

Student Athlete Support Scheme (2024/25 School Year)

SUMMARY:

This circular informs schools of the operational details and funding arrangements of the Student Athlete Support Scheme (the Scheme), and invites HKSSF member schools to apply for grants under the Scheme in 2024/25 school year.

DETAILS:

Background

The Chief Executive announced in the 2013 Policy Address that the Government would work with the Schools Sports Federation of Hong Kong, China (HKSSF) to provide appropriate support to students from low-income families for them to fully develop their sporting potential. The Pilot Scheme was launched in 2013/14 school year, subsequently the scheme was regularised from 2016/17 school year onwards.

Aim of the Scheme

The Scheme aims at providing financial support for students with sporting talent from low-income families to help pursue their sporting goals through participating in HKSSF inter-school competitions.

Target Beneficiaries

Any Primary 1 to Secondary 6 students recommended by the respective school principals to participate in the HKSSF programmes, while meeting one of the following criteria, will be eligible for the funding support:

- (a) the student receives Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA); or
- (b) the student receives full or half grant from the Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA); or
- (c) the student is being assessed as financially needy by the respective schools.

Areas of Support

(For more detailed deliberation of eligible items, please refer to the set of Frequently Asked Questions enclosed.)

1. Each school can apply for a total grant of up to \$15,000 per school year to provide financial support to students in the following four major areas –
 - (a) purchase of sports equipment (including sports shoes and sportswear);
 - (b) transportation fees for local training (including those under the Schools Sports Programme of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) as stated in item (d) below) and HKSSF competitions;
 - (c) paying of school squad coaching fees, *excluding* the costs of hiring private coaches for individual student; and
 - (d) paying of course fees for participating in the Outreach Coaching Programme (school squad training) and Joint School Sports Training Programme of HKSSF sports under the School Sports Programme of the LCSD.
2. Schools may decide the amount of funding to be allocated to each of the major areas ((a) to (d) above) of support and the number of students to be supported, but the amount of support for any individual student should not exceed \$3,000 per school year.

Important Points to Note

To ensure the effective use of funding under the Scheme and to maximise the benefit to individual student, participating schools should strictly follow the requirements set out below –

- (a) Grants from the Scheme should only be used to support students who are planning to participate in HKSSF events in the 2024/25 school year.
- (b) The subsidy should be used to cover expenses incurred by students during the 2024/25 school year (i.e. from 1 September 2024 to 31 May 2025).
- (c) Sports equipment purchased under the scheme should be owned and retained by the students concerned. Schools should keep the acknowledgement receipts co-signed by the appropriate school representatives and the students' parents or guardians as proofs of the students' retention of the equipment.
- (d) The subsidy should only cover school squad trainings organised by schools, course fees and transportation costs for participating in the Outreach Coaching Programmes (school squad trainings) and Joint School Sports Training Programmes of HKSSF sports under the LCSD School Sports Programme. Trainings conducted by other organisations will not be covered by the Scheme.

- (e) The subsidy should only cover the portion of transportation costs or training fees that the eligible students are required to bear. It should not be used to settle the transportation costs or training fees for the entire school squad.
- (f) Students receiving support under the Scheme to participate in a HKSSF programme are allowed to receive subsidies from other sources to cover fees payable in relation to the trainings and competitions. However, the total amount of subsidies received shall not exceed the total sum that the students are required to pay for the participation in the sports activities concerned. Schools should keep clear records of the funding from all sources in which each student receives for audit purposes.
- (g) Schools should observe the School Administration Guide, Code of Aid for Aided Incorporated Management Committee Schools and other related circulars of the Education Bureau. Schools may also make reference to ICAC’s Best Practice Checklist on “Governance and Internal Control in Schools”¹.

Funding and Administrative Arrangements

1. The Scheme is of a school-based nature and is opened for applications from all HKSSF member schools (primary and secondary schools). Upon satisfactory completion of the programme reports, funds will be released to schools on a reimbursement basis according to the following schedule. Each participating school should only submit the report once for every school year:

Submission of Year-end Reports	Reimbursement (Tentative)
On or before 14 March 2025	On or before 13 June 2025
On or before 30 May 2025	On or before 29 August 2025

2. Schools that are interested should submit an application to the HKSSF by duly completing the application form on or before 30 September 2024, and provide basic information on the estimated number of eligible students and estimated expenditure for each area of support. If the primary and secondary sections of the same school are individual member school of the HKSSF and are both interested in joining the Scheme, they should submit separate applications with the school types clearly stated on the application forms.
3. The HKSSF will acknowledge receipt of the applications by email within a week after the application is received. A list of approved schools will be uploaded on the HKSSF’s website after the vetting of applications. Schools are advised to contact the HKSSF if they do not receive the acknowledgement of receipt, or if there are other questions regarding the application.

¹ The document is available online at http://cpas.icac.hk/UploadImages/InfoFile/cate_43/2016/f8a780b1-ecbe-42c7-b46e-d94c378fd007.pdf.

4. Each participating school is required to submit a programme report (The report template will be provided by HKSSF. Schools may download the template from the HKSSF website) summarising the use of the funds and the information of the students before the deadlines. After the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB) and the HKSSF review the reports and confirm that relevant criteria and requirements are met, the HKSSF will disburse the funds to schools on a reimbursement basis. The subsidy will only be released after the report has been submitted and verified. The CSTB and HKSSF will make reference to the information provided by schools in evaluating the effectiveness of the Scheme.
5. Schools should keep all vouchers related to the Scheme, and the documents co-signed by the school representatives and the parents/guardians of the beneficiaries acknowledging the receipt of equipment purchased, as well as the public transport expenses incurred (Transport expenses record form will be uploaded to HKSSF website). The CSTB and HKSSF may request schools to provide documents and records for auditing or other relevant purposes. Random checks may also be conducted to ensure proper use of the funds.
6. The HKSSF will process the requests for reimbursement based on the approved school list released at the beginning of the school year. Requests for reimbursement from schools not on the list will not be processed.

APPLICATION

We are now inviting applications for the Scheme for the 2024/2025 school year. The form is now available at the HKSSF website (www.hkssf-hk.org.hk/athletesupport.htm). Interested schools should complete and return the application form to the HKSSF by post or email **on or before 30 September 2024**. The HKSSF will notify schools of the application results via post and email by mid October 2024. The approved school list will also be uploaded on the HKSSF's website. Schools are advised to contact the HKSSF if they do not receive the application results by late October 2024.

ENQUIRIES

A set of Frequently Asked Questions is available at (www.hkssf-hk.org.hk/athletesupport.htm). For further enquiries, please contact the HKSSF at 2711 7691 or Ms Bonnie Mak the CSTB at 3509 8078.

The Schools Sports Federation of Hong Kong, China
28th August 2024