

**For discussion on
20 June 2008**

Sexual Minorities Forum

**EDB's Policy and Guidelines in handling matters related to
Sexual Orientation in Schools and Expulsion of Students**

Purpose

This paper seeks to brief members on EDB's Policy and Guidelines in handling matters related to sexual orientation in schools and expulsion of students.

EDB's Policy Related to Expulsion of Students

2 EDB advises schools to adopt a Whole School Approach in handling cases regarding expulsion or suspension of students as practices such as expulsion or suspension from class are considered to be educationally undesirable, and defeats the purpose of providing schools with various resources to offer diversified and quality education to cater for children of different abilities and aptitudes. Students in question should be allowed to continue normal schooling, pending the outcome of any investigation into the cause and, if necessary, he/she should be referred for professional advice and follow up first. So far, EDB has not received any reports of cases concerning expulsion of students due to sexual orientation.

3 EDB has issued clear guidelines to advise schools from time to time to take appropriate measures before contemplating expulsion or suspension of students, and when taking such action, to comply with the procedures as stipulated in the respective Codes of Aid. Guidelines have been issued to all schools under EDB Circular No. 87/1997 (Annex 1) regarding Expulsion and Suspension of students from school and EDB Circular No. 11/2006 on Upholding students' right to Education (Annex 2) and can be found at the EDB homepage <http://www.edb.gov.hk>.

EDB's Policy and Measures Related to Sexual Orientation in Schools

4. It has always been EDB's policy to develop students' values and attitudes in relation to equality, anti-discrimination, rights to life, respect for all peoples within the existing curricular through the learning and teaching of Key Learning Areas(KLAs)/ subjects at various Key Stages, such as the subject General Studies at Primary level; the Personal, Social and Humanities Education KLA at Secondary level and in the core subject Liberal Studies under the New Senior Secondary Curriculum to be implemented from 2009 onwards. While the topic on sexual orientation and its elements will be embedded in the various KLAs/subjects, it would specifically be dealt with in the Ethics and Religious Education in the senior secondary curriculum.

5. Furthermore, relevant seminars are organized by EDB and in partnership with the non-Government organizations to empower teachers' competency in teaching related topics in schools and handling students' problems associated with these. Resource materials such as Education Television Programmes (ETV), on "Equality for the New Generation (平等新一代)" and "Equality for Everybody (人人平等)" were also developed with relevant information and teaching resources uploaded to the web for teachers' reference and adoption.

Education Bureau
June 2008

24 December 1997

EDB Circular No. 87/1997

**(Formerly referred as EMB Circular No. 87/1997
Formerly referred as Administration Circular No. 87/97)**

Expulsion and Suspension of Pupils

[Note : This circular should be read by -

- (A) Supervisors/Heads of all Aided Primary and Secondary Schools, Special Schools, Practical Schools, Skills Opportunity Schools, Caput Schools and Private Independent Schools in the Bought Place Scheme - for necessary action
- (B) (i) Supervisors/Heads of Private Primary and Secondary Schools, ESF Schools, DSS Schools; and
(ii) Heads of Sections/Government Primary and Secondary Schools
- for information]

This circular advises schools on the appropriate measures to be taken before contemplating expulsion or suspension of pupils. It should be read in conjunction with [EMBC No. 31/2003](#) dated 30 October 2003 on "Enforcement of Universal Basic Education".

2. The Education Department disapproves practices of some schools in advising pupils to leave school voluntarily and is of the view that such practices are educationally undesirable, and defeat the purposes of providing schools with various resources to promote education for all abilities and to provide free and compulsory education opportunities for all children, including problem children, up to junior secondary level. It is also noted that some parents who have been advised to withdraw their children from schools may not realize that they have the right to refuse such advice.

3. Heads of schools are therefore reminded

- (a) that they should admit pupils referred by the Director of Education to fill vacant places;

- (b) that they should not oblige their pupils to leave school or withdraw 'voluntarily'. In case where a parent genuinely wishes to withdraw the pupil, the school should inform the District Education Officer concerned; and
- (c) that they should provide maximum possible guidance and counselling services to pupils to help them solve their learning and behaviour problems.

4. Heads of schools are requested to observe the following guidelines before contemplating expulsion or suspension of pupils from school :

(a) Expulsion of Pupils

Expulsion of pupils from school should not be instituted unless it is absolutely necessary and when such an action has to be taken, the provisions in the Codes of Aid should be complied with. Pupils must not be expelled solely on the ground that they are academically weak. Before contemplating expulsion of pupils, schools are advised to observe as far as possible the attached Flowchart for Handling Pupils with Behavioural Difficulties in Schools (Annex I).

(b) Suspension of Pupils

The Education Department does not consider suspension from school a generally appropriate way to treat a misbehaved pupil. On the contrary, it is feared that prolonged or frequent suspension from school would have an adverse effect on the development of the pupil and possibly create more opportunities for further misbehaviour or learning difficulties. Under most circumstances, the pupil in question should be allowed to continue normal schooling, pending the outcome of any investigation into the cause of his misbehaviour by the school and, if necessary, he should be referred for professional advice. Schools are therefore advised not to suspend pupils from school except under very special circumstances, and when taking such an action, to comply with the procedures provided in the Codes of Aid.

It is noted that in many schools, pupils who have misbehaved badly in class are ordered to withdraw from normal classes for a short period of time to cool off. This measure has proved to be useful in the adjustment of a pupil's behaviour. Schools should therefore consider whenever possible suspension from class for a

short period in place of suspension from school. Pupils on suspension from class should receive proper supervision and counselling within the school premises.

(c) Adoption of the Whole School Approach to Guidance and Discipline in Schools

The main reason for misbehaving is learning or adjustment difficulties in schools. As a preventive measure, schools are encouraged to adopt the Whole School Approach to guidance and discipline, whereby all teachers in a school should participate actively in assisting pupils to resolve their problems. Teachers should be made aware of the pastoral care system in the school and should participate fully in developing a healthy and positive ethos. The Guidance Teacher Resource Book and Guidelines on Whole School Approach to Guidance (Part I & Part II) for both primary and secondary schools published by the Services Division of this Department would provide good material for reference.

(d) Professional Advice on Counselling and Guidance

Schools should also familiarize themselves with various feasible ways of handling problem pupils who might require professional advice through formal and informal communication with one another and with external services agencies listed at Annex II, including the Services Division of this Department (Annex III). In the event of serious delinquent behaviour of pupils, Police Community Relations Officers of the Hong Kong Police Force should be involved.

5. The District Education Officers/Inspectors (Special Schools Administration) will continue to monitor closely all cases of expulsion and suspension. Heads of schools are requested to keep a record of such cases should enquiries be required at a later date.

6. Administration Circular No.69/95 dated 6 September 1995 is hereby cancelled.

H F LEE
for Director of Education

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FLOW CHART FOR HANDLING PUPILS WITH BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES IN SCHOOLS

Pupil exhibits behavioural difficulties

Handling by class teacher / guidance teacher/
discipline master / deputy head / school head #

improvement

Support by	
SSW in secondary school	SGO/SGT in primary school

improvement

Service of EC/EP

Support to Pupil

- Individual assessment/treatment
- Group treatment

Support to school

- Case conference
- Advice & consultation

Placement Service

- Ordinary school placement by DEO
- Placement in school for maladjusted children by SR&P
- Practical school / SOS placement by SR&P
- Home/Hostel placement by SWD

Service of SWD/NGO

- Family service
- Comprehensive Social Security Scheme
- Care & Protection, etc.

Pupil continues to study in the school with/without support

improvement

(if successfully placed)

- Intensive remedial service
- Adjustment programme

Pupil is to be followed up by SSW / SGO / SGT of the new school or SWr of the new home / hostel

improvement

Legend

DEO	District Education Officer	SOS	Skills Opportunity School
EC	Educational Counsellor	SR&P	Screening, Referral & Placement
ED	Education Department		Sub-section of the Services Division, ED.
EP	Educational Psychologist		
NGO	Non-governmental Organization	SSW	School Social Worker
SGO	Student Guidance Officer	SWD	Social Welfare Department
SGT	Student Guidance Teacher	SWr	Social Worker

Note : Parental consent / support should be sought throughout the process.
Consult / Report to the Police as and when necessary.

List of Serving Agencies

List of Agencies	Telephone No.	Address
Asbury Village Community Centre of Methodist Church	2420 1073	1 Sheung Kok Street, Tai Wo Hau, Kwai Chung
Boys' & Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong	2527 9121	3 Lockhart Road, Wan Chai
Caritas - Hong Kong	2524 2071	2 Caine road, Caritas House
Chinese Y.M.C.A.	2540 0526	51 Bridges Street, Sheung Wan 51
Christian Family Service Centre	2750 2337	No.107, Block 4, Upper Ngau Tau Kok Estate 107
Evangelical Lutheran Church Social Service	2710 8313	1/F, Lutheran Building, 50A, Waterloo Road 50A1
Hong Kong Christian Service	2389 4242	School Social Work Temporary Office, 5 Chui Ping Road, Kwun Tong 5
Hong Kong Children & Youth Services	2366 7272	6/F, 23 Chatham Road South 236

Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups	2395 0161	4/F, 54 Bedford Road, Tai Kok Tsui 54
Hong Kong Family Welfare Society	2527 3171	Rm 1003, Duke of Winsor Soc Serv Bldg, 15 Hennessy Road, Wan Chai 15 1003
Hong Kong Lutheran Social Service	2711 9131	89 Chung Hau Street, Homantin 89
Hong Kong Y.W.C.A.	2522 3101	1 Macdonnell Road
International Social Service	2834 6863	6/F, Southorn Centre, 130 Hennessy Road, Wan Chai 1306
Methodist Epworth Village Community Centre	2558 0108	100 Chai Wan Road, Chai Wan 100
St. James' Settlement	2574 5201	85 Stone Nullah Lane, Wan Chai 85
Social Welfare Department	2892 5271	7-9/F, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai 213
Yang Memorial Social Service Centre	2761 1860	Rm 401-404, Lai Man House, Oi Man Estate, Homantin 401-404

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**List of Supportive Services to Schools to Help Pupils with
Behavioural Problems Provided by Services Division, Education Department**

<u>Supportive Services</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>Responsible Unit/Section</u>	<u>Tel. No.</u>	<u>Address</u>
A. On-site Support				
1. Student Guidance Scheme*	Provision of guidance service to primary schools and dropout students within compulsory school age.	Student Guidance Section	2892 6434	10/F, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, H.K.
		Non-attendance Cases Team	2520 0394	Rm 803, 8/F, Tai Sang Commercial Building, 24-34 Hennessy Road, Wan Chai, H.K.
2. Crisis Intervention Service	Service provided for cases of emergency, such as student suicides. Schools can contact the Psychological Services sections by telephone for advice on the management methods.	Psychological Services Section	2714 7852	6 Perth Street, Homantin, Kln.
3. Advisory Service	Provision of advisory support and advice to heads and teachers of ordinary schools on helping pupils with learning difficulties.	Special Education Inspectorate Unit, Special Education Inspectorate & Placement Section	2892 6415	10/F, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, H.K.

B. Off-site Support

4.	Adjustment Programmes	Provision of additional support and guidance to primary and junior secondary pupils with emotional or behavioural problems outside normal school hours.	Resource Teaching Unit	2892 6414	10/F, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, H.K.
				2760 0659	Perth Street Special Education Services Centre, 6 Perth Street, Homantin, Kln.
5.	Special Schools for Maladjusted and Socially Deprived Children	Schools cater for maladjusted and socially deprived children aged 8:00 - 15:11 years.	Administration of Special Schools Unit	2892 6420	10/F, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, H.K.
6.	Special education services including :				
i	advisory service	see (3) above	Special Education Inspectorate and Special Education Services Centres	2892 6415	10/F, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, H.K.
ii	audiological service	Provision of diagnostic assessment of hearing impairment and educational remedial services for hearing-impaired children.	on Island,	2561 3441	3/F, 323 Java Road, H.K.
			in Kowloon	2760 6102	6 Perth Street, Homantin, Kln.
iii	teaching resources	Provide references on teaching resources for special schools and special education classes.	and the New Territories	2307 6251	77, Lai Cho Road, Kwai Chung.

iv	examination service	Provision of supportive service to enable handicapped candidates to sit for public examinations.
v	psychological service	Provision of assessment services and follow-up treatment to children with learning and/or behavioural difficulties by a team of professional staff.
vi	referral and placement service	Referral of children with special educational needs to Non-governmental organisations or government departments for special education services & educational placement of handicapped children to special schools or special education classes.
vii	research service	Research studies on issues relating to the norming of tests and special education provisions by the Psychological Services sections.
viii	screening service	Identification of primary school pupils with problems of hearing, eye-sight, speech and learning with a view to providing follow-up assessment and educational treatment services.

ix	resource teaching service	see items 4 above.
x	training service	Provision of short-term training opportunities for special education personnel in the form of seminars, workshops and short courses.
xi	speech therapy service	Provision of diagnostic assessment and remedial treatment programmes for speech and/or language impaired children.

- * The Student Guidance Scheme serves primary school pupils only. For secondary school pupils, there is the School Social Work Scheme whereby school social workers from the Social Welfare Department or non-governmental organisations visit secondary schools regularly to provide counselling service to pupils

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27 October 2006

Education Bureau Circular No. 11/2006
(Formerly referred as EMB Circular No.11/2006)

Upholding Students' Right to Education

[Note : This circular should be read by

- (a) Heads of all Primary and Secondary Schools, excluding ESF and International Schools, for necessary action; and
- (b) Heads of Sections for information.]

SUMMARY

This circular reminds schools of the importance of upholding students' right to education. Schools have to reinforce and step up measures for assuring students' regular attendance and to follow strictly the requirements of reporting to the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) all student dropouts and departures, regardless of their age and class level. Schools are also required to admit dropouts who are ready for schooling, as long as there are existing vacancies.

BACKGROUND

2. Students admitted to the primary and secondary levels should normally be allowed to complete their education in the same school. Heads of schools have a fundamental responsibility to uphold students' right to education.

3. The Government provides 9-year free and universal basic education to children aged between 6 and 15. As stipulated under Sections 74 and 78 of the Education Ordinance (Cap 279)^{Note 1}, parents have the legal responsibility to ensure that their children within these ages attend schools regularly. Schools, as providers of formal

^{Note 1} Section 74 of the Education Ordinance (Cap 279) empowers the Permanent Secretary of the Education and Manpower to issue attendance orders to parents who fail to send their children to school without reasonable excuses. Section 78 stipulates that any parent, who without reasonable excuses, fails to comply with an attendance order shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine at Level 3 (\$10,000) and to imprisonment for 3 months.

basic education to students, should share the responsibility of motivating students to learn through meaningful school activities and laying down a clear policy on school attendance, which should be clearly communicated to students, parents, teachers and the Student Guidance Officer (SGO) / Student Guidance Teacher (SGT) / Student Guidance Personnel (SGP) / School Social Worker (SSW) and effectively implemented.

4. For students aged 15 or above, it is also our policy that those who are capable and willing to pursue further studies after Secondary 3 should be provided with such opportunities. Furthermore, with the implementation of the new academic structure for senior secondary education in the 2009/10 school year (and the current Secondary 1 students being the first cohort under the new academic structure), all students should, under normal circumstances, be able to complete six years of secondary education in the same school.

5. In view of the above, all schools should refrain from expelling students or advising students to leave school voluntarily, as such practices are educationally undesirable and defeat the purpose of providing schools with various resources to offer diversified and quality education to cater for children of different abilities and aptitudes.

DETAILS

Reinforcing and Stepping up Measures to Foster Students' Regular Attendance

(a) Formulation of school policy on student attendance

6. It is important for schools to develop an appropriate school policy relating to student attendance. The school policy should aim at developing students' regular attendance habits as well as inculcating a positive attitude and value towards schooling. A mechanism should be in place for timely and proper intervention from teachers in collaboration with SGO / SGT / SGP / SSW in schools or social / youth work organizations in the community so that appropriate support can be provided to students at risk for preventing them from departing schools pre-maturely. Clear procedures and guidelines should be formulated for different school personnel to follow.

(b) Strategies to be adopted under the school policy on student attendance

7. We recommend schools to incorporate the following strategies in formulating

the school policy on student attendance:

- (i) Since unsatisfactory academic performance is one of the pre-dominant causes of truancy and dropout, it is important for schools to have a **balanced curriculum and well-designed teaching and learning strategies** to cater for the learning needs of students with different abilities and aptitudes. Besides, under the new senior secondary academic structure, schools are required to provide a broad and balanced curriculum with the intention that all students, regardless of their interests and abilities, could receive senior secondary education before progressing to further study, training or work.
- (ii) **Cross-disciplinary collaboration is important.** Students with behavioral problems have stronger tendency to become dropouts, and they often have difficulties in complying with school rules and regulations. Schools should integrate the student guidance and discipline work to promote whole person development and rule-abiding behaviors among students. Teachers and SGO / SGT / SGP in primary schools and SSW in secondary schools should work together in handling students at risk / marginal dropouts.
- (iii) **A holistic early intervention approach** should be in place. School heads should involve class teachers, guidance and discipline personnel to devise and coordinate various measures and strategies to develop students' positive value and attitude towards schooling. Whenever there is truancy, unexplained absence or irregular attendance, schools should make early intervention through the concerted efforts of staff members.
- (iv) Schools should **make good use of the community resources available** for dropouts with problems in behavior or other aspects that are beyond schools' handling capacity. Currently, dedicated non-governmental organizations (NGOs) offer valuable supporting services by running short-term learning / social development programmes ^{Note 2} for student dropouts with a view to helping these young people rekindle motivation and interest in learning or

^{Note 2} Two of these programmes are the 3-month "Unusual Academy" run by the Hong Kong Playground Association and the 8-week "Back to School" by the Hong Kong Christian Service. These programmes aim at rekindling student dropouts' learning motivation and adaptation to mainstream school life. The NGOs concerned also administer assessment to students upon their completion of the programmes and provide follow up support services to the students after their resumption of schooling.

vocational training.

- (v) **Close partnership between the school and home** would yield positive results in raising the children's commitment to learning and sense of belonging to the school. Schools need to strengthen parent education and home-school cooperation to enable parents to understand the school policies on student attendance and support their children in meeting the requirements. Involving parents at the onset of intervention will help dropout students resume schooling at the earliest possible time. Schools should also disseminate updated information on the multiple progression pathways available to students so that parents can properly advise their children in their studies and career pursuit.

“Some Further Suggestions on Developing a School Policy on Student Attendance” are at Appendix I for schools' reference.

Strict Compliance with the Requirements of Reporting Non-attendance and Dropout Cases to EMB

(a) Reporting Procedures

8. Schools must comply strictly with the requirements of reporting students' non-attendance and dropouts to EMB, regardless of their age and class level. Relevant procedures are laid down in Appendix II. It is of utmost importance that school heads should report the case WITHOUT DELAY to EMB on the 7th day of the student's continuous absence without exception.

9. The Non-attendance Cases Team (NAC Team) of EMB will work in partnership with schools to help the student dropouts resume schooling at the earliest opportunity. On the preventive side, concerted efforts among school, parents and NGOs are to be lined up to help the students concerned who (i) are attending primary and secondary classes; (ii) have been absent from school for 7 school days or more; and (iii) their reasons for absence are associated with behavioral problems, emotional problems, losing interest in their studies and other learning difficulties, truancy, family problems or being withheld by parents from attending school, etc.

10. Heads of schools should make the best use of the WebSAMS for keeping student information, reporting suspected student dropouts and analyzing school performance in respect of student attendance. Heads must ensure that the attendance records are kept properly and accurately, and make use of these records for early identification of students with irregular attendance pattern or absence without reasonable reasons. A teacher or other staff should be appointed to be in charge of the student attendance matters and liaison with the staff of the NAC Team as and when required.

11. Our record shows that some dropout cases were not reported to EMB, or not reported within the stipulated timeframe. The longer the students are out of school, the more difficult it will be for them to re-integrate into school, and the higher the risk of becoming a social burden in the longer term. To assure timely intervention, schools should comply strictly with the reporting requirements. In case of default, schools will be required to explain and take remedial action. It is noteworthy that student attendance is also one of the performance indicators covered in the external school review.

(b) Handling of Dropout Cases

12. At present, SGO / SGT / SGP handle dropout cases from primary schools while the NAC Team of EMB handles dropout cases from secondary schools.

13. For dropouts aged below 15, SGO / SGT / SGP / SSW will provide intervention service including counseling to them during the first two months after their absence was reported. When counseling is not effective in bringing these students back to school, we will issue a warning letter to the parent(s) at the end of the second month after the reporting of absence. Should absence still persist, we will issue a reminder at the end of the third month and every month thereafter. For continuous non-compliance, we will issue an Attendance Order under Section 74 of Education Ordinance (Cap 279) at the end of six months. It is worth reiterating that if intervention through in-depth investigation and support services for student can be arranged at the earliest opportunity, there is a greater chance for the student dropout to return to school smoothly.

14. For student dropouts aged 15 or above, EMB will try to place them back to the

school last attended or other schools, depending on such circumstances as parental choice, suitability and availability of school places. With the consent of the parents concerned, EMB may also refer these dropouts to short-term programmes / social development programmes run by NGOs to prepare them for resumption of normal schooling. When the dropouts are ready for schooling, EMB will offer placement service and the respective NGOs will provide post-placement service to both the receiving school and the student. The receiving school is expected to work in collaboration with the NGO concerned to put in place a support programme for the student with a view to helping him / her to adapt to the school environment. Please refer to Flow Chart (A) of Appendix III for Handling of Student Dropouts Aged Below 15 and Flow Chart (B) for Handling of Student Dropouts Aged 15 or Above.

Admitting and Re-admitting Student Dropouts

15. It is incumbent upon public-funded schools to accept school dropouts who are ready for schooling again, as long as the school is found to be suitable and there are vacancies. Schools have the obligation to re-admit their own dropouts unless the students or their parents decline the offer. In accordance with guidelines worked out by the Advisory Committee on the Placement of Pupils in 1990, with details at Appendix IV, it has been the practice to place student dropouts back to the school last attended.

16. Schools admitting or re-admitting dropouts should allow these students to attend class immediately rather than defer to the next school term or exclude the re-admitted students from attending lessons. Experience reveals that remedial services for these student dropouts would be more effective if such services were taken forward within the school context.

ENQUIRIES

17. You are welcome to contact your respective Senior School Development Officers for any enquiries. Below is a list of contact points that you may find useful for enquiring on some specific issues:

- on the policies relating to the enforcement of universal basic education:
Mr Henry YIP of the NAC Team at 3698 4388

- on handling dropout cases in secondary schools:
Mr CHOW Ho-ming of the NAC Team at 3698 4389

- on the counseling of dropout pupils in primary schools:
School Development Officers (Guidance & Discipline) of the respective district at 2863 4705

18. This circular supersedes EMB Circular No. 31/2003 dated 30 October 2003 on Enforcement of Universal Basic Education.

Mrs Michelle WONG
for Secretary for Education and Manpower

Some Further Suggestions on Developing a School Policy on Student Attendance

I. What constitutes a good school policy on student attendance?

- A good attendance policy should clearly articulate the circumstances in which schools will or will not authorize absence. There should also be an early warning system that detects signs of truancy, which may lead to dropout. Staff, parents and students should be adequately briefed so that they fully understand the implications of dropping out and the procedures for recording and reporting student absence.
- A good attendance policy sets up support systems that include: pastoral support plans for students with long term attendance difficulties, a process to enable returning students to catch up on learning and re-integrate within the school, access to external support for parents and students, alternative/flexible curriculum arrangement for students with learning difficulties, training for staff working with at-risk students, etc.
- A good attendance policy reinforces and celebrates good and improved student attendance through a range of reward systems. Parents, learning mentors and partner schools should be involved in the celebrations where relevant.

II. What are the essential elements to be included in the policy?

- Measures to ensure that cases of school transfer are genuine and that the students are really attending class in their new schools;
- The contribution, in terms of regular practices, tasks and responsibilities, expected from different stakeholders in the school; for example, the administrative steps that a classroom teacher should take when a pupil of his/her class is absent or drops out from school, the measures taken to liaise with parents, the role and follow up work of the Student Guidance Officer (SGO) / Student Guidance Teacher (SGT) / Student Guidance Personnel (SGP) / School Social Worker (SSW), etc.
- The remedial/supportive actions that the school should take for students that exhibit irregular attendance; the positive and supportive measures that the school should take to enable a dropout to resume school smoothly or a newly admitted student to adjust to the school's requirements;
- Samples of forms used in connection with school attendance; and details of any personnel/professionals who may offer advice and support to parents.

III. Dos and Don'ts

Dos

We would like to recommend some good practices that schools may adopt and adapt as appropriate under different contextual environments in order to prevent irregular attendance, truancy and non-attendance.

- The good practices include: reviewing school policies to eliminate practices that discourage attendance; providing professional development for teachers who work with at-risk students; offering career education, conflict resolution and violence prevention programs; providing students with after-school and summer enhancement programs or alternative learning programs; setting up a system of mentor and tutor students; connecting community service projects with classroom learning; enhancing family involvement in school activities.
- Do create a positive learning environment that provides an incentive for students to come to school. Students would attend school if the school applies fair and systematic reinforcement for achievement and effort, provides interesting extra curricular activities, possesses high quality teaching and resources, employs committed and competent teachers, develops a caring pastoral system and maintains a clean and pleasant environment, etc. Students need to feel secured, accepted among peers and have a sense of belonging to the school community.
- Do build regular attendance habits by emphasizing the importance of schooling in meeting with parents, newsletters and assemblies. Parents should also be given the messages that the law requires children attend school regularly and that absence from class would hinder students' progress and create adjustment problems.
- Do organize any school activity that builds trusting relationship between teachers and students, values students' individuality, recognizes their contribution, addresses their concerns, or strengthens their sense of belongings or ownership to the schools etc. Students who engage in school activity are much more likely to sustain good attendance in the long term.
- Do follow up the cases after providing the early intervention programmes / services.
- Do collect and analyse attendance data regularly (e.g., weekly/or bi-weekly) for the purpose of identifying the causes and patterns of student absence, and using the data to devise solutions and evaluate the effectiveness of intervention measures.
- Do provide training to all staff to equip them with the essential skills and knowledge of working with at-risk students and their parents.

Don'ts

- Do not administer discipline measures that hurt the self-esteem of students, or resort to practices that discourage attendance such as keeping students out of the classroom as a form of punishment which, in effect, takes away the reason for going to school.
- Do not punish truant students by depriving them of the opportunities in taking part in school and extra-curricular activities. Students must actively participate in school life and have a sense of belonging to school in order to sustain regular attendance.
- Do not ever give up hope in helping truant or potential dropouts. Their frequent or infrequent absence means they are having some kind of difficulty in adapting to school life. Teachers, guidance personnel / school social workers and parents can help by trying to understand the students' problems or concerns, and lining up concerted efforts in offering appropriate support to the students concerned.

Procedures for Reporting Student Dropouts and Other Student Movements

[Heads of schools are reminded to comply strictly with the following procedures in reporting student dropouts and other student movements.]

I. Students absent for 1 or 2 days

1. On the first day of a student's absence, school should on the same day ascertain his / her reason for absence by phoning the parents, or any other means as appropriate.
2. If the student's absence is assessed to be related to truancy, school refusal, difficulties in academics / behavior / emotion, etc, the case must be referred immediately to the SGO / SGT / SGP / SSW of the school for early intervention. Parents should be reminded to arrange for the students' resumption of school the next day.
3. The school should keep a clear record of these students being referred to the SGO / SGT / SGP / SSW.
4. As a guiding principle, the SGO / SGT / SGP / SSW should work in collaboration with the discipline / guidance team of the school as well as the parents to assist the student to resume school as quickly as possible through persuasion, counseling and / or casework service.

II. Students absent for 7 days or more

5. If the student's non-attendance persists, school head should report the case WITHOUT DELAY to EMB on the 7th day of the student's absence. The procedures are as follows:
 - Schools using WebSAMS should : (a) use the "Attendance" module in the WebSAMS to report suspected dropout student and submit the data to EMB through the Communication and Delivery System (CDS); (b) follow the Early Notification System (ENS) by clicking the "Send E-mail to NACT" in order to submit the suspected dropout student information to the NAC Team for urgent action. As an alternative, schools may preview and print a hard copy of Form A and fax it to the NAC Team (fax number: 2520 0073).
 - Schools not using WebSAMS should : (a) use eForm A to report suspected dropout students and submit the data to EMB; (b) print a hard copy of eForm A submitted in (a) and fax it to the NAC Team (fax number: 2520 0073) for urgent action.

[For enquiries on using WebSAMS, please contact the School Liaison Officers of the Systems and Information Management Section. Information is available from <http://cdr.websams.edb.gov.hk>]

6. Work of SGO / SGT / SGP / SSW highlighted in paragraphs 3 and 4 above should continue as appropriate.

III. **Student transfers and emigrated students**

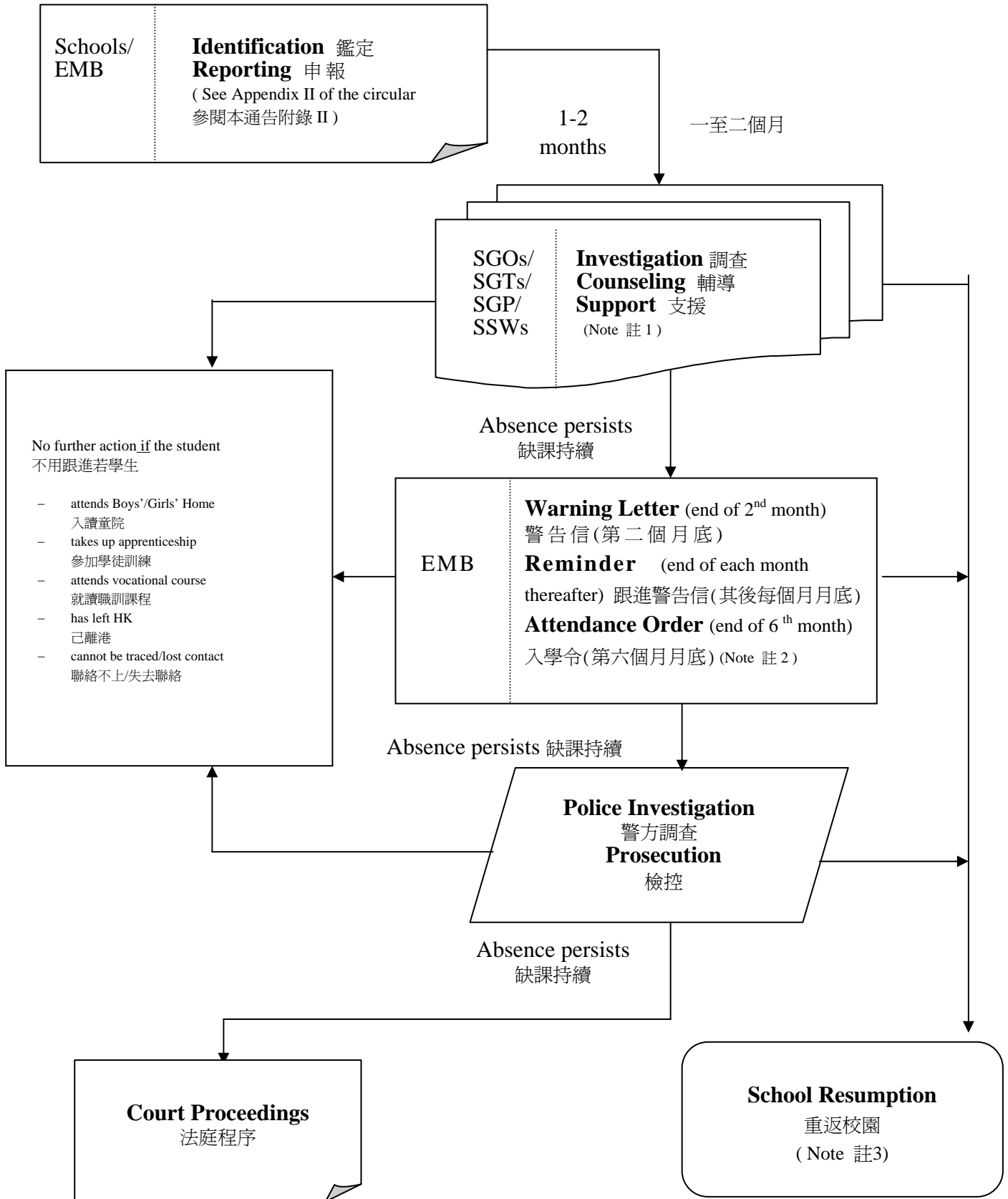
7. Though student transfers and emigrated students need not be reported to the NAC Team through the ENS, schools using WebSAMS are required to forward the completed Form A of these students to the EMB through the CDS within 7 days of the student's departure. Schools not using WebSAMS are to submit to EMB the completed eForm A of these students.

IV. **Student re-admission and new student intakes**

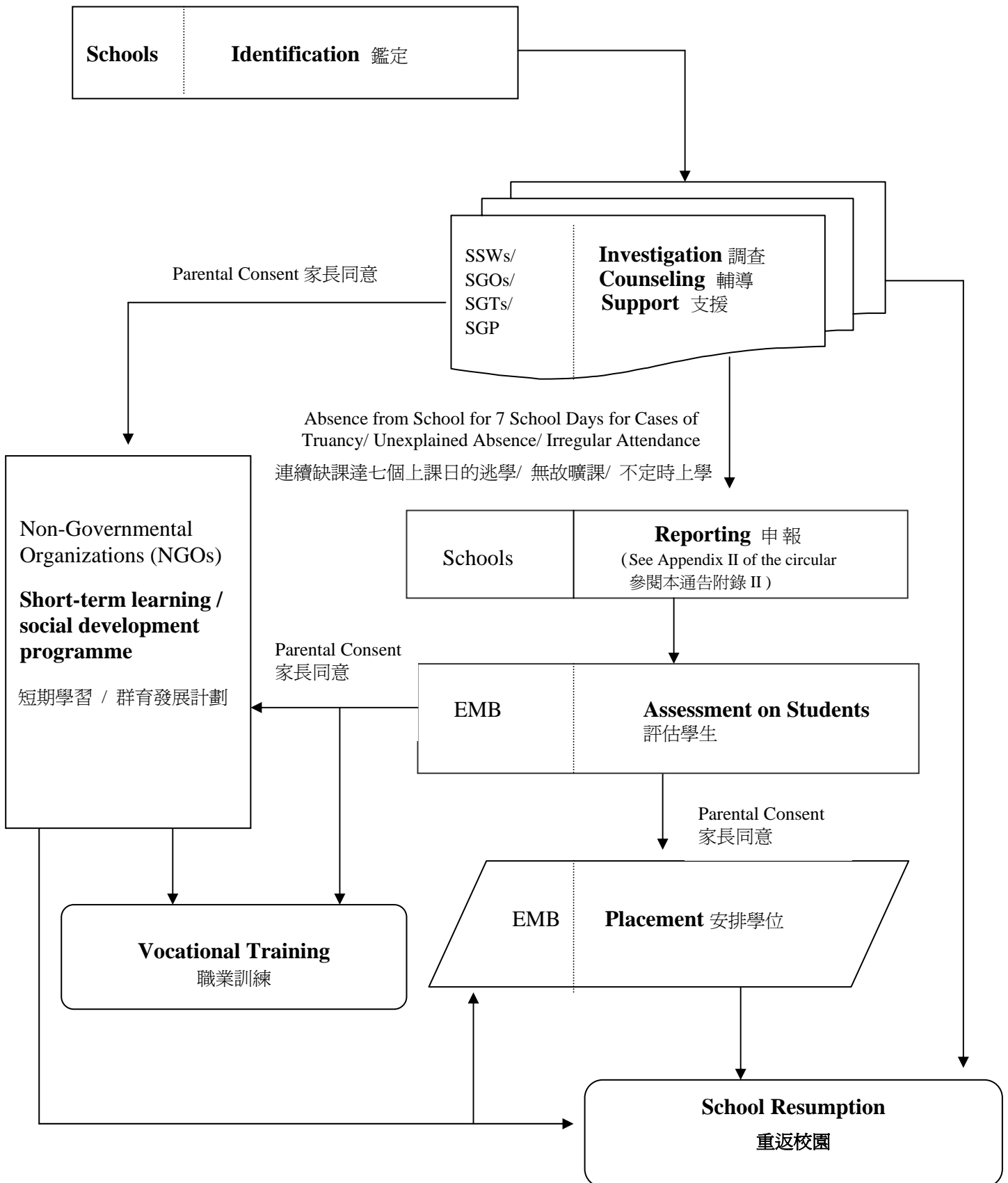
8. Schools using WebSAMS are to report to EMB through the CDS re-admission of dropouts and new student intakes within 10 days from their first day of attendance, while schools not using WebSAMS are to submit eForm B or eForm C to the EMB.

[Submission of Form B through the CDS or eForm B is not necessary if the enrolment of the student has already been reported during the Enrolment Survey conducted in mid September each year. Related procedures are listed in the "Guidelines for the Student Information Management System" uploaded on the EMB Homepage. For enquiries on the Guidelines, please contact the School Liaison Officers of the School Places Allocation Section.]

Flow Chart (A): Handling of Student Dropouts Aged Below 15
處理 15 歲以下輟學生個案流程圖



Flow Chart (B): Handling of Student Dropouts Aged 15 or Above
處理15歲或以上輟學生個案流程圖(B)



Note 1: Investigation, Counseling and Support

- In handling a dropout case, the primary concern is to safeguard the student's right to education. This calls for SGO /SGT / SGP / SSW to work with different professionals (such as family social workers and educational psychologists) to adopt short-term case management strategy in order to bring the student back to school as quickly as possible.
- The primary objective of the intervention during the first 2 months since his / her absence is to assist student in resuming schooling.
- The intervention should include a speedy assessment (identification of focal issues, goal clarification, case analysis, etc), collaboration (establishing rapport with clients and family members, soliciting support resources such as educational assessment, family counseling services, alternative education programmes, etc), closely monitored schedule of work (tasks to be accomplished as agreed, interim arrangement made with school staff, etc) and follow up actions (supporting and monitoring progress when student resumes school).
- If intervention fails to achieve the primary objective, the SGO / SGT / SGP / SSW should consult the School Development Officers (Guidance & Discipline) or Inspector of the Non-attendance Cases (NAC) Team and to consider convening a multi-disciplinary case conference with a view to bringing the child back to school. The need to step up the intervention by issuing warning letters or attendance orders by EMB should also be considered.
- During the course of intervention, the SGO / SGT / SGP / SSW should take note of the following points:
 - Early intervention will stand a better chance for the child to resume schooling.
 - Effective guidance can be rendered only if the child is in the school.
 - In the first or second contact, make it clear to the parents that it is their responsibility to send the child to school, tell them the possible harmful effect on the child's development and the legal consequences.
 - To enable the child to resume schooling and maintain regular attendance, school staff's understanding, acceptance and granting of concession are essential.
 - To convince the child and the original school that attending class is necessary while waiting for alternative school placement.
 - If necessary, the SSW should discuss case with the Inspector of the NAC Team and the SGO / SGT / SGP consult the School Development Officer (Guidance & Discipline) of the EMB.

Note 2: Issue of Warning Letters / Attendance Orders

- The Inspector of the NAC Team should, at the end of the second month of the student's absence (without reasonable excuse), issue a warning letter to the parents concerned. A reminder will be issued at the end of the third month and every month thereafter should absence still persist.
- The warning letter and the reminder(s) require the parents to bring the student back to the original school or a specified placement suitable for the student.
- The Inspector of the NAC Team must ensure that the parents understand the consequence of non-compliance with the requirements of the warning letter and the reminder(s), that is, the issue of attendance order under Section 74, Education Ordinance, Cap 279. The penalty, on conviction, for failing to comply with the attendance order is a fine at Level 3 (\$10,000) and three-month imprisonment, should be conveyed to the parents clearly.
- If the non-attendance situation persists without reasonable excuse, an attendance order will be served at the end of six months.

- The attendance orders are to be served to the parents in a home visit by the Inspector of the NAC Team and a School Development Officer of the Regional Education Office, who serves as a witness and a resource person in case the parents enquire about the placement.
- During the home visit, the Inspector of the NAC Team has to explain to the parents that they must bring the student to the specified school at the specified date, they have the right to make an appeal to the Administrative Appeal Board (AAB) within 28 days should they be aggrieved by the attendance orders, and the possible legal consequence for non-compliance.
- During the period when the warning letters / reminder(s) / attendance orders are issued, the SGO / SGT / SGP / SSW should work in partnership with the Inspector of the NAC Team.

Note 3: School Resumption

- Whenever a dropout resumes schooling, measures must be taken to ensure that the child can adjust well to the requirements of the school. This includes the follow-up service on the case by the SGO / SGT / SGP / SSW, the implementation of a short-term adjustment programme, etc.

Remarks

SGO / SGT / SGP are reminded to:

- report case progress to the NAC Team on monthly basis until the case is closed;
- use “Investigation Report on Dropout Cases” for monthly reporting; and
- use “Dropout Case Progress Review” to bring up cases to the Internal Review Board (IRB) of EMB in the 5th month.

SSWs are reminded to:

- submit an investigation report with recommendations to the NAC Team within the first month after receiving EMB’s request according to the procedures laid in the “Guideline for School Social Workers in Co-operation with the then Education Department on Handling of Non-attendance in Junior Secondary School (October 1992)”;
- work in partnership with the NAC Team and provide assistance whenever possible.

Guidelines on Placement of Pupils

The Advisory Committee on The Placement of Pupils, set up in 1990, had worked out in the same year a set of guidelines to be followed in the placement of dropout pupils. These guidelines are set out as follows:

- (a) As far as possible, the original school where the pupil dropped out should have the obligation to re-admit the pupil. The obvious advantage of this arrangement is that the pupil can adjust to the environment easily. If, however, re-admitting the pupil into his original school would affect his motivation in study or cause other problems, a transfer to a more suitable school would be considered.
- (b) The physical location of the new school in relation to the pupil's residential address should be considered.
- (c) A school with more vacancies should have more obligations to admit the pupil.
- (d) In general, the ability band of the pupil should not be too different from those of the other pupils of the new school concerned.
- (e) In principle, no distinction should be made between government and aided schools as far as placement of these pupils is concerned.