

EDB progressively disburses anti-epidemic subsidies and support grants to schools

The one-off Special Anti-epidemic Grant to all schools offering full and formal curriculum in Hong Kong and the Support Grant to all kindergartens (KGs) announced earlier by the Education Bureau (EDB) will be disbursed starting from March.

A spokesman for the EDB said today (March 17) that all schools offering full and formal curriculum (i.e. all public sector schools, Direct Subsidy Scheme schools, private primary and secondary schools and KGs) would receive the one-off Special Anti-epidemic Grant to help them replenish their epidemic prevention equipment, clean their school premises and pay for other expenses related to epidemic prevention. The amount of grant ranges from \$10,000 to \$25,000, depending on the type and size of the school. The additional expenditure is estimated to be \$42 million, benefitting some 2 200 schools.

Public sector schools and other schools receiving government subsidies are expected to receive the grant this month at the earliest. No application is required. Other schools are expected to receive the grant starting from April at the earliest.

Meanwhile, the boarding sections of aided special schools have been operating to cater for students in need of boarding service during the class suspension. To enhance the support for the boarding sections to guard against the epidemic, the EDB will separately provide a one-off additional grant for 21 special schools with a boarding section. The amount of the grant is determined by their approved boarding capacity, ranging from \$50,000 to \$150,000. It will incur an additional expenditure of \$2.25 million. The grant will also be disbursed to these schools this month.

As regards KGs, in addition to the above-mentioned Special Anti-epidemic Grant for all KGs, the EDB will also provide a lump sum grant for each KG to assist them in tackling operational difficulties caused by the epidemic, incurring an additional expenditure of about \$120 million. Schools joining the kindergarten education scheme (Scheme-KGs) will receive a grant ranging from \$60,000 to \$160,000, depending on their types (i.e. half-day, whole-day and long whole-day) and size. The grant will be disbursed within March. The EDB will also use the number of students in January this year as the basis for calculation of the monthly subsidy for each Scheme-KG during the class suspension to ensure that there will be no reduction of government subsidies due to the absence or withdrawal of individual students during the period. For non-Scheme KGs, each KG will receive a Support Grant of \$80,000 to be disbursed starting from April.

Regarding the Student Grant for 2019/20 school year, which has been increased from \$2,500 to \$3,500 per student, allocated from the Anti-epidemic

Fund amounting to \$900 million, the EDB has started depositing the grant into bank accounts specified by parents since the end of February. Since the EDB has to handle applications from about 900,000 students and the epidemic has also affected the submission of applications by parents or schools as well as the process in the work of the EDB contractor, it may take some time for processing all the applications. The spokesman called on parents to be patient and the bureau will expedite the process with a view to disbursing the grant as soon as possible. As for some parents who have not yet submitted their application forms, the EDB has already announced earlier that the deadline for submission of application forms would be extended to two weeks after the resumption of classes.