mean of scaled score = 8.76) and social cognition (mean of scaled score = 9.83) have reached the average level (scaled scores 7-13). In Time 3, children cases with age ranging from 6.83 to 8.25 years have already entered primary school for approximately a year. The mode of their age is 7 years while the mean is 7.45 years. Research findings showed that developmental outcomes of the children cases in cognition (mean of scaled score = 12.01), language (mean of scaled score = 12.30) and social cognition (mean of scaled score = 11.49), are still remained at the average level (scaled scores 7-13). There were significant increases in scaled scores when comparing to Time 1. With reference to developmental outcomes of children aged 6 years and 3 months provided by the scale, these children cases still maintained at average level in the developmental domains of cognition, language and social cognition etc.

Table 2
Progress of children cases in all developmental domains

Developmental domains	<i>M (SD)</i>		<i>t value</i>	<i>p value</i>
	<i>Time 1</i>	<i>Time 3</i>		
Cognition	10.61 (4.41)	12.01 (4.25)	2.57	.013

Language	8.76 (4.55)	12.30 (4.70)	8.67	.000
Social cognition	9.83 (4.97)	11.49 (4.59)	2.40	.019
Gross motor	7.75 (3.30)	12.60 (3.85)	11.00	.058
Fine motor	11.00 (3.91)	11.60 (4.56)	0.78	.495

Note: In Time 1, a total of 75 cases participated in the study ($N = 75$). 4 cases also received gross motor assessment ($N = 4$); and 9 cases had fine motor assessment ($N = 9$). In Time 3, a total of 60 cases participated in the study ($N = 60$). 5 cases had gross motor assessment ($N = 5$); and 5 cases had fine motor assessment ($N = 5$).

Remark: The scaled scores indicated above are scaled scores compared with children of the same age. A scaled score of below 3 indicates having obvious difficulties, a scaled score of 4-6 means weaker than average and a scaled score of 7-13 means average level.

Classroom Adaptation

- 3.7 To evaluate children’s classroom adaptation, class teachers filled in the “Teacher Observation of Classroom Adaptation – Checklist” (TOCA-C; Leaf, Schultz, Keys, & Ialongo, 2002) to assess children’s concentration problems (7 items), disruptive behaviour (9 items) and prosocial behaviour (5 items) in classroom. Each item is rated on a six-point Likert scale (1 = Never; 2 = Rarely; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Often; 5 = Very often; 6 = Almost always).
- 3.8 According to the results of the paired samples t-test (Table 3), there was significant difference in the coefficients of teacher observation of children’s classroom adaptation regarding disruptive behaviour between Time 1 and Time 3 ($t(23) = .31, p < .05$). The coefficient of teacher observation of children’s classroom adaptation regarding disruptive behaviour decreased significantly from Time 1 ($M = 2.06, SD = 0.74$) to Time 3 ($M = 1.76, SD = 0.72$) (mean difference = 0.31, $p < .05$). No significant difference was found in the coefficients of concentration and prosocial behaviour between Time 1 and Time 3. The checklist was completed by KGs/KG-cum-CCCs teachers in Time 1 and by primary school class teachers in Time 2 and Time 3. The results were positive which reflected that in the aspect of classroom adaptation, disruptive behaviour of children with special needs decreased significantly after progressing to P1.

Table 3

Comparison of teacher observation of children’s classroom adaptation in Time 1 and Time 3 ($N = 24$)

	Time 1		Time 3		Mean difference	t value	df	p value
	M	SD	M	SD				
Concentration problems	3.97	1.10	4.28	.93	-.31	-1.34	23	.20

Disruptive behaviour	2.06	.74	1.76	.72	.31	2.07*	23	.05
Prosocial behaviour	3.87	1.02	3.93	.83	-.07	-.25	23	.80

Note: ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

3.9 In Time 2, teachers assessed children's classroom adaptation for both experimental and control groups. The results are listed in Table 4 which includes means and standard deviations of all subscale items. Class teachers drew a typical child for the control group by referring to the prior or next class number of the child case and choosing one at similar age and of same sex of the child case but without any special needs. Results showed that the means of the subscale on attention problems ranged from 3.06 to 5.11. Teachers generally observed that children cases sometimes or often stayed on task and worked hard, and most children could complete assignments very often. The means of the subscale on disruptive behaviour ranged from 1.31 to 2.89. Teachers observed that children cases never or sometimes broke rules and had social problems, often could not get along with others, never or rarely fought, harmed others or their property. Finally, the means of the children cases ranged from 3.06 to 5.06 in the subscale on prosocial behaviour. Teachers observed that children sometimes or often had positive social behaviour, were never or rarely rejected by classmates, and were often friendly.

Table 4

Teacher observation of children's classroom adaptation in Time 2: Means (M) and standard deviations (SD)

	Experimental group (N = 35)		Control group (N = 20)	
	M	SD	M	SD
Concentration problems	3.86	1.26	4.89	.71
Concentrates	3.71	1.55	4.95	0.99
Pays attention	3.63	1.35	4.85	0.93
Works hard	3.91	1.46	4.70	0.80
Stays on task	3.80	1.88	4.90	0.79
Is easily distracted (R)	3.06	1.80	3.90	1.29
Completes assignments	5.11	1.23	5.50	0.69
Learns up to ability	3.80	1.59	5.45	0.83
Disruptive behaviour	1.95	.81	1.44	.35
Breaks rules	2.06	1.28	1.45	0.61
Doesn't get along with others	2.89	1.30	1.95	1.28
Harms others	1.66	1.08	1.05	0.22
Gets angry when provoked by other children	2.80	1.71	2.25	1.16
Yells at others	1.80	1.30	1.30	0.73
Fights	1.31	0.87	1.00	0.00

Lies	1.54	0.70	1.45	0.69
Harms property	1.71	0.93	1.10	0.45
Teases classmates	1.80	0.99	1.40	0.68
Prosocial behaviour	3.75	1.14	4.71	.62
Is friendly	4.06	1.49	4.90	0.97
Is liked by classmates	3.31	1.32	4.35	0.75
Shows empathy and compassion for others' feeling	3.29	1.34	4.35	0.83
Is rejected by classmates (R)	5.06	1.31	5.70	0.57
Has many friends	3.06	1.26	4.05	0.95

Note: (R) = Reversed item

3.10 Independent samples t-test was applied to examine the extent of difference between teacher observation of children's classroom adaptation for experimental and control groups. The sample included 37 teachers from the experimental group but two teachers did not return the questionnaires so that the above data are from the 35 teachers from experimental group. Findings from the two groups of children, namely, experimental group ($N = 35$) and control group ($N = 20$), were listed in Table 5. The results indicated that there were significant differences between experimental and control groups in teacher observation of classroom adaptation in all three aspects, including concentration ($t(53) = -3.87, p < .01$), disruptive behaviour ($t(50) = 3.24, p < .01$) and prosocial behaviour ($t(53) = -4.03, p < .01$). In other words, teachers observed that children in the control group ($M = 4.89, SD = .71$) demonstrated better attention than their experimental group ($M = 3.86, SD = 1.26$) in classroom. The control group ($M = 1.44, SD = .35$) showed lower frequency of disruptive behaviour than the experimental group ($M = 1.95, SD = .81$). Finally, more prosocial behaviour was found in the control group ($M = 4.71, SD = .62$) than the experimental group ($M = 3.75, SD = 1.14$). The results above reflected that children with special needs were generally lower in attention and prosocial behaviour in classroom than typical children of the same age and that teachers sometimes could still observe attention and positive social behaviour among children with special needs in classroom. However, it should be noted that child performance and teacher observation might be affected by school suspension and implementation of online class at home in Time 2.

Table 5

Independent samples t-test: Comparison of teacher observation of classroom adaptation among children in experimental and control groups

	Experimental group ($N = 35$)		Control group ($N = 20$)		<i>t-test</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Concentration problems	3.86	1.26	4.89	.71	-3.87**
Disruptive behaviour	1.95	.81	1.44	.35	3.24**

Prosocial behaviour	3.75	1.14	4.71	.62	-4.03**
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Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Adaptation of Children after Promotion to Primary One

- 3.11 In Time 2, apart from collecting questionnaires from class teachers, researchers also interviewed 37 teachers of the children cases in the experimental group by phone. Among these 37 teachers who evaluated the adaptation of the children cases in the early period of P1, 13 teachers responded that the children cases adapted well, with performance similar to typical children in all aspects such as learning, adhering to school routines, as well as emotions.
- 3.12 Both the qualitative feedback and quantitative data of TOCA-C from teachers indicated that children adapted quite well in classroom after entering P1, with disruptive behaviour rarely observed and prosocial behaviour sometimes demonstrated. Attention was their major difficulty. This coincides with the types of SEN of the sample: more than 70% with ASD, ADHD and specific learning difficulties. ASD children cases need to adjust their emotion and behaviour. ADHD children cases need support for tackling attention problem. Children with specific learning difficulties need to adapt to the learning, reading and writing requirements in primary school.
- 3.13 To sum up the children data above, it showed that children cases could still remain at average level in developmental domains of cognition, language and social cognition after promoting to P1, with reference to the norm of children aged 6 years 3 months provided by HKCAS-PC. Both qualitative and quantitative findings from teachers indicated that children adapted quite well in classroom after entering P1, with disruptive behaviour rarely observed and prosocial behaviour sometimes demonstrated. Qualitative findings from teachers reflected that children cases with certain types of special needs would normally present at the early stage with the needs on adjustment of emotion and attention, as well as difficulties in learning and literacy, when they were promoted to primary schools. These findings have indicated that transition services and support measures may focus on attention and emotional regulation, as well as providing learning support etc. in correspondence with children's specific needs.

Analysis of Children's Improvements

- 3.14 The data below was collected from 60 parents/carers mainly through face-to-face interview and phone interview, with a view to understanding children and parents' needs for transition support services and the services they have actually received, and examining how the collaboration and good support for adaptation in the transition can be enhanced. Quantitative interviews in Time 1 focused on gathering information from children, parents and teachers from KGs/KG-cum-CCCs in analysing the children's profiles of cognition, language and social cognition domains. Quantitative interviews in Time 2 focused on collating information from children, parents and teachers and analysing factors that lead to individual children's improvements or regressions in domains such as cognition, language and social cognition. Quantitative interviews in Time 3 focused on

various stakeholders' views on transition support services that facilitate children's adaptation: expectations and recommendations from schools, service operators and the Government, and in particular, parents' opinions on the enhancement of transition services and facilitation of smooth transition. Detailed questions can be found in Appendix F.

- 3.15 The comparison of Time 3 and Time 1 data indicated that the children in this study could maintain their development levels in the five major developmental domains (cognition, language, social cognition, fine motor and gross motor). Only very few children had changes across the categories of "above level" and "below level". The categories of "above level" and "below level" are differentiated by referring to children's scaled scores in the five scales of cognition, language, social cognition, fine motor and gross motor and subsequently comparing with the levels of children at the same age. In the present study, "below level" includes two indicators, namely "obvious difficulties" and "relatively weak" whereas "above level" comprises three indicators, namely "average", "relatively strong" and "good".
- 3.16 Among 60 children cases, 45 children maintained their performance across the developmental domains. 13 children recorded cross-indicator improvements in four major domains, including 6 children in social cognition, 5 in language, 3 in cognition and 2 in gross motor. One of the children had significant improvements in both social cognition and language domains. Cross-indicator improvement refers to that fact that the original indicator has improved by at least one grade. Appendix G illustrates the cases progressing from "below level" to "above level" by various ability domains. Only 2 children did not maintain the original level of performance.
- 3.17 The major factor for the improvement of children cases can be summarised as school support and home-school co-operation. Among 13 improvement cases, 8 parents (62% of improvement cases) described school support and also how they communicated with school to help their children adapt to primary school life. 4 parents (67%) in the social cognitive domain, 3 parents (60%) in the language domain, 3 (100%) in the cognitive domain and 1 (50%) in the gross motor domain expressed their views on school support and home-school co-operation. Despite the pandemic and school suspension, schools still arranged online individual training on speech therapy and social group training for children. Besides, teaching assistants arranged pull-out class sessions on mind reading training for children to enhance their social cognition and language expression. There were also regular homework tutorials to help children adapt to learning in P1.
- 3.18 Parents proactively cooperated with school on training arrangements and participating in training with their children. They communicated with schools actively. Through channels such as handbook, phone, telecommunication platform, parents had mutual communication with teachers, student guidance officers and therapists, etc. to follow up on the learning process of children and arrangement for transition services, during which mutual trust was developed. Parents were also willing to participate in online parent seminar or workshop on regular basis to learn and understand children's training needs and to enhance parental efficacy. Some parents also participated in other self-financed gross motor and executive skills training.

Conclusion

Summary of extract

- 3.19 According to the quantitative findings, the majority of children discharged from OPRS and progressing to primary school could sustain their abilities in developmental domains such as cognition, language and social cognition. As compared with teachers' observation of classroom adaptation in KGs/KG-cum-CCCs and P1, there are no significant differences in children's attention and prosocial behaviour before and after proceeding to primary schools. Disruptive behaviour in classroom was rarely observed in children cases both before and after entering primary school. Similar to their control group, disruptive behaviour was seldom observed in the experimental group after entering primary school.
- 3.20 Teachers' qualitative results also revealed that children cases adapted well in classroom after entering P1, with performance similar to typical children in all aspects such as learning, adhering to school routines, as well as emotions. In the early transition into primary education, the major difficulties the children cases encountered corresponding to their types of SEN were adjustments of emotion and attention, followed by social skills, language and communication, attention deficit and learning, reading and writing difficulties. Subsequently, transition services and support measures should focus on dealing with attention, emotional adjustment and learning support, etc.
- 3.21 On the whole, the research findings indicated that key factors leading to the improved outcomes in child developmental domains include parental support and school support.

Parental Support

- 3.22 In examining key factors that are conducive to children's improvements, a stronger parental support was observed among all those cases with improvements in child developmental domains. Parents are more willing to spend time on participating in online speech and occupational therapies as well as homework tutorial with their children. A closer home-school collaborative relationship has been established so that parents can maintain good communication with schools on regular basis, teachers can provide useful information for parents, and parents can obtain assistance from speech therapist, social worker and guidance officer too. In addition, parents are more willing and active to attend talks which renders them both a comprehensive understanding of child development and an enhanced parenting self-efficacy.

School Support

- 3.23 Another key factor is school support, effective transition and other support services, with SENCO and SEN support teacher conducting classroom observation during the initial period of P1, providing additional support for individual students (e.g. resources or learning packs for P1 adaptation, additional

therapies arranged by parents). Primary school class teachers, SENCO, subject teachers and educational psychologist have regular meetings to review the progress and effectiveness of supports.

- 3.24 To ensure a smooth transition, teachers regularly communicate with parents and keep them informed of the progress of children via phone, face-to-face and online conversations and student handbooks, etc. and establish good collaborative relationship with parents.

Chapter 4

Identification of Effective Transition Support Services and Other Support Services

Introduction

- 4.1 Teacher data of this section comes from two learning stages: (1) At the stage of kindergarten, there were 56 class teachers from KGs/KG-cum-CCCs who mainly mentioned about learning activities arranged by KGs/KG-cum-CCCs for the transition as well as 19 operators that provided transition support services to K3 children. (2) At the stage of primary school, 60 children from 50 schools are invited. 37 schools participated and there were 37 class teachers and 30 SENCOs from the same schools. Besides, teachers from 7 primary schools declined from participating in the study and no reply was heard from teachers of 6 primary schools despite repeated phone calls and voice messages. Data was collected mainly through questionnaires and phone interviews to understand adaptation of the children cases in P1 and the transition services for students provided by schools, and to solicit teachers' opinions about transition support services. Background information of the two groups of teachers can be found in Appendices H and I.
- 4.2 This chapter also included interview data on transition support services and other relevant services from 60 parents from individual interviews.

Analysis of Transition Support Services

- 4.3 Class teachers from KGs/KG-cum-CCCs also shared details of the learning activities related to transition from kindergarten to primary school through individual interviews. Basically, schools would provide a series of adjustment activities for all K3 children and their parents. For children, the school would organise children to visit primary schools and participate in model classes, and would also conduct Primary One simulation activities so that children could experience the environment of primary schools, the arrangement of lessons and recess, and also some classroom routines, for instance entering homework items in student handbook, using the timetable to pack learning materials in schoolbags, going to the toilets, etc. Old boys and girls were invited to share their primary school learning and campus life experiences to facilitate children's adaptation and prepare for primary one. For parents, schools would hold a meeting on details about primary school admission applications, and talks on children's adaptation to primary school. Schools would also invite primary school principals to share with parents the learning and routine requirements of primary schools, so that they can have a better understanding and good cooperation with primary schools. In addition, schools would also give consultations to individual parents about their children's school selection according to their needs. Teachers mentioned that the ability of the children who had received OPRS was relatively good, and usually not encountering too many problems in transition. However, for children with weaker ability, they would take the initiative to contact teachers of the primary

school and provided information on how the children learned in early childhood setting.

- 4.4 The consultancy team summarised that operators offered the following three types of transition support services: for children – adapting to school routines, visits to primary schools, familiarising with class attendance, recess, meals, toileting, queuing, and dismissal from school, for supporting literacy, writing and executive function training to meet learning needs; for social, emotional and behavioural training; for parents - organising talks on Primary One admission, individual counselling and consultation (through face-to-face and telephone), and workshops to facilitate understanding in advance the adjustment difficulties and coping methods, to enhance parenting efficacy and confidence, to manage stress, to provide home visits and home-based intervention by a multi-disciplinary team for families in need, and to provide relevant information on community services, e.g. integrated family and youth services, government medical or social welfare services, to enhance resources on mutual support for parents, such as parent sharing sessions; for schools - provide support services to schools, such as consultation services to teachers and social workers, and provide relevant information and training advice to schools on an individual basis.
- 4.5 The current transition support services for students provided by primary schools mainly include organisation of an adaptation week for P1, arrangement of subject activities, and conduction of classroom observation by and assistance from the teachers or teaching assistants from the learning support team, etc. All teacher respondents stated that the school would organise an adaptation week for all P1 newcomers in the middle to latter half of August. The adaptation week mainly includes a guided walk around the school, introduction of the school's facilities, class teachers and classmates, and conduction of a series of classroom routine training such as procedures of attending assembly, learning to queue up for toilet, copy student handbook and pack up the school bag, etc. All subject teachers would also take turn to arrange subject-based activities. Not only would they help students adapt to the class logistics, but they would also have preliminary observation and assessment of students' abilities in comprehension, expression and copying through activities and worksheets.
- 4.6 Teacher respondents indicated that the school would arrange SENCO and SEN support teacher to sit in class to observe the in-class performance of children who already have the Progress Report, and make preliminary identification on children with obvious learning difficulties. After class, they would also discuss with class teachers the list of students who require special attention and additional support for individual students.
- 4.7 Teacher respondents stated that the major support services for students with SEN provided by the school were speech therapy, social and learning support group training, with varying frequencies and durations. Training related to speech therapy was generally conducted once or twice a month with 35-45 minutes per session. Social group training was generally more frequently held than speech therapy and was conducted one to three times every week, often during break or after lunch. The learning support group was generally administered two to three times a week, with 35-45 minutes per session, and was mainly arranged to be held

in tutorials and in the form of pull-out class to consolidate and strengthen students' knowledge in Chinese, English and Mathematics.

- 4.8 Other school support services included after-school homework tutorial, attention training, occupational therapy, mind reading session and play therapy. 22 teacher respondents (59%) stated that the relevant support services mentioned above would often be delivered to the needy students in mid-September the earliest or early October the latest. 10 other teacher respondents (27%) mentioned that the children cases have been put on the list of early identification in P1 and have been waitlisted for assessment by educational psychologist.
- 4.9 Apart from the provision of individual and group training according to needs of students, the school would also take recommendations of the Progress Report and provide the needy students with various classroom accommodations and support. 16 teacher respondents (43%) indicated that they have already arranged the student to sit in the front row or near the teacher at the beginning of the school term so as to facilitate the teacher's timely instruction to the student in need. Students with higher learning ability would be arranged to sit next to the needy student and help the student handle class assignments. To deal with students with learning, emotional and behavioural problems in the classroom, 14 teacher respondents (38%) said that support assistant or support teacher would be arranged to collaborate in class to help the student handle assignments, minimise disruptive behaviour in classroom and stabilise the student's emotions.
- 4.10 With regard to assessment accommodations, 13 teacher respondents (35%) stated that the school has already introduced measures for all P1 students such as reading aloud test papers, reducing the number of examinations and replacing Term 1 examination with thematic continuous assessment, in order to alleviate P1 students' adaptation difficulties arising from the change of learning and assessment modes. In view of this, the schools in this study generally have not made any formal accommodation arrangements for students with SEN such as individual pull-out mode or extra time for examination. Individual teacher respondents stated that they would not consider any alternative arrangements unless the student has obvious adaptation difficulties or has disruptive behaviour. Some schools would prepare a memorandum for the invigilator with points to note regarding the student concerned, so that the invigilator can closely monitor the student's condition and provide necessary and timely support.
- 4.11 To understand students' family background and their learning in KGs/KG-cum-CCCs, 31 teacher respondents stated that the school would organise a meeting with P1 parents in mid-August in which the class teacher and subject teachers would meet with the parents one by one. They would generally record students' conditions and would discuss the list of students who require special attention at class teacher meeting so that they could follow up after the start of the school year.
- 4.12 For students with SEN, 9 teacher respondents (24%) indicated that SENCOs would contact the parents either by phone or face-to-face meeting to learn more about the special needs of their children and explain the arrangements of relevant support services. 5 teacher respondents (14%) said that the class teacher and SENCO would even make a home visit upon parental consent to have an in-depth understanding of the family background of the student and parent-child relationship, etc.

- 4.13 In addition, 22 teacher respondents (59%) mentioned that at the commencement of the school year or even throughout the school year, the school would arrange professionals such as school social worker and educational psychologist to deliver a spectrum of seminars and workshops for parents, usually 2 to 5 times in a year, with themes on facilitating children's adaptation to P1, enhancing children's learning and communication skills, children's attention training, emotional and behavioural regulation, and stress management, so as to help both children and parents adapt to school life and mode smoothly.
- 4.14 16 SENCOs (53%) pointed out that the Progress Report and all relevant information obtained by class teachers and SENCOs would be collated. At the staff meeting before the commencement of the school year, all teaching staff would then be informed of the number of students with special needs and their types of special needs, so that teachers would have a preliminary understanding of the students. The detailed reports, individual support strategies and accommodation arrangements for students would be circulated and further discussed at the class teachers' meeting after the beginning of the school year.
- 4.15 For parents of students with SEN, 11 teacher respondents (30%) mentioned that the school would design an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for Tier-3 student cases, and would invite their parents to attend case support meetings and engage them in collaboration with educational psychologist, SENCO and subject teachers etc. to formulate supporting goals and strategies. For Tier-2 cases, parents' suggestions on support services and accommodation arrangements would be collected and would be discussed with subject teachers for making support arrangements for the following school year. According to the guideline of the Education Bureau (EDB), a Student Support Summary for students with SEN should be prepared for parent's reference, with information such as types of support measures needed by students as well as types and duration of various support group training. The Progress Report of the student would be brought up for parents' reference at the last parent meeting of the school year so as to enable parents to understand the support measures for students and the related effectiveness throughout the entire school year.
- 4.16 For schools without regular support meetings, teachers said that meetings with SENCO would be held on a need basis only. Subject teachers are mainly responsible for observing and identifying cases in the 1st semester and they would only discuss the detail in the 2nd semester whether students need support with reference to the students' conditions. Other teacher respondents highlighted the importance of support meetings. Teachers reckoned that support meetings could provide teachers with more effective strategies and remind teachers of points to note in teaching.

Opinions of Parents, Teachers and SENCOs

Summary of extract

- 4.17 Parent respondents mainly need a wide variety of training and tutorial for their children to keep up with the learning progress. 15 parents (25%) expressed the need for homework tutorial for revision and practice of the learning content of online lessons. (The interview was conducted during school suspension and lessons were mainly delivered online.) 15 parents (25%) would like to have

attention training for their children. 7 parents (12%) said their children need social group training while 6 (10%) said their children need speech therapy.

- 4.18 With regarding to school support, parents' most needed provision was homework tutorial as well as additional small-class tutorial and remedial class, totalling 17 parents (28%). 12 parents indicated the need for speech therapy and 12 needed social group training (20% respectively).
- 4.19 31 teacher (84%) respondents indicated that the school would organise P1 orientation talk for parents mainly to introduce the school curriculum, class timetable, assignment and examination arrangements, as well as resources that P1 newcomers would need and points to note.
- 4.20 Teachers reckoned that the Progress Report is a set of very valid and important information and document which lists out the pre-school rehabilitation services that the children cases have received, their particulars in all domains that require special attention (such as cognitive development, affective and social development, language development, self-care, muscle control and coordination development). It also provides recommendations on supporting children's adaptation to the life of primary education, with details such as environment arrangement, class support measures, social, emotional and behavioural support strategies, skills training, remedial equipment, for primary school's reference.
- 4.21 24 SENCO respondents (80%) had positive comments on transition support services. They opined that the policies on pre-school support and the transition support services between kindergarten and primary school have been bettered in recent years. The mechanism of transferring information of students with special needs would enable primary schools to grasp the pre-school condition of the students and learn about their special needs in advance (21 respondents, 70%). By referring to the pre-school recommendations, primary schools would be able to adjust class teaching strategies and make appropriate accommodations and support arrangements which facilitate and strengthen the transition support for students and enhance the effectiveness.
- 4.22 Home-school communication and co-operation is indispensable in determining students' ability of coping with changes in the transition, smooth adaptation to primary school life and effective learning. 27 teacher respondents (73%) said that they would keep P1 parents informed of students' daily class performance primarily during the time when parents pick up or drop off their children, and once in month they would communicate and discuss with parents by phone about the learning progress or special condition of the students. Other teacher respondents indicated that they would make arrangements on a need basis and would not contact parents unless students demonstrate adaptation difficulties or have special condition.
- 4.23 To cater for and support diverse students with SEN more effectively, 33 teacher (89%) and 29 SENCO respondents (97%) stated that the school would regularly hold class support meetings, during which the class teacher, subject teachers and teachers/ teaching assistants from the learning support team would discuss the academic performance, assignments, social and emotional behaviour of students concerned, so as to have a comprehensive understanding of students' needs, jointly formulate goals for students, discuss effective support measures, and regularly review and adjust the measures according to students' performance. The

frequency of holding class support meetings varied across schools, ranging from two to four times annually. SENCO S29 even indicated that the contents of the Progress Report (including type and support measures) of each student with SEN would be collated and compiled into a student support handbook for all teachers' reference and keeping and for the convenience of perusal when needed. In the middle of the semester, teachers would fill in an evaluation form of support and review the aspects that the students need more support or have obvious difficulties, and the items to be followed up in the next school year. All support records would be filed in the individual student profiles to facilitate handover among subject teachers every year.

- 4.24 Other supports included: provision of guidance, community-based projects and budding programmes according to student needs, and temporary support for student learning; arrangement for teaching assistant to be in class to support students with suspected attention deficits, and if needed, referral to social worker for arranging and waitlisting for assessment; organisation of learning companion programme and homework tutorial to support students with apparent learning difficulties, arrangement for class ambassador to help students with learning disabilities, use of visual cue cards to help students to be attentive in class and to follow steps in learning, and provision of consolidation class on foundational knowledge for students with lower learning abilities.
- 4.25 13 parent respondents (22%) indicated that there was no need for school to provide further services. 8 parents (13%) would like to have more communication with school about the following: the school can deliver workshops at a time convenient to working parents; training via videoconferencing should fit the schedule of working parents, or the school provides videos for parents to train their children; keep parents informed of the concrete programme and progress; set up a group for contact. Under the impact of the pandemic, 7 parent respondents (12%) felt helpless and did not know how the school could help. Therefore, some parents would like to have seminars or workshops on counselling parents and giving emotional support.

Communication with OPRS Operators

- 4.26 Teachers said it might not be necessary to contact the OPRS operator if students did not have any special adaptation problem in P1. All teacher respondents stated that they had not contacted OPRS operators. However, they considered that Progress Reports provided by OPRS operators and communication with parents were already sufficient for understanding the special educational needs and pre-school condition of students.
- 4.27 Besides, 22 teacher respondents (59%) said they had referred to the Progress Reports provided by operators. Such reports were collected and collated by SENCO in mid or late August and then circulated among teachers. Regarding Progress Reports, teacher T32 would particularly attend to the contents of assessment and recommendations on providing support for students.
- 4.28 23 teacher respondents (62%) thought that exchanges between schools and OPRS operators should be strengthened and suggested that communication platforms for support teams of the two parties be established. However, only 4 teachers

considered it necessary to have face-to-face communication. Teachers T11 and T12 opined that meeting with pre-school rehabilitation service team would enable them to have an early understanding of the special learning needs of students, and allow primary school teachers to prepare for and conceive appropriate support strategies with reference to the effective support strategies in pre-school, which can be further adjusted according to students' situation after progressing to P1. Teacher T21 said teachers might not be confident of providing precise and appropriate support for students, and meeting with pre-school rehabilitation service team would enable them to seek more professional advice. Similarly, teacher T28 pointed out that pre-school information of students would help teachers understand students' background, and believed that the transition would be even better if the team could meet with teachers face-to-face and on site and exchange about students' pre-school performance and effective support approaches. Other teachers viewed that, in general circumstances, if student needs were mild or not urgent, contacting OPRS operators by phone would be sufficient (T02, T04, T05, T21, T29 and T31).

- 4.29 8 teacher and SENCO respondents (12%) expressed their views on the communication and exchanges with OPRS operators. Teacher T03 tended to learn about the student through communication with parents and personal observation, and deemed it unnecessary to meet with OPRS operators. Teacher T07 indicated that reference to students' pre-school learning condition did not help primary school teachers much because the learning environment of primary school was tremendously different from pre-school, and pre-school support strategies might not be applicable. Others thought that the contents of the Progress Reports have already reflected the students' developmental condition and needs in pre-school and it was not necessary to strengthen exchanges with OPRS operators (T13, T24 and T29).
- 4.30 Regarding arrangements for meeting with OPRS operators, 8 teachers (22%) indicated the following considerations: whether teachers' workload would allow them to attend the meeting (2 teachers); the meeting could be held in August or September (3 teachers); the meeting could be held via videoconferencing (2 teachers); or the meeting with OPRS operations could be merged with the meeting with school-based educational psychologist which would allow the understanding of students' conditions after entering P1 from multiple perspectives (1 teacher).
- 4.31 Among 30 SENCO respondents, 19 (63%) agreed to the need of strengthening communication and exchange with OPRS operators; 7 (24%) said it depended on needs; 3 (10%) considered no such need; 1 (3%) was neutral. 63% of SENCOs agreed that OPRS operators could contact schools for a support meeting for the transition of cases which would give support teams of both parties opportunities of exchanges and handover of cases.
- 4.32 In view of the intensiveness of the primary school curriculum and teachers' heavy workload, 22 SENCOs (73%) suggested that priority for case meeting for transition support should be given to cases at Tier 3 and with multiple special educational needs. For other ordinary or mild cases, the Progress Report has already provided sufficient information. It was believed that the school could independently handle and follow up on matters of support. With regard to time and mode of meeting, 22 SENCOs deemed it appropriate to have a meeting before the start of P1, and the meeting could be held online via videoconferencing.

4.33 7 SENCOs (24%) hoped that the school could have the liberty of deciding whether to have case meetings with OPRS operators on a need basis, and they thought that they could contact the staff member of the operator for a meeting upon receipt of report and classroom observation. In this connection, they suggested that a reply mechanism be set up to facilitate concrete and clear communication between the two parties. If the operator anticipated that the student would have severe adaptation problem, the operator could also send staff members to the primary school to have case meeting (S02).

Conclusion

Summary of Extract

4.34 Based on the information and views from teachers and parents, the consultancy team summarises four key factors that are conducive to the smooth transition of students with SEN from kindergarten to primary school:

Transition Support Activities for K3 Children

4.35 KGs/KG-cum-CCCs would arrange the following activities for K3 children, including model lessons, visit to a primary school and taking part in simulation lesson to enhance children's understanding of the learning environment and routines. Parents would take part in talk on Primary One admission and teachers would share with parents who sought to consult them for school choice.

The Comprehensive Development Progress Report for Pre-school Children

4.36 The Progress Report on pre-school children's progress of development is a set of very valid and important information and document which lists out domains of the children cases that continue to require attention after transition to primary school. It also enables primary schools to grasp the pre-school condition and understand the special educational needs of the students in advance. For example, at the teaching staff meeting before the commencement of the school year, all teaching staff would be informed about the number and types of students with SEN in the upcoming school year so that teachers could have a preliminary understanding of the students. The Progress Report serves as an important reference for primary schools which helps them support children's adaptation to primary school life. In addition, schools can be encouraged to contact OPRS operators on a need basis to follow up on adaptation matters of children cases.

Teachers Make Good Use of the Information to Arrange, Administer and Review Various Relevant Support Strategies

4.37 At the class teacher meeting after the start of the school year, teachers utilise the information provided by the Progress Report to arrange and administer the recommended classroom support strategies so as to foster students' adaptation to primary school life. In the regular class-based support meetings, the class teacher, subject teachers and support team staff discuss academic performance,

assignments, social and emotional behaviour of students concerned, so as to have a comprehensive understanding of students' needs, jointly formulate goals for students, discuss effective support measures, and regularly review and adjust the measures according to students' performance.

- 4.38 Currently, the major support services for students with SEN provided by schools include speech therapy, social and learning support group training. Schools can also make use of the Learning Support Grant to procure the support services from various disciplines to provide children with appropriate training such as homework tutorial, attention training, professional services including elements of educational support and occupational therapy etc. , mind reading session and play therapy.

Provide Valid Information and Support to Parents Continuously

- 4.39 In the summer preceding P1, parents and children actively join the activities of P1 adaptation week and establish good communication and exchange with school. After entering primary school, the school communicates and exchanges with parents by phone on students' learning progress or special condition, or invites parents of the students to attend case support meeting, and collaborate with educational psychologist, SENCO and subject teachers on formulating support goals and strategies which will allow parents to understand the support measures and outcomes throughout the entire school year.

Chapter 5

Recommendations on Service Modes and Support Measures for the Transition Support Services between Kindergarten and Primary School

Introduction

- 5.1 Based on the data obtained from teachers and OPRS Operators, recommendations of the service mode and transition support services for children promoting to primary school are proposed in this chapter. Data from teachers collected in two stages are: (a) the stage in kindergarten: 56 class teachers from KGs/KG-cum-CCCs, who mainly mentioned about learning activities arranged by KGs/KG-cum-CCCs for the transition; (b) the stage in primary school: 57 class teachers, and 30 SENCOs from the same schools were involved. Data was collected mainly through questionnaires and phone interviews. Background information of the two groups of teachers can be found in Appendices H and I.
- 5.2 The consultancy team also collected and analysed data of OPRS operators mainly to examine aspects such as suggestions on appropriate service modes and support measures for transition service for children with special needs, extension of support services by optimising manpower and deploying resources. In Time 1, 21 questionnaires were collected from operators with a view to understanding their difficulties in and suggestions for deployment of manpower and provision of transition services. The consultancy team also visited and interviewed two new OPRS operators with services operated in October 2019. Summaries can be found in Appendices J, K and L. In Time 2, 21 operators were interviewed through online meetings, with contents mainly on how operators deployed manpower and resources for providing transition support services for children, family and schools. Questions and results are included in Appendix M. In Time 3, 19 operators participated in the study and 2 did not. Since 2 operators did not complete the whole questionnaire, there was change in the number of samples. For the questionnaires, operators were enquired about their transition service arrangements during school suspension and after class resumption in September as well as their views on topics such as pre-school training for students progressing to P1 and etc.

Analysis of Teachers and Schools

Support services for children with special needs

- 5.3 Teachers from KGs/KG-cum-CCCs mentioned that the ability of the children who received OPRS was relatively good, and usually not encountering too many problems in transition. However, for children with weaker ability, they would take the initiative to contact teachers of the primary school and provided information on how the children learned in early childhood setting.
- 5.4 SENCOs generally opined that both OPRS operators and primary schools should provide various types of support for parents of students with special needs since students' problems and needs vary across different developmental stages. More

attention is paid to student development in various domains during pre-school period. In comparison, primary schools focus on helping students to adapt to a strikingly different learning mode and school life and continue to offer support to students and parents in various aspects such as learning, language, emotional and social skills. In addition, primary schools also advocate an inclusive school culture and facilitate people's understanding of the types of SEN, with a view to eliminating the misunderstanding and labelling of students with SEN.

On Providing Professional Training for Primary School Teachers

- 5.5 Among 30 SENCO respondents, 29 (97%) revealed that the school currently would arrange professional training seminars and workshops for teachers one to three times a year. Seminar topics are formulated according to the direction of school development and are not necessarily related to integrated education. Topics of the seminars organised by school-based educational psychologist are mainly related to approaches on handling learning and behavioural problems of students with various types of SEN and effective intervention skills for handling students with emotional problems, etc. Seminars delivered by speech therapist include increasing students' attention in classroom and improving their speech problems, etc.
- 5.6 Every year, schools would recommend teachers to participate in the structured training courses pitched at three levels, organised by the EDB for caring for students with SEN. Information of workshops organised by different organisations would also be circulated so that teachers could join according to their interest and at their own will. Co-workers would also share the related notes and teaching materials after participating in seminars. A school (S20) also participated in a partnership programme or shadow programme and had mutual classroom observation and exchange with schools experienced in supporting students with SEN so as to enhance the relevant knowledge and skills of taking care of students with SEN. Individual school tried to arrange teachers for classroom observation in the form of case study which exemplified skills of supporting students with SEN and designing classroom activities.
- 5.7 Regarding views on professional training for teachers, 9 SENCOs (30%) suggested that training workshops and programmes should not only focus on theory but should also demonstrate more practical support skills and approaches, and provide teachers with opportunities to apply and practise the strategies and receive instant feedback from professionals. They believed that such arrangements would be of great help to the improvement of teachers' pedagogical skills and would increase their self-confidence in supporting students with SEN. For example, additionally set up a partnership co-operation programme and invite experienced therapists, professionals or school co-workers to share their practice experiences, discuss case studies and have class demonstration. Teachers can be encouraged to apply the strategies and skills in class and review the outcomes with professionals instantly so as to enhance their teaching skills and confidence in supporting students with SEN.
- 5.8 About the topics of professional training seminars and workshops for teachers, 19 SENCOs (63%) suggested to add more topics related to autism, the application of teaching materials in supporting children with SEN in learning, emotional and

behavioural aspects (such as seminars and workshops on fine motor training), as well as awareness of mental health of teachers and students.

On Early Identification and Support in P1 and Enhancing the Progress Report

- 5.9 25 SENCO respondents (83%) said they strongly agreed to the idea of early identification, intervention and support. As observed by 11 SENCO respondents (37%), the majority of children who have got the Progress Report and already received support services had more advantages and demonstrated better and more stable adaptation in P1, whereas children who showed difficulties in adaptation to P1 were mainly those without any Progress Reports. Therefore, SENCOs opined that early identification at pre-school stage and continuous support was very conducive to students' transition and adaptation to primary school.
- 5.10 For students suspected with SEN only after promoting to P1, 25 SENCOs (83%) indicated that the school also has a well-developed early identification mechanism for P1. In the 1st semester of P1, teachers would observe and identify students with suspected learning disabilities, fill in the observation checklist on their conditions in various domains. In the 2nd semester, they would arrange for consultation and preliminary assessment with educational psychologist for the students. SENCO S27 pointed out that during the waiting time for the assessment of educational psychologist, the school, being person-oriented, would also make flexible arrangement to provide Tier-1 class support or even group training for students not yet diagnosed but with suspected and obvious needs, after consulting SENCO and educational psychologist and upon parental consent.
- 5.11 24 SENCOs (80%) said the Progress Report was detailed which would allow the school to have a preliminary understanding of the pre-school condition of the student. And after meeting with parents, the school would have a more in-depth understanding of the new development and needs of the student and would be able to arrange appropriate support services for students and parents more precisely. SENCO S24 also appreciated that as early identification and support has already been done in pre-school, the Progress Report would spare the time of primary school teachers to learn about or re-examine the special educational needs of students, thus further facilitating the smooth transition from kindergarten to primary school.
- 5.12 Based on personal observation of the performance of students with the Progress Report, a SENCO expressed appreciation for the pre-school rehabilitation services. The Progress Report shows that a student has made noticeable improvements and can effectively control emotion and manage problem behaviour. The parent also has a higher awareness of the student's emotion and has substantial handling experience so that issues arising from the transition can be predicted and psychological preparation and intervention approaches can be formulated. All these help the student to have stable emotion and make adaptation easier.
- 5.13 SENCOs normally could retrieve the Progress Report through the Special Education Management Information System (SEMIS) in mid of July every year. The information obtained would help teachers of the learning support team, educational psychologist and speech therapist to understand students' needs for support in case meetings. 2 SENCOs (7%) suggested to strengthen the

individualised contents of the report such as adding more practical examples in the description of students' special needs, situations in which severe emotional or behavioural problems have appeared, factors provoking the incidents and practical support approaches adopted by tutors. This would increase the awareness of the primary school teachers and serve as additional information for their reference.

On Strengthening Education and Support for Parents

- 5.14 More than half of the SENCO respondents (19 SENCOs, 63%) indicated the importance of parent education and support, and suggested to strengthen the understanding of the types of SEN among parents of children with SEN. This would allow parents to have a better understanding of the rationales and reasons behind behaviour of children with SEN and have more empathy on children's difficulties so that they could manage their expectations for children, establish appropriate ways to get along with children, and provide effective support.
- 5.15 Teacher respondents also suggested that for parents of students with SEN, their knowledge and skills in supporting children with special needs should be strengthened (T25), and more teaching materials and resources for P1 adaptation should be provided. Teacher T17 pointed out that the school currently could only offer limited support due to teachers' time and ability constraints, and therefore more external resources and services for students and parents would be preferred. Teacher T29 reckoned that students with SEN have to spend more time and efforts than other peer students in adapting to the abundant contents of the primary school curriculum while parents need time to understand the school's support measures for students and to make complement. Some parents find it difficult to follow up on students' study and need to manage their expectation to avoid unnecessary stress for students.
- 5.16 In addition to the adaption week for all P1 newcomers, 13 SENCO respondents (43%) revealed that the school would also provide P1 adaption learning packs for needy students so that parents could utilise the resources and teaching materials to help children adapt to the life and learning mode of the school. For example, SENCO S05 has purchased a P1 adaptation resource pack which teaches students self-care, packing up of school bag and simulated class procedures. SENCO S27 provided additional word cards for needy parents so that they could teach children to learn words at home. School-based educational psychologist would help parents borrow electronic resources of "Read and Write Made Easy" as needed so that they could support dyslexic children by teaching them skills and strategies in spelling and writing. Timetable and visual cue cards would be additionally prepared to facilitate P1 adaptation, and social worker would also provide consultation service for parents and teach them to accept children's diversity and to view children's emotional and behavioural problems from multiple perspectives (S24).
- 5.17 Besides, 10 SENCOs (34%) suggested that more P1 adaption learning packs and online resources be provided for parents. To ensure that parents could use the relevant materials appropriately, a short videoclip could be provided to demonstrate how to use the learning pack so that parents could master the concept and method concretely.

Collaboration of Family, School and Community

- 5.18 The Evaluative Study on the Effectiveness of the “Pilot Scheme on OPRS” pointed out that the tripartite approach integrating family, school and community into one collaboration model is a key factor for the success of OPRS as it allows the multi-disciplinary professional team to provide an early intervention for students with SEN and their parents. It is particularly important to sustain these success factors during children’s transition into primary school, with child and family as the centre, and maximise parental engagement to allow their better understanding of the development and life experience of children with special needs and help parents explore resources available in community. In addition, there should be effective collaboration and good communication among all stakeholders, including frequent exchanges between parents and teachers, multi-disciplinary professional team and teachers, as well as parents and multi-disciplinary team.
- 5.19 With regard to the community’s collaboration and inputs, the consultancy team learned from parents by phone interview about their understanding and perception of transition support resources and support in the community. Parents’ perceived community resources mainly referred to P1 transition class for entering primary school, class visit or class simulation in primary school. Regarding community resources and services for the transition support services between kindergarten and primary school, 27 parent respondents (45%) indicated “with no knowledge at all”, 11 (18%) “generally with no knowledge”, 14 (23%) “with some knowledge”, and only 5 (8%) “with knowledge”. 3 parents (5%) had no comments. 3 of them revealed that the waiting time for the services was too long and only 8 (13%) indicated that those services could help a bit. However, 11 parents did not indicate what services they had utilised. Most of the parents were not aware of the community services such as parents resource centres. Services in this aspect could be further publicised and promoted.

Analysis of On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services Operators

Summary of interview

- 5.20 For the priority of cases to be discussed at case meetings and the mode of meetings, operators generally viewed that severe and complicated cases should be given the priority of follow-up at the beginning of the school year. 6 operators (32%) indicated that severity of cases should be determined according to the children’s overall needs such as learning ability, behavioural and emotional performances, family background and capacity of parental support. 4 operators (21%) said that the priority could be given according to the types of SEN, with priority for ASD and ADHD cases. Another 2 operators (10%) supplemented that recommendations for students proceeding to P1 have already been recorded in the Progress Report. If needs such as global developmental delay, early dyslexic symptoms and specific support measures of children have already been detailed in the reports, primary schools could make accommodations accordingly and might not need to consult or involve the pre-school rehabilitation service units. In consideration of the fact that “the number of students with SEN and types of SEN in each school vary every year and the mode of support and manpower ratio are different across schools”, 1 operator (5%) deemed it necessary to initially

coordinate with the school before determining the case priority according to school need. Finally, for student cases with mild conditions, most operators, totalling 11 (58%), agreed that case meetings in the form of direct phone conversation would be sufficient. Regarding sustainability of support, it would be more effective to focus on individual strengths rather than weaknesses in enhancing the student's psychological resilience and learning ability.

Design of Transition Support Services

- 5.21 To cater for the needs of upcoming P1 student cases and their parents, operators offer transition support services for their children beneficiaries, including routine establishment, behavioural and emotional expression, strategies for parents and children to handle learning stress arising from dictation and assessment, parent workshops on P1 adaptation as well as individual counselling and consultation services (face-to-face and by phone) for parents. Some also provide relevant information and training recommendations relevant to the cases to primary schools.
- 5.22 14 operators (74%) agreed that adaptation training for kindergarten students proceeding to P1 is an essential service. 8 operators (42%) indicated that they were willing to coordinate and collaborate with primary schools on providing services to students in need.
- 5.23 Operators opined that particular attention to children should be given according to case severity. For children with severe impairment, arrangement for transition support services should be made in advance to facilitate communication and visits among the parties concerned such as children, parents, kindergarten teachers and primary school teachers and SENCOs, etc., with a view to understanding the conditions and needs of students and parents.
- 5.24 Regarding the definition of case severity, 2 operators (11%) would refer to the student's receipt of Tier-3 support at pre-school stage, 1 operator (5 %) would refer to the extent of impact of symptoms on the child, family and functions of primary school, and 1 operator (5%) would refer to the amount of support and recommendations required by school teachers, as indicators.
- 5.25 In addition, platforms for communication among team members from OPRS operators, families and schools should be established in the provision of transition support services. If needed, regular case meetings and meetings with parents could be organised.
- 5.26 In addition to the adaptation difficulties similar to Chinese-speaking children with special needs, Non-Chinese Speaking (NCS) children with special needs and their parents also have to adapt to language and cultural differences. For example, they need translation services in the learning of strategies for home training for children. The operators suggested that special subsidies for NCS student and parent users of OPRS could be considered, similar to their counterparts of other pre-school rehabilitation services. Students of ethnic minority (EM) with special needs often have multiple needs, and staff members of ethnic minority from OPRS teams could help develop mutual trust with the family and increase parents' participation. Currently, an operator specifically provides services to NCS students with special needs. The EDB also provides grants and resources to

schools accepting NCS students with special needs. Further details are available in Chapter 6.

- 5.27 The SWD and the EDB have established an electronic platform for the information transfer mechanism between preschool rehabilitation service units and primary schools so that special attention and appropriate services would still be given to children who have received pre-school rehabilitation services (including OPRS) after their promotion to primary school.

Conclusion

Maintenance of Existing Support Services in Primary Schools

- 5.28 It is necessary to sustain these success factors during children's transition to primary school, with child and family as the centre and by increasing parental engagement, so as to allow their better understanding of the development and life experience of children with special needs and help parents explore resources available in community.

Strengthening of Parent Education and Support

- 5.29 The conclusion in Chapter 4 mentions about the importance of parental support. Therefore, parent seminars targeted at parents with children with special needs can focus more on the understanding of the types of SEN which will allow parents to have a better understanding of the rationales behind behaviours of children with special needs and reasons for the formation of those behaviours. They will then have more understanding on children's difficulties so that they can manage their expectations for children, establish appropriate ways to get along with children, and provide effective support. OPRS operators can also have an early identification of parents in need and an early referral of them to relevant support and services. For parents who are in dire need of support in the aspect of family relations, their cases can be referred to the relevant Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) in the locality, in addition to the school social worker. IFSCs will follow up family cases.

Strengthening of Teacher Training

- 5.30 At present, training workshops and programmes for primary school teachers cover thematic and practical support skills and approaches. The consultancy team deems that the component of practical skills and approaches can be further strengthened. Teachers can be provided with opportunities to apply and practise the strategies acquired and receive instant feedback from professionals. It is believed that this will have a very beneficial impact on teachers' pedagogical skills and will also increase teachers' self-confidence in supporting students with SEN.

Strengthening of Internal Communication in Primary School

5.31 The consultancy team opines that the internal communication between Student Support Team and school social worker in some of the primary schools can be strengthened so that the social worker has more information on cases for follow up.

Chapter 6

Current Transition Support Services and Support Measures

Introduction

- 6.1 This chapter aims at discussing the existing transition support services and measures, including family, children and youth welfare services provided by the SWD, relevant grants and professional support offered by the EDB, Progress Report and transition support services provided by OPRS operators.

Mechanism on the Current Transition Support Services

Utilisation of the Progress Report to Enhance the Transition Support

- 6.2 To enhance the effectiveness of transition from kindergarten to primary school, starting from the 2018/19 school year, the EDB, the SWD and the Child Assessment Service under the Department of Health (DH) and the Hospital Authority (HA) have strengthened their collaboration so as to ensure that when children with special needs proceed to primary schools from pre-school centres/kindergartens, the primary schools can have an early understanding of their conditions and arrange support for their smooth transition into the learning life of primary school by referring to their assessment information and Progress Report. Specifically, with the assistance of the EDB and upon parental consent, the child assessment centres of the DH and the HA will send the assessment information of the children with special needs to their recipient public sector or Direct Subsidy Scheme primary schools. As for the children who have received subsidised pre-school rehabilitation services, the Progress Reports of these upcoming P1 students prepared by the pre-school rehabilitation service units subvented by the SWD, will be transmitted electronically through the Special Education Management Information System (SEMIS) of the EDB to their recipient schools before the commencement of the new school year (mid-July of the year). The Student Support Team (SST) in schools have to scrutinise the assessment information and/or Progress Reports of P1 students concerned and discuss early with their parents about the daily performance of the students. After understanding the conditions of the students, the SST will include their information into the student support register and make appropriate support arrangement for them according to their actual needs. Upon parental consent, the SST will record the support measures in the “Summary of Transition Support for P1 Student” in SEMIS on or before late October. The EDB staff will understand from schools their planning of support measures for the respective students by reviewing the “Summary of Transition Support for P1 Student” devised by schools through SEMIS within six to eight weeks upon the commencement of a new school year and offer professional advice. Schools will also provide a copy of the “Summary of Transition Support for P1 Student” to parents so that they can understand the support arrangements by schools and make suitable complement to enhance the effectiveness of support and home-school communication.

Current Support Services Provided by the Social Welfare Department

Transition Support Services Provided by OPRS Operators

- 6.3 At present, children and parents are the major target users of the transition support services provided by OPRS operators. Services for children include the design and conduction of P1 adaptation training as well as enhancement of learning, social and self-care abilities for K3 children which generally cover reading and writing support, social communication, classroom procedures in primary school, eating and toilet training, psychological and emotional adjustment, etc. Services are mainly provided in small group at the centre in summer. School visits may also be arranged.
- 6.4 Transition support services for parents mainly include support group for P1 parents, individual guidance and phone enquiry. Through seminars and workshops, parents will be able to understand and master the skills of handling learning difficulties and homework issues in primary school, and enhance home training in self-care, social and language expression skills, etc. With reference to the Progress Report, the services will help parents understand children's abilities and special needs as well as the aspects that require attention after entering primary school.
- 6.5 Parents will also be introduced to the school support services such as school programme for supporting students with ASD and ADHD, and community services relevant to junior primary education such as referring parents to other community resources (e.g. application for free school bags and stationeries for low-income families, IFSCs).

Mobile Training Centre provided by OPRS operators

- 6.6 The 2018 Policy Address pointed out that the Government would enhance professional and support services for OPRS, including strengthening the establishment of speech therapists and social workers and setting up mobile training centres. Mobile training centres serve as an extension of the school to provide training sites for young children and counselling services for parents and families. Operators can also make good use of mobile training centres to provide transition support services for children.

Early Education and Training Centre

- 6.7 It is designed mainly for children with disabilities from birth to the age of two, providing them with early intervention programmes with particular emphasis on the role of the child's family. Children with disabilities who are aged two to under six and have not yet started primary school can also receive the service if they are not concurrently receiving other pre-school rehabilitation services, which will facilitate their integration into the mainstream education system.

Integrated Programme in Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centre

- 6.8 It provides training and care to children, aged 2 to under 6, with mild disabilities in an ordinary kindergarten-cum-child care centre with a view to facilitating their future integration into the mainstream education as well as in the society.

Special Child Care Centre

- 6.9 It provides special training and care for children, aged 2 to under 6, with moderate to severe disabilities to facilitate their growth and development, helping them prepare for primary education.

After School Care Programme (ASCP)

- 6.10 After School Care Programme (ASCP) aims at providing care services for children whose parents are unable to give proper care to them during after-school hours because of work, job search or other reasons. ASCP is operated by non-governmental organisations on a self-financing and fee-charging basis, offering support services for the primary school students (including those being diagnosed with or having suspected special educational needs and waitlisted for medical assessment), who are Hong Kong residents. Services provided under ASCP include homework guidance, parental guidance and education, skill learning as well as social activities. Families of children with SEN may apply for the services above according to their family conditions.

Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres

- 6.11 The Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres (ICYSCs) adopt a total person and community approach to meet the multifarious needs of children and youth aged 6-24 in specific catchment areas. ICYSCs provide professional social work intervention (preventive, developmental, supportive and remedial services) in working with children and youth, their significant others as well as the community. Through the flexible application of social work intervention strategies (including casework, group work and community work) in different platforms (i.e., centre, school, or community), forging strategic alliance and making use of information technology wherever appropriate, the following programmes are provided by ICYSCs: guidance and counselling, supportive programmes, developmental and socialisation programmes, and community engagement programmes. Children with SEN progressing to primary school may participate in the various activities offered by ICYSCs to meet their developmental needs.

Parents/Relatives Resource Centres

- 6.12 At present, there are a total of 19 subvented Parents/Relatives Resource Centres (PRCs), five of which have been set up with specialised ethnic minority units. Its objective is to provide community support for the parents and relatives/carers of persons with disabilities. With assistance from staff of the centre, parents and relatives/carers would learn how to take care of their family members with disabilities or with difficulties on upbringing, exchange experience and establish mutual support. The service would help parents or other family members/relatives/carers to accept their family members with disabilities or with difficulties on upbringing, strengthen the function of family and help parents and

relatives/carers to cope with the difficulties and pressure in taking care of their family members with disabilities or with difficulties on upbringing. Families of children with special needs can make good use of the support services provided by PRCs to assist their children in the smooth transition into primary school.

Integrated Family Services

- 6.13 Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs), operated by the Social Welfare Department and subvented non-governmental organisations, provide a spectrum of services to address the multifarious needs of individuals and families of specific localities. With the guiding principles of accessibility, early identification, integration and partnership, the IFSCs are set up to support and strengthen individuals and families through delivering of services under the direction of “child-centred, family-focused and community-based.” Services include enquiry service, resource corner, family life education, parent-child activities, group work service, programme activities, volunteer training and service, outreaching service, counselling service and referral service, etc. for individuals and families in need with extended hour services. Families of children with special needs can also seek the relevant support services such as counselling service mentioned above according to their needs.

Current Support Services Provided by the Education Bureau

Learning Support Grant

- 6.14 The EDB provides additional resources for public sector ordinary primary schools, of which “Learning Support Grant” (LSG) is the major one. This cash grant for public sector secondary and primary schools is based on the number of students with SEN (including the academically lower achievers in primary schools) and corresponding to the tier of support required by the students.
- 6.15 Starting from the 2019/20 school year, the EDB has extended the LSG to all public sector ordinary schools and increased the grant rate for Tier-3 support. Schools will have 1 to 3 additional regular teaching post(s), titled as Special Educational Needs Support Teacher, provided on account of LSG reaching the specific threshold so that schools will have a more stable teaching force and additional resources for flexible deployment to strengthen the support for students with SEN.

Grant for Supporting Non-Chinese Speaking Students with Special Educational Needs (NCS-SEN Grant)

- 6.16 To further support non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students with SEN to adapt to school life and make smooth transition through different learning stages, the EDB has provided the NCS-SEN Grant 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, so that they can employ additional teaching assistants to assist teachers in designing activities and teaching materials, procure translation service and provide social and emotional management training, with a view to strengthening the emotional, communication

and social support for the students concerned.

Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO)

6.17 Starting from the 2019/20 school year, all public ordinary schools have been additionally allocated a SENCO post. From the same school year, the EDB has also upgraded the SENCO post to promotion rank in public sector primary and secondary schools with a comparatively large number of students with SEN to enhance the professional capacity of SENCOs in leading the school's student support team in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of the school's integrated education policies and support measures. The EDB arranges the "Professional Training Programme for the Special Educational Needs Coordinators", with a duration of approximately 120 hours, for new-to-role SENCOs. The EDB also regularly organises professional development activities for SENCOs, such as networking activities and sharing sessions, to foster professional exchanges and enhance their professional capacity in supporting integrated education.

School-based Educational Psychology Service

6.18 The "School-based Educational Psychology Service" (SBEPS) has already covered all public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong in the 2016/17 school year. Starting from the 2016/17 school year, the Government has further enhanced the SBEPS by progressively improving the ratio of educational psychologist to school to 1:4 for public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools with comparatively large number of students with SEN.

School-based Speech Therapy Service

6.19 The EDB has all along been allocating additional resources to the public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools to procure School-based Speech Therapy Service (SBSTS) for students with speech and language impairment (SLI). The public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools utilise the LSG and the Enhanced Speech Therapy Grant (ESTG) respectively to procure SBSTS, or form school clusters to employ school-based speech therapists.

6.20 Starting from the 2019/20 school year, the EDB has implemented the Enhanced SBSTS and created school-based speech therapist posts in the public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools by phases. This allows schools to form school clusters to employ school-based speech therapists to provide more stable, sustainable, diverse and intensive services and assist students with speech and language impairment or other students with SEN to develop language and communication abilities.

Teacher Training

- 6.21 At present, the EDB provides serving teachers with structured training courses pitched at three levels, i.e., Basic, Advanced and Thematic (BAT Courses), in catering for students with SEN and training targets are set, with a view to aggregating in each of the public sector primary and secondary schools a critical mass of teachers with professional capacity in catering for students with SEN. In addition to BAT courses, starting from the 2017/18 school year, the EDB has also conducted the “Professional Developmental Programme for Mental Health” which includes elementary training for teachers at large and in-depth training for designated teachers, with a view to raising teachers’ concerns on mental health and enhancing their professional knowledge and capacity to identify and support students with mental health needs. Starting from the 2021/22 school year, this course has been included in the Thematic Courses of the BAT Courses. Besides, the EDB also conducts training activities for teachers from time to time every year, such as thematic talks, seminars, experience sharing sessions and workshops, and organises school networking activities and learning circles, so as to share successful experiences in catering for students with SEN and provide updated information.
- 6.22 Furthermore, the EDB has all along been conducting the “Early Identification and Intervention Programme for Primary One Students with Learning Difficulties” in all public sector primary schools in Hong Kong to help schools establish an identification mechanism and provide them with screening tools and supplementary teaching materials, in order to ensure that identification and support for P1 students with learning difficulties are provided at an early stage. EDB officers will conduct school visits regularly to understand the schools’ support measures and implementation and give professional advice.

Conclusion

- 6.23 Currently, a spectrum of support services is offered by the SWD and the EDB to give appropriate support to children in need, families and schools to facilitate children’s smooth transition to primary education. Key factors summarised from the cases with improvements and data from the study indicate that continuing parental and school support is very crucial.

Chapter 7

Discussions and Recommendations

Introduction

- 7.1 This chapter will examine the connection between the *Persons with Disabilities and Rehabilitation Programme Plan (RPP)* published by the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee in June 2020 and the present study and also analyse key factors which help sustain improvements of children cases, with a view to summarising effective transition and other support services which facilitate smooth transition, and recommending appropriate service modes and support measures for the transition of children with special needs from kindergarten to primary school.

Connection between Current and Future Local Policies

- 7.2 The Rehabilitation Programme adopts the following three guiding principles: “(1) Abiding by the purpose of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD): to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, attach importance to the core values of “autonomy and independence”, “accessibility”, “diversity” etc.; (2) Adopting a life span approach in examining the needs of persons with disabilities in different aspects and stages of their lives; and (3) Facilitating cross-sectoral and inter-departmental collaboration to establish a disability inclusive society for persons with disabilities.” The vision is to “Recognise the diversified developmental needs of persons with disabilities; respect the autonomy and independence of persons with disabilities; establish a disability inclusive society that enables persons with disabilities to develop their capabilities, unleash their potential and contribute to society.” (*Persons with Disabilities and Rehabilitation Programme Plan*, p. 4, 5 & 7)
- 7.3 The RPP points out that “Pre-school children with special needs progressing to Primary One will still need support, adjustment and guidance in respect of the learning, social, emotional and behavioural aspects for adapting to primary school life.” The Government has “establish[ed] a mechanism for information transfer from pre-school rehabilitation service units to primary schools such that children identified as having special needs at kindergartens can receive early attention and appropriate support services when they proceed to Primary One. EDB, SWD, the Hospital Authority (HA) and the Child Assessment Centres (CACs) of the Department of Health (DH) have strengthened their collaboration. Starting from the 2018/19 school year, when children with special needs are admitted from pre-primary institutions/KGs to primary schools, the assessment information and Progress Reports on these children will be provided to the primary schools that they will be attending to facilitate the schools to have early knowledge of their special needs and provide support for their smooth transition to primary school life. Through the Special Education Management Information System and school

visits, EDB will also keep track of the schools' arrangements for supporting the students concerned and offer advice to the schools." (*Persons with Disabilities and Rehabilitation Programme Plan*, p.12)

- 7.4 The RPP points out that "Upon parental consent, the assessment information and/or Progress Reports on children with special needs will be provided to the primary schools that they will be attending before the start of a new school year. RAC has noted that the school Student Support Team will discuss early with parents the students' daily performance, record the students' information in the student support register, formulate support arrangements for the students and record these arrangements in the "Summary of Transition Support for Primary One Student", of which a copy will be provided to parents for their understanding of schools' support arrangements and taking collaborative initiatives. EDB will keep track of the schools' support measures and offer professional advice. Starting from the 2019/20 school year, schools will include Primary One students with assessment information and/or Progress Reports as targets of the "Early Identification and Intervention Programme for Primary One Students with Learning Difficulties (EII Programme)" for following up on their performance. Schools will also observe and identify the learning needs of other Primary One students to ensure that those with learning difficulties can receive early support." (*Persons with Disabilities and Rehabilitation Programme Plan*, p.13)

Evaluation of Children's Improvements and Factors

- 7.5 Children who have shown significant improvements in child developmental domains have stronger parental support, with parents who are more willing to spend time on participating in online speech and occupational therapy as well as homework tutorial with their children. To ensure the smooth transition, teachers shall regularly communicate with parents and keep them informed of the children's progress via a variety of channels such as phone, face to face and online conversations and student handbooks, and establish good collaborative relationship with parents.

Discussions and Recommendations on Transition Support Services

- 7.6 Regarding children's developmental outcomes, development of cognition, language and social cognition etc. among children who have promoted to P1 could still remain at average level despite the school suspension in the 2019/20 school year. According to teachers' evaluation, the children cases generally adapted well after entering P1. They seldom had disruptive behaviours and sometimes even demonstrated prosocial behaviours. Findings also revealed that the children cases have different special educational needs and therefore transition support services should match with their specific needs.
- 7.7 In the aspect of school, the consultancy team considers it essential for class teachers, SENCO, subject teachers and educational psychologist in primary

school to have meetings to evaluate the progress and outcomes of support regularly. OPRS operators can also introduce community services to children and parents with additional needs at an early stage so as to help them adapt to the learning and school life of primary education.

- 7.8 The consultancy team has identified the following effective transition support services and other support services: adaptation training for P1 organised by operators in kindergarten education, SENCOs and SEN support teacher conducting classroom observation at the beginning of P1, providing additional support to needy students (e.g., resources or learning packs for P1 adaptation, additional therapies arranged by parents), continuing parent education, and promoting all-round development of children and providing them with a variety of such learning opportunities, and etc. Primary school transition services mainly include Adaptation Day or Adaptation Week, rehearsal for schools, classrooms, activities and learning routines, provision of individual and group training according to students' needs after classroom observation, and inviting parents to participate in case meetings.
- 7.9 The consultancy team recommends that transition support services for children with special needs can be provided in two phases: (a) during the pre-school period, operators organise on-site adaptation activities or training in various modes for children to facilitate their smooth transition to P1 in September, while KGs/KG-cum-CCCs provide a series of activities for K3 students and their parents to familiarise themselves with the learning, classroom environment and routines of primary schools. (b) in the early transition period, primary schools with reference to contents of the "Comprehensive Development Progress Report for Pre-school Children", learn more about the special educational needs of the children, provide important information about the relevant support measures and necessary assistive equipment for the children, and formulate preventive measures and adaptation strategies to cope with the possible learning, social, emotional and behavioural problems, etc. so as to foster a smooth transition from kindergarten to primary school for the benefits of students, teachers and parents. If needed, schools may also contact the service operators for professional communication according to the correspondence information in the report.
- 7.10 The provision of continuous parent support and good home-school communication, parent consultation and support on individual or small group basis as well as introducing community resources to parents can help parents build up parenting efficacy, reduce stress and negative emotions, enhance their mental health and foster children's positive and all-round development. For parents who are in dire need of support in the aspect of family relation, their cases can be referred to the Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) in the locality, in addition to the school social worker. IFSCs will follow up the family cases.
- 7.11 The consultancy team recommends that more professional training for primary school teachers in the form of seminars and workshops can be provided and the component of practical skills and approaches can be strengthened. Teachers can be provided with opportunities to apply and practise the strategies acquired and receive instant feedback from professionals, with a view to improving teachers' teaching skills and enhancing their self-confidence in supporting students with SEN.

7.12 The provision of transition support services for children with special needs should continue to adopt a tripartite cooperation model in collaboration with families, schools and communities. This will allow the multi-disciplinary professional team comprising KGs/KG-cum-CCCs, service operator and SST of primary school to provide timely support for children and parents before and after their promotion to primary school in the aspects of adaptation to primary school learning as well as development and growth in all domains so that children can fully realise their potential and develop their abilities, in line with the guiding principles and directions stipulated in “Persons with Disabilities and Rehabilitation Programme Plan” published by the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee in June 2020.

Chapter 8

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