

CE visits special school and kindergarten (with photos/video)

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, today (October 28) visited a special school and a kindergarten-cum-nursery in Sham Shui Po to know more about services provided by the Government together with social welfare organisations for students and young children with special needs.

Mrs Lam started the visit at the Mental Health Association of Hong Kong – Cornwall School. Accompanied by the school supervisor, Dr Hung Se-fong, Mrs Lam was briefed by the principal, Ms Wong Man-yi, on the education, rehabilitation and boarding services provided to students with severe intellectual disabilities. Mrs Lam visited classes and facilities of the boarding section to learn how the school enhances the students' abilities to care for themselves and live independently through the provision of life skill training to enable them to integrate into the community more easily. She especially expressed her gratitude to the staff members of the school and the boarding section for handling a large volume of work during the epidemic for the prevention and control of viral infection.

In recent years, the Government has allocated additional resources for students with diverse needs. In regard to special education, for example, a post of special educational needs co-ordinator was established in all public sector ordinary schools and support for students with autism spectrum disorder was enhanced, while in aided special schools the manpower of school social workers and the staffing of boarding sections were strengthened to provide better support for schools and students. Mrs Lam noted that many parents have found it difficult to care for students who had left schools after graduation but had been unable to receive connecting rehabilitation services immediately. During the consultation exercise for the Policy Address this year, there were views that the special schools could make use of the occasional surplus places in their boarding sections to provide residential respite places for graduates during long holidays. Mrs Lam paid special attention to the boarding situation during the visit today to explore the feasibility of the suggestion.

Mrs Lam then proceeded to visit Po Leung Kuk Angela Leong On Kei Kindergarten-cum-Nursery. Accompanied by the school supervisor, Ms Daisy Ho, she was briefed by the principal, Ms Mo Hoi-yi, on the provision of On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services for children with special educational needs in the school. Mrs Lam chatted with parents of students, who shared the view that the services had served the purpose of "early identification and early intervention" and the effect had been very satisfactory.

The Government regularised the Pilot Scheme on On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services in 2018. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) commissioned non-governmental organisations to form multi-disciplinary teams to provide on-site rehabilitation services for children with special educational needs at more than 80 per cent of the kindergartens and

kindergarten-cum-child care centres. These teams comprise occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech therapists, clinical/educational psychologists, social workers and special child care workers. Last month, the Government increased the number of service places to more than 8 000, while aiming to further increase the number by 1 000 each year over the next two school years for a total number of 10 000 places in the 2022/23 school year, thereby achieving the goal of "zero-waiting time" proposed in the Chief Executive's 2018 Policy Address. In light of the current difficulties faced by the Department of Health in recruiting professionals to conduct assessments for children, the SWD launched a 20-month project – the Pilot Project on Tier 1 Support Services in Kindergartens/Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres – in August this year to provide early intervention services for children with signs of special needs and awaiting evaluation.

Another characteristic of the On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services is the emphasis on cross-departmental, cross-sectoral and cross-disciplinary collaboration. Within the Government, there is coordination among the Education Bureau, the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Food and Health Bureau to share resources with a view to providing the most appropriate services for children in need.

"The provision of early support for children with special educational needs not only helps them grow healthily, thus alleviating the anxieties of their parents, but also reduces demand for special education and adult rehabilitation services in the future. It is indeed a very meaningful form of expenditure," Mrs Lam said.



