

For discussion
on 16 April 2009

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Provision of International School Places and Boarding Facilities for Non-local Students in International Schools and Local Schools

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the supply of international school places in Hong Kong and the latest development on the provision of boarding facilities for non-local students in international schools and local schools.

Provision of International School Places

2. It is an on-going commitment of the Government to support the development of a vibrant international school sector to meet the community's demand for international school places and to underpin our aspiration to be Asia's World City.
3. As reported by 51 existing international schools in the annual survey launched in early September 2008, the international school sector as a whole offered a total of about 34 600 primary and secondary school places. The enrolment as in early September 2008 was about 30 900 students from over 30 nationalities. The existing international schools offer different non-local curricula, including American, Australian, British, Canadian, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Singaporean and the International Baccalaureate Programme.
4. In order to meet the increasing demand for international school places in recent years, we have been taking a three-pronged approach in providing assistance to individual international schools to facilitate their development, namely –
 - (a) granting approval to existing international schools for in-situ expansion or renting premises to meet their short-term accommodation needs on an individual merit basis;

- (b) allocating vacant/to-be-vacated school premises for the expansion of existing international schools; and
- (c) allocating greenfield sites for international school development.

5. For (a) above, we have so far facilitated the expansion of four existing international schools, which would result in the provision of some additional 400 secondary school places progressively starting from the 2009/10 school year.

6. As for (b) above, we have, since 2007, allocated four vacant/to-be-vacated school premises (three on Hong Kong Island and one in the New Territories) to facilitate the expansion of four existing international schools. Renovation of the school premises is in progress and it is expected that when the renovation works are completed, an additional 1 640 school places, comprising 300 primary school places and 1 340 secondary school places, would come into stream on a progressive basis starting from the 2009/10 school year.

7. As regards (c) above, we launched a School Allocation Exercise (“SAE”) in December 2008 for four greenfield sites (which are situated in Kowloon Bay, Lai Chi Kok, Sai Kung and So Kwun Wat at Tuen Mun) for the development of international schools. By the close of the deadline of the SAE in March 2009, we have received a total of 14 applications, including submissions from four operators of existing international schools in Hong Kong, five operators of local schools/organizations, four operators of overseas schools/organizations and one subsidiary organization of an overseas government. The applications are being scrutinized and will be considered by the School Allocation Committee (“SAC”) consisting of official members and non-official members from various fields in accordance with the established procedure. The result of the SAE is expected to be available by mid-2009.

8. Depending on the outcome of the SAE, we estimate that the new international schools to be set up at these four sites would provide no less than 4 000 school places after these schools have come into operation in about three to four years’ time. We will seek the approval of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council for the offer of interest-free loans for individual school building projects (excluding the boarding portion for Tuen

Mun site) upon application by the successful bidders in accordance with the prevailing policy¹.

Provision of Boarding Facilities for Non-local Students in International Schools and Local Schools

9. Existing international schools do not provide student boarding facilities within their school campuses. In order to promote diversified development of the international school sector and to further attract non-local students coming to study in Hong Kong, the Chief Executive in Council approved in December 2008 the development of a new non-profit-making international school with student boarding facilities on the greenfield site in So Kwun Wat at Tuen Mun (as referred to in paragraph 7 above) on a pilot basis. The successful operator would be required to set up a new international boarding school which aims at having at least 50% of the “target students”, i.e. non-local children of families coming to Hong Kong for work or investment, or non-local students holding student visas for entry into Hong Kong for studies. Moreover, the school should provide boarding places for the secondary section only and aim at reserving at least 50% of the boarding places for admitting non-local students holding student visas for entry into Hong Kong for studies². We have decided to limit the operation of the boarding places only to secondary students who are more independent and could benefit more from the boarding life as compared to primary students.

10. While non-local students may enter international schools at which they are targeted, some of them may wish to widen their local exposure by enrolling in local schools. Over the years, some Direct Subsidy Scheme (“DSS”) Schools/local private schools have approached the education authorities to explore the possibility of providing boarding facilities on campus. Such requests are often prompted by the wish to attract local families as well as non-local students who could afford boarding on a fee-charging basis. Bearing in mind the scarce land resources in Hong Kong, our focus is on the provision of boarding facilities for non-local students. In order to complement our efforts on the new international boarding school in

¹ Under existing policy, financial assistance in the form of interest-free loan for school building may be offered to non-profit-making international school operators on an application basis. The loan, repayable in ten years, is capped at 100% of the cost for constructing a standard-design public sector school accommodating the same number of students.

² Under current arrangement, a student visa application may be favourably considered if the applicant could nominate a local sponsor. If the applicant is under the age of 18, one of the applicant’s parents should authorize the sponsor or his/her relative/friend in Hong Kong to be the guardian of the applicant during the period of his/her enrolment at the college.

Tuen Mun, the Chief Executive in Council has also decided to relax the present arrangement such that existing non-profit-making international schools, local private schools and DSS schools may be allowed to develop and operate within their existing sites boarding facilities which are targeted primarily (at least 50%) at non-local students (can either be non-local children of families coming to Hong Kong for work or investment or non-local students holding student visas for entry into Hong Kong for studies), provided that such facilities would not incur additional cost in terms of land and funding on the part of the Government. In the case of a site granted for education purpose but is not currently used for the operation of a school or in the case of private land which is not currently granted for education purpose, and where EDB is supportive of the provision of a school with boarding facilities at that site and the land is not required for other purposes, the Administration would consider on an application and case-by-case basis, the development of new schools with boarding facilities by the land owner, subject to certain prescribed conditions. Details of the conditions are set out in the Legislative Council Brief issued to Members in December 2008 (Ref: EDB(I)IS/1/08). So far, we have been approached by a few DSS schools and one private school operator for exploring the possibility of providing boarding facilities for secondary students.

11. The above arrangements will not apply to public sector schools (i.e. government and aided schools) which are for meeting demand from local students, and which are not allowed to admit non-local students under current policy.

Way Forward

12. The Administration will continue to facilitate the development of international schools in Hong Kong and monitor the provision of school places in the international school sector to meet the needs of the community. We will also review the effectiveness of the provision of boarding facilities after the pilot international boarding school project in Tuen Mun has come into operation for some time. We will continue to maintain a close dialogue with the international schools, Consul-Generals, the business sector and other interested parties for the purpose of monitoring the demand for international school places.

Education Bureau
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