

## Diocesan Boys' School

### Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

#### **Guiding principles for supporting students with SEN**

A *Whole School Approach* is adopted to support students with SEN. The whole school approach entails three interconnected dimensions, namely school policies, culture and practices, and aims to reach a *Whole School Consensus* so that all students can show their acceptance of and respect towards those students with SEN and all teachers can acknowledge their responsibility to and support for those students with SEN. With participation and collaboration among the school administration (the administrative practices and arrangement), the teachers (the professional knowledge of various SENs and the variety of teaching approaches) and the students (the positive behaviours and attitudes), students with SEN can receive meaningful and equitable access to curriculum. This enhances their academic and social skills, self-esteem and positive relationships with others in the school as well as in the wider community (IBO, 2010).

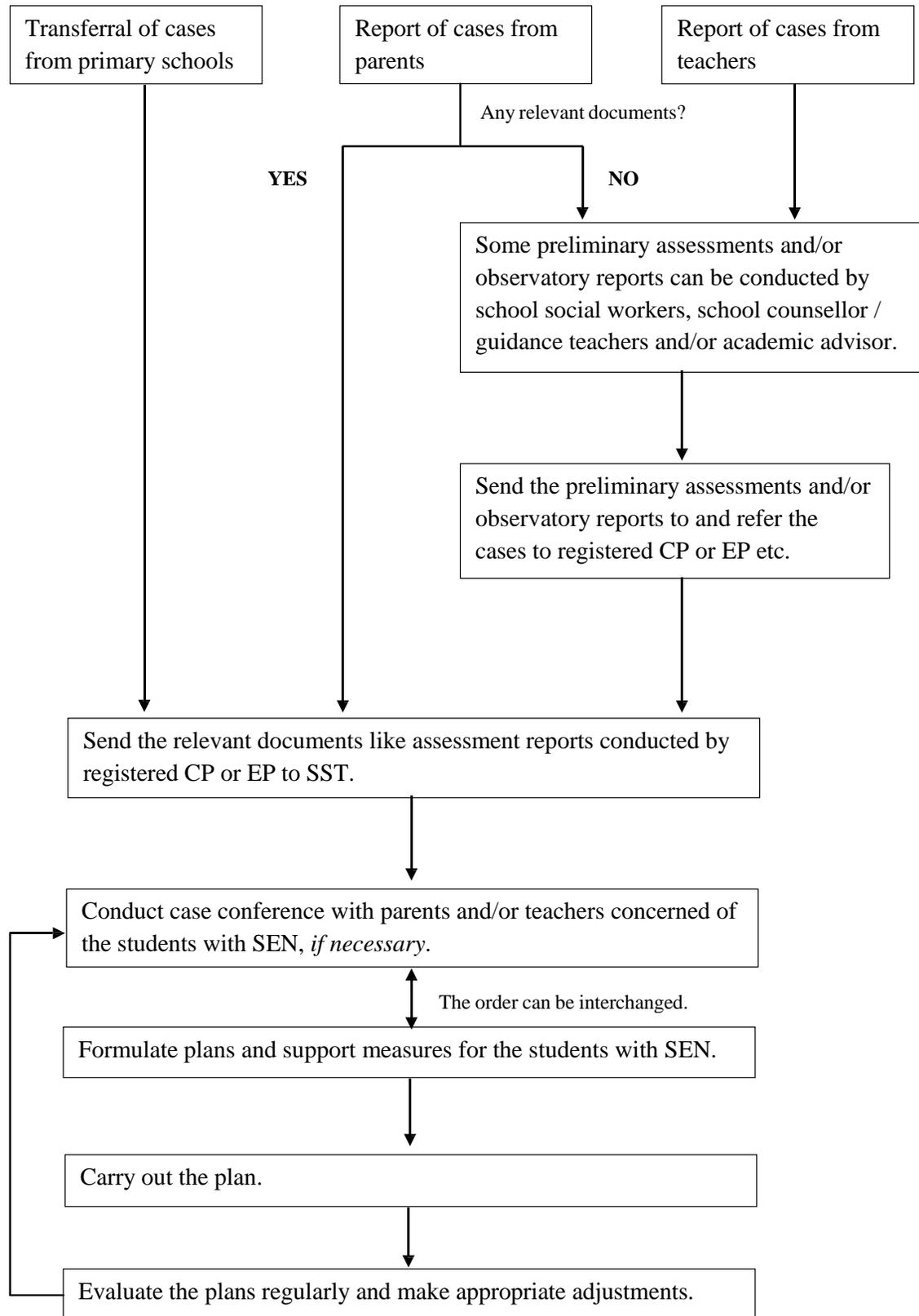
#### **Identification of and strategies for supporting students with SEN**

A *Student Support Team* (SST) has been set up to plan, implement and review support services for students with SEN. The SST consists of the Headmaster, Dean(s), class teachers and the academic advisors of students with SEN, as well as school counsellors / guidance teachers and school social workers. If necessary, the SST may invite parents and EDB support officers/specialists to attend relevant meetings.

The school will arrange for *teachers to receive specific training* geared toward the particular SENs of students in the school. The school will also organize general *training courses* geared towards the particular SENs of students in the school.

The following flowchart shows the procedure for identifying and handling students with SEN.

## PROCEDURE FOR IDENTIFYING AND HANDLING STUDENTS WITH SEN



### **Transferral of cases from primary schools**

Subject to parental consent to the transfer of SEN information, hard copies of the relevant documents of those P6 students with SEN (e.g. medical reports, assessment reports, succinct learning records and teaching strategy suggestions, etc.), together with the duly signed parental consent form, will be received by the school before mid-August.

### **Report of cases from parents**

Hard copies of the relevant documents relating to their sons (e.g. medical reports, assessment reports, succinct learning records and teaching strategy suggestions, etc.) should be submitted to the school for record-keeping.

If relevant documents are not provided, the school social worker, the school counsellor / guidance teachers or the academic advisor will conduct a preliminary assessment of the reported students. If it is deemed necessary after the preliminary assessment, the school will refer students suspected of SEN to a clinical psychologist (CP), an educational psychologist (EP), a psychiatrist, an ophthalmologist, an audiologist, or a speech therapist, as appropriate, for further assessment and diagnosis. The school may subsidize the fees charged by the specialist depending on the urgency of the case and/or the financial status of the student's family.

### **Report of cases from teachers**

If teachers suspect students of having SEN, the school social worker, the school counsellor / guidance teachers or the academic advisor or the Dean of Students should be informed as soon as possible.

The school social worker, the school counsellor or the academic advisor will conduct a preliminary assessment of the reported students. If it is deemed necessary after the preliminary assessment, the school will refer students suspected of SEN to a clinical psychologist (CP), an educational psychologist (EP), a psychiatrist, an ophthalmologist, an audiologist, or a speech therapist, as appropriate, for further assessment and diagnosis. The school may subsidize the fees charged by the specialist depending on the urgency of the case and/or the financial status of the student's family.

If the confirms the case, the parents concerned will be required to declare whether or not they agree to disclose the SEN cases of their sons to their son's teachers and any other relevant parties.

The SST will process the documents related to students identified as having SENs. Depending on whether or not the concerned parents agree to disclose the SEN cases of their sons to the concerned teachers and parties, SST will formulate a plan of support measures for each of the students with SEN. SST will conduct regular evaluations on the plans for SEN students and make appropriate adjustments if deemed necessary.

### **Assessment of SEN students**

When a student has been identified as having SENs, the IB Coordinator will consider whether an application should be made to the IBO under the Request for Inclusive Assessment Arrangements policy. In reaching his decision, the IB Coordinator will take advice from the SST and other relevant parties, such as the student's academic advisor. If a decision is made to submit a request to the IBO, the IB Coordinator, using the information regarding the student's SENs that is held on file, will process that request. Parental consent will be sought before any such application is made.

### **Approach to teaching SEN students**

Teachers who have been made aware of the presence of SEN students in their classes should ensure that their classroom provides an inclusive environment that is effective, friendly and welcoming, as well as healthy and protective (IBO 2010).

In order to ensure that SEN students are fully included in classes, teachers should differentiate appropriately, ensuring that they are supported so that they can make the most of the learning opportunities provided (IBO 2010).

Guidance on common forms of SEN and ways to address the needs of students with those SENs is provided in the following extract from

The "*Operation Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education*" prepared by the Education Bureau (EDB) in May 2010 (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition).

Further guidance on differentiation to meet the needs of SEN students will be provided through training courses as the need arises (see above).

#### **1. Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)**

- (a) SpLD in reading and writing (also known as dyslexia) is the most common type of SpLD.
- (b) Despite having normal intelligence and having received formal instructions, students with SpLD are unable to read, spell and dictate words accurately and fluently.
- (c) Generally speaking, students with SpLD display the following characteristics:
- do better in oral than written expression;
  - cannot read with fluency; mispronounce words or forget the pronunciation;
  - cannot spell words even after making considerable effort;
  - omit or add unnecessary strokes to the Chinese characters when copying;
  - reverse letters or characters or write the “mirror images” of letters or characters; and
  - tire easily and need to make greater effort in completing reading and writing assignments.
- (d) In supporting students with SpLD, teachers are advised to adopt diversified teaching strategies such as:
- break tasks into small steps to suit the pace and learning capabilities of the student;
  - adopt the multi-sensory approach such as highlighting certain parts or strokes of words with coloured pens;
  - structure the tasks and grade the curriculum materials in accordance with the level of difficulty;
  - teach students various learning skills such as identifying salient points, getting to know the key words, etc.;
  - help students develop the habit of reading, such as by making arrangements for daily/weekly paired-reading sessions;
  - strengthen their writing ability by introducing the “6 Ws” method, using mind-mapping, spidergrams, flowcharts and tree diagrams, etc.;
  - adjust the level of difficulty of the learning materials such as by replacing difficult words with simpler ones; help students develop the habit of self-review in order to reduce writing errors;
  - provide assessment accommodation; reduce the amount of materials for dictation, inform students of the marking scheme in advance, allow extra time for tests and examinations etc.;
  - administer homework accommodation, e.g. assign appropriate homework in accordance with the student’s ability, reduce assignments which require a lot of copying, enlarge the writing grid; and

- encourage the use of computers and information technology to facilitate students' learning such as using word processing to replace pen and paper.

## 2. **Intellectual Disability**

- (a) Students with intellectual disability have marked disabilities in cognitive functioning in the following areas:
  - weak social skills.
- (b) In supporting students with intellectual disability, teachers should focus on essential life skills, and employ diversified teaching strategies to enhance the effectiveness of instruction. For example, they may use real objects and gestures as aids to supplement verbal instructions, or provide visual cues to facilitate students' understanding of abstract concepts etc., so that these students can participate in learning in the regular classroom.

## 3. **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**

- (a) Usually, children display autistic symptoms before the age of three. These children show marked disabilities in social development, language communication and behaviour adjustment.
- (b) Social development: these children live in their own world. They are weak in interpreting verbal messages and facial expressions and do not consider things from other people's perspective. Therefore, it is necessary to support them in cultivating friendship with their peers and grasping simple rules of social interactions.
- (c) Language communication: they are slow in verbal development and their speech is monotonous, repetitive or echolalic. Thus the teacher should give them simple, explicit and direct instructions and explain every step of the learning task so that the students can follow easily;
- (d) Behaviour adjustment: these students often insist on following certain routines, e.g. taking buses of the same route or taking the same seat, or refusing to change certain daily habits. Teachers can assist them to accept changes, e.g. by informing them of changes well in advance to prevent undue anxiety. Rehearsals for the change can also be arranged as required.
- (e) Since students with autism usually need clear instructions for accomplishing tasks, the teachers can help by providing them with an overview of the procedures.

- (f) With regard to their difficulty in processing instructions simultaneously, it is better to give them one instruction at a time. Symbols and pictures can also be used to enhance their understanding of the instructions.

#### 4. **Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)**

- (a) Students with ADHD have three characteristics:
- Inattention: They are often distracted by irrelevant signs and sounds. They also fail to work in a systematic way or pay attention to details. Moreover, they often make careless mistakes;
  - Hyperactivity: They cannot remain seated in class and usually keep fidgeting or fiddling with objects around them; and
  - Impulsivity: They lack patience, are impulsive and often act without considering the consequences. They blurt out answers before the questions are completed. Moreover, they often interrupt others, cannot remain in line with the queue, and are unable to follow through the instructions.
- (b) In teaching these students, teachers:
- may let them sit in the front row or an appropriate place where teacher could easily attend to them, and remind them to keep their desks tidy so as to minimize the source of distraction;
  - should give clear and specific instructions and give one instruction at a time; repeat the instructions if necessary so as to ensure students' reception and understanding;
  - may address the students by their names before speaking to them in order to establish eye-contact and draw their attention; may ask the students to repeat the salient points of the instructions in order to ensure that they understand the instructions;
  - may make prior behavioural goal and agreement with the students on the visual cues in class to avoid interruption to the teaching. For example, the teacher may show a yellow card for warning, or award the students with a star-shaped sticker for good behaviour;
  - may ask the students to run an errand so as to allow a break from remaining in seat for too long. These can take the form of asking the students to distribute worksheets, exercise books, etc., or invite the students to help the teacher when using the computer or showing slides during the lesson;
  - establish clear-cut rules and award schemes for guiding the behaviour of the students,
  - make good use of peer influence: arrange the students to sit next to a conscientious classmate who may remind the students to be attentive when necessary;

- help the students develop self-control by recording the number of times the students have acted impulsively, evaluating their own ways of solving problems;
- may teach emotion management skills, e.g. teaching the students to take a deep breath when getting angry, count numbers in descending order, or stop and think, etc.;
- avoid direct conflict with the students when they lose their temper; make prior agreement with the students that whenever they are about to throw tantrums, they can go to the corner or leave the classroom in order to calm down; the teacher should reason with the students only after they have calmed down; and
- keep in close contact with the students' parents for consistent behaviour management at home and school; and monitor the students' reaction to medication so that the parents can provide feedback to the doctor.

## 5. **Physical Disability**

- (a) Cerebral palsy, epilepsy, spina bifida, muscular dystrophy and developmental co-ordination disorder are common types of physical disabilities which affect students' motor co-ordination, speech, writing and daily activities.
- (b) Schools may help these students by:
  - providing lifts, toilets and wheelchair access;
  - providing more space for them to move around, to park their wheelchairs and place their crutches; and
  - helping them carry heavy objects or providing them with appropriate assistive tools.

## 6. **Visual Impairment (VI)**

- (a) Visual impairment refers to the visual acuity, of 6/18 or below, taking measurement from the eye with better vision upon wearing spectacles or after refractive correction surgery.
- (b) Visual impairment can be classified as mild low vision, moderate low vision, severe low vision or total loss of vision.
- (c) Schools should take into account that:
  - students with VI have weak perception of lighting, distance, volume and colour. Spacing and lighting condition of a classroom should be adjusted according to the degree of VI of the students. Generally speaking, classrooms with light-coloured walls and floor, matched with darker coloured doors, chairs, desks and handrails, will be preferred.

- use doors with various colour tones to differentiate rooms with different functions, such as classrooms, laboratories and washrooms;
- tactile guide paths, Braille signs and hazard warning tiles should be installed wherever appropriate to establish a barrier-free school environment;
- allow students to use assistive tools for students with VI, including Braille book, audio tapes, magnifying glass, word magnifier and computer, etc. in accordance with the students' residual visual functions;
- provide a seat that facilitates entrance or exit of the classroom and use of assistive tools for students with VI;
- provide adjustable inclining desktops and large desktops;
- students with VI should be notified of any changes in the setting of the classrooms beforehand, or inform them as soon as possible.

## 7. **Hearing Impairment (HI)**

- (a) Students There are three major types of hearing impairment, namely conductive, sensorineural, and mixed.
- (b) The level of impairment can be further classified into mild, moderate, moderately severe, severe and profound.
- (c) Characteristics of students with HI are as follows:
  - when conversing in a noisy environment or listening to someone who speaks softly, they cannot fully comprehend the contents of the conversations;
  - they may not hear the speakers clearly during classroom discussions if the speakers are not directly within sight;
  - they may find it difficult to listen to audio-tapes or watch television programmes which have no subtitles; and
  - without the hearing aids, they may only hear conversations within close distance and they need to rely on lip-reading.
- (d) For daily contact with these students:
  - teachers should try to stand and speak in front of the student so as to provide visual cues like lip-reading, facial expression and gestures. It is not necessary for teachers to raise their voice, slow down the speech or exaggerate the lip movements;
  - since the students may not have the confidence to raise questions for fear of inaccurate pronunciation or weak expressive skills, the teacher should help them improve their self image, enhance their social skills, grasp effective learning techniques, develop the habit of reading and writing; and

- teachers may provide the students with learning materials before the lesson, so that they may have a better grasp of the contents beforehand.

## 8. **Speech and Language Impairment (SLI)**

- (a) For daily contact with these students, there are four common types of speech and language difficulties:
- Defective articulation: substitution or omission of sound s or other error patterns that cause unclear speech. For example, “seem” is mispronounced as “deem”, and “tall” as “call”, etc;
  - Language problems: inability to understand and/or use language at an age-appropriate level;
  - Fluency problems (commonly known as stuttering): difficulty in initiation of speech or interruption of speech flow; and
  - Voice problems: including hoarseness, loss of voice, inappropriate pitch or volume control, hypernasality or hyponasality during speech acts.
- (b) In helping students with SLI, teachers should note that:
- other students should not be allowed to laugh at these students’ speech and language problems;
  - when students misarticulate certain sounds, teachers may demonstrate the correct pronunciation and encourage them to imitate;
  - for students with difficulties in organizing and expressing their thoughts, teachers may use story grammar (e.g. time, characters, place, initiating events, internal response, attempt, consequence and reaction) or guiding questions to enhance their expressive skills; and
  - for students with fluency problems, teachers should not hurry the students.

IBO (2010, August). Learning diversity in the International Baccalaureate programmes : Special educational needs within the International Baccalaureate programmes [PDF]. Retrieved from [http://www.istafrica.com/uploaded/documents/WeeklyBulletin/Learning\\_diversity\\_in\\_IB\\_programmes\\_2010.pdf](http://www.istafrica.com/uploaded/documents/WeeklyBulletin/Learning_diversity_in_IB_programmes_2010.pdf)