

30 April 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Fee Offset for Extended Circuit Breaker Period (5 May – 1 June) for Those at Student Care Centres

1. Earlier in April, we began a month-long Circuit Breaker. As part of the Circuit Breaker, student care centres (SCCs), including special student care centres (SSCCs) had to suspend general services. MSF then called for all SCCs that administer the Student Care Fee Assistance (SCFA) (“SCFA Administrator SCCs”) to provide parents with offsets for 50% of their nett fees¹, for Singaporean children not attending student care during this period, with parents bearing the remaining 50% of fees.

2. On 21 April 2020, PM Lee announced the extension of the Circuit Breaker by four weeks, from 5 May to 1 June. At the same time, MOE announced that the June school holidays would be brought forward to 5 May 2020. In line with the Circuit Breaker extension, **general services by SCCs will be suspended for an extended period from 5 May to 1 June.**

3. We recognise that parents and SCCs are concerned about fees for the extended Circuit Breaker period of May.

Shouldering the impact together

4. For the first Circuit Breaker period in April, there were two options at the extreme ends: (a) no fee offset (i.e. parents bear the entire month’s fees and the full impact of the Circuit Breaker), or (b) 100% fee offset (i.e. operators bear the full impact of the closure). Either option would lead to hardship falling entirely on one party. This was not tenable. Instead, we decided that all three parties: the Government, SCCs, and families – should bear part of the burden of this public health measure. Hence, we adopted the position that the 50:50 approach is the fairer way to share the burden, with Government providing support to both parents and operators.

5. Similarly, the same considerations apply to the extended Circuit Breaker period in May. We recognise that we have to continue to share the burden of this crisis collectively. While parents continue to pay student care fees during the extended Circuit Breaker period, **we have called for all SCFA Administrator SCCs to provide 50% nett fee offset for enrolled Singaporean children who are not attending student care for the extended Circuit Breaker period of May.** This offset can be invoiced on

¹ Nett fees refer to the fees payable by parents after GST and SCFA subsidy.

or from June onwards, depending on each SCC's policy. This means that the offset is applicable for children who remain enrolled in June and there are fees payable against which to offer the offset.

Varying how the fee offset is provided

6. We seek parents' understanding that individual SCFA Administrator SCC may have to vary exactly how they can provide the offset, depending on their financial circumstances. The SCCs are not homogenous, and government assistance may not cover the entire cost of operations for all, depending on their exact cost structure and manpower mix.

7. As such, while we have called for a 50% fee offset, SCFA Administrator SCCs may vary exactly how the offset sharing is provided. Some may have to pace out the 50% fee offset over a few months or until things get better, or provide some offset in kind, such as providing additional classes during non-programme time, learning resources, or credits for future activities. Where SCCs have parents who are less impacted by the COVID-19 situation and are prepared to forego all or some of the offset to support the SCC and teachers, operators may seek to work out a mutually acceptable arrangement with them. On the other hand, where operators are able, we welcome them to do more, especially for parents in greater need.

Supporting parents

8. MSF will continue to disburse SCFA subsidies in full to SCFA beneficiaries in SCFA Administrator SCCs, and automatically waive the minimum 50% attendance requirement in May 2020. For parents facing job losses or reduced income or other difficulties, we aim to help through various schemes such as the Temporary Relief Fund, COVID-19 Support Grant, Courage Fund, Self-Employed Persons Income Relief Scheme and Enhanced Workfare Special Payment, on top of existing ComCare schemes.

Emerging stronger together

9. We recognise that the COVID-19 situation is presenting great changes and challenges for everyone. We will emerge stronger together when this storm is over.

Yours sincerely,

Denise Low (Ms)

Director

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