

## Maternity leave for staff in aided, caput, DSS schools and kindergartens joining Kindergarten Education Scheme extended to 14 weeks

The Education Bureau (EDB) today (December 18) issued circulars to all aided, caput, Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools, and kindergartens which have joined the Kindergarten Education Scheme (KG Scheme), to announce the detailed arrangements for extending the maternity leave from 10 weeks to 14 weeks for eligible female staff with effect from January 1, 2019.

An EDB spokesman said, "The Chief Executive's 2018 Policy Address proposed to extend the statutory maternity leave from the current 10 weeks to 14 weeks. Though the Government needs time to amend the relevant ordinance, to promote the spirit of good employer, the EDB has decided to introduce a new measure to aided schools including special schools, caput and DSS schools, to extend maternity leave to 14 weeks. The EDB also encourages kindergartens which have joined the KG Scheme to provide 14 weeks of paid maternity leave to their eligible staff.

"Staff within the approved establishment of aided schools or contract staff remunerated by aided schools paid out of other EDB grants (i.e. cash grants), as well as staff of caput and DSS schools, may benefit from the 14 weeks of paid maternity leave if they have completed not less than 40 weeks of continuous service immediately before taking the maternity leave and their actual date of confinement or expected date of confinement falls on January 1, 2019 or after. The EDB also provides resources to support kindergartens which have joined the KG Scheme to extend the paid maternity leave of their staff to 14 weeks."

Schools with staff members on maternity leave may need to maintain effective operation through the employment of supply staff. Under the new initiative, the EDB will pertinently provide schools with a grant for reimbursement of related expenses arising from the employment of supply staff. Kindergartens which have joined the KG Scheme will also be provided with this grant if they extend the paid maternity leave of their staff to 14 weeks and employ supply staff. The details are set out in EDB Circular No 16/2018 "Extension of Maternity Leave for Staff in Aided, Caput and Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools" and EDB Circular No 17/2018 "Kindergarten Education Scheme – Maternity Leave for Staff and Staff Relief Grant".

The spokesman said that as always the EDB encourages schools to promote family-friendly practices and fulfil their obligations as good employers. The extension of paid maternity leave to 14 weeks may allow mothers more time to take care of their newborn babies. Schools should implement this new measure and make known the arrangements regarding the extension of maternity leave as

set out in the circulars to all their staff.

For enquiries, schools and their staff may contact the respective District School Development Sections or Joint Office for Kindergartens and Child Care Centres of the EDB.