

Brief on the Enhanced School Complaint Management Arrangements

Background

The Education Ordinance has authorised the Incorporated Management Committees (IMCs) / School Management Committees (SMCs) with the power and responsibility in managing schools. Therefore, schools should formulate their school-based mechanisms and procedures for administering school operation, including the handling of school-related complaints. Under the spirit of school-based management, parents, students and members of the public should express their views (including complaints) and improvement measures to the school concerned direct for the betterment of school development.

2. In connection with the above, the Education Bureau (EDB) set up the Ad Hoc Committee on Complaints Handling in Schools (the Committee) in September 2011 [renamed as Committee on Enhancement of Complaint Management in Schools in September 2013] to make recommendation on how to enhance the school complaint handling procedures. Membership list of the Committee is at [Annex 1](#).

3. Based on the recommendation of the Committee, three phases of pilot project were launched between the 2012/13 and 2014/15 school years to help the participating schools to establish a fair, just and transparent mechanism, namely the “Enhanced School Complaint Management Arrangements” (the Enhanced Arrangements), for handling complaints relating to their daily operation and internal affairs lodged by parents, students or members of the public.

4. In view of the positive evaluation results of the pilot project, the Enhanced Arrangements is fully implemented in all public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools with effect from 1 September 2017. As all the relevant tasks were completed, the Committee was dissolved in February 2018.

Essence of the Enhanced Arrangements

5. Premised on the spirit of school-based management, the Enhanced Arrangements are not just streamlining the complaints handling procedures with the aim of helping schools to timely and directly respond to the views or complaints they receive day-to-day, but also establishing the good communication culture and channels with their stakeholders as well as enhancing the complaint handling skills of their staff. Among others, the essence of the Enhanced Arrangements includes:

- ◆ **Ensuring fair and open handling of complaints from parents, students and members of the public**

Schools are required to set up their school-based complaint handling mechanism and procedures in consultation with the stakeholders (including members of the School Sponsoring Bodies and IMCs / SMCs, staff and parents). The school-based complaint handling mechanisms and procedures have to be approved by the IMCs/SMCs and be arranged to keep all staff, parents and students well-informed through appropriate channels, such as circulars, staff meetings, parent-teacher association, school website, etc. Schools should conduct regular review of their school-based complaint handling mechanisms and procedures for enhancement.

- ◆ **Defining clearly the roles and responsibilities of schools and EDB in the handling of school-related complaints**

Schools are responsible for handling the complaints relating to their daily operations and internal affairs lodged by parents, students or members of the public in accordance with their school-based complaint handling mechanisms and procedures. Nevertheless, EDB would intervene and conduct direct investigation in any time if the cases involve serious incidents such as maladministration of the school authorities and students' safety, etc.

EDB is undertaking to handle other types of school-related complaints, including those (i) relating to the Education Ordinance, education policies and services directly provided by EDB; (ii) referred by other organisations (such as Chief Executive Office, Legislative Council, Equal Opportunity Commission, District Council or government departments, etc.); and (iii) lodged by school staffs, etc.

- ◆ **Setting up an independent mechanism to review school-related complaints**

To ensure proper and just handling of school-based complaints from parents, students or members of the public by the schools, EDB has set up a Panel of Review Boards on School Complaints in January 2013, which comprises independent members from both the education and non-education sectors. If complainant or related

parties could provide substantial justifications or new evidence, they may apply for an independent review of the case concerned. However, the case must have already gone through the school-based complaint handling mechanisms and procedures.

Education Bureau

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