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Ms Amy Yu  
Clerk to Education Panel  
Legislative Council Complex,  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Ms Yu,

**Review on the subvention arrangements  
for the English Schools Foundation (“ESF”)**

I write to report the progress of the review on the subvention arrangements for the ESF following our last report to the Legislative Council Panel on Education (the Panel) in July 2011.

Since July 2011, we have been engaging in dialogue with the ESF to take forward the review. We have explained to the ESF our policy position that the ESF is an established and valued member of the school system in Hong Kong. Review of the subvention should be based on a holistic perspective of the entire school system and the position of the ESF therein, taking into account the arrangements for schools which operate in a like-fashion in terms of governance and oversight mechanism, admission policy, curriculum and student mix, etc. In addition, we would factor into consideration the demand for English-medium education by the expatriate community and some local families.

Specifically, we have proceeded to review the role and services of the ESF under the following policy objectives and parameters –

- (a) the existing recurrent subvention to the ESF should be phased out gradually in order not to prejudice the interest of existing students who had been admitted to the ESF schools before any new subvention arrangement takes effect;
- (b) the basis for considering any new subvention for the ESF should be revised and formulated in a wider context having regard to the present day considerations including the diversity of school types within the entire school system in Hong Kong and the position of the ESF therein, Hong Kong's position as an international city and possible re-positioning of the ESF to provide a broader range of education services in Hong Kong to complement local education;
- (c) in considering the unique services that ESF may offer, the competitive edge of the ESF over other types of schools providing non-local curriculum should be examined and justified by the ESF demonstrating the possible benefits of its existing services in supporting English-speaking students. Its uniqueness should also be substantiated by its role in complementing Government's policy and how it distinguishes itself in various aspects from other service providers in the school sector;
- (d) in relation to (b) and (c) above, the services provided by the ESF should be underpinned by, among other things, relevant parameters in its admission policy as a condition for granting new subvention; and
- (e) the Government's regulatory oversight on the ESF should be so structured as to fall into line with the prevailing standard applicable to other schools of similar nature; in particular, the oversight should be commensurate with the level and nature of the future subvention, if any.

As a related matter, to ensure that the ESF fulfills its statutory mission to provide English-medium education to children who are able to benefit from such education in the context of our policy objective, it is essential for the ESF to lay down a clear student admission policy. In this respect, we understand that the ESF is reviewing its existing student

admissions with a view to developing an up to date scheme in tune with the needs of the community.

The discussion with the ESF is on-going along the parameters set out in the above paragraphs. We expect that more time is required to examine the uniqueness of the services provided by the ESF vis-à-vis other schools offering similar curriculum, the commensurate monitoring mechanism as well as the admission policy of the ESF to reflect its uniqueness. We aim to report further the progress of the review to the Panel on Education by the end of 2012.

Yours sincerely,



( Wendy Chung )  
for Secretary for Education

c.c. AA/SED