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18 June 2014

Miss Polly Yeung
Clerk to Panel
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Miss Yeung,

**Panel on Education Meetings
on 14 April 2014 and 12 May 2014
Follow-up actions**

I refer to the discussion at the captioned Panel on Education Meetings during which Members sought supplementary information on the three projects namely 'Two special schools at site 5C-5, Kai Tak development, Kowloon', 'A school for social development for girls at Choi Hing Road, Kwun Tong, Kowloon' and 'Construction of an Annex to Baptist Lui Ming Choi Secondary School, Shatin, New Territories'. I write to provide the requested information in the ensuing paragraphs for Members' reference.

Two special schools at site 5C-5, Kai Tak development, Kowloon (i.e. Sung On Street, To Kwa Wan)

Arrangements for reprovisioning and redevelopment (R&R) of special schools

2. As set out in the paper for discussion by the Panel on 9 June 2014, under the existing practice, the Education Bureau (EDB) conducts regular review on reprovisioning and redevelopment (R&R) needs of special schools. EDB would

consider a number of factors when deciding whether a special school would be shortlisted for R&R. These factors include –

- (a) the physical conditions of the school (such as age of the school premises, site area, floor area, etc.);
- (b) supply and demand of special school places of the specific categories;
- (c) quality of education of the school;
- (d) school location; and
- (e) whether there are other means to improve the physical conditions of the school, etc.

3. These factors are similar to those adopted for reprovisioning mainstream schools and have been endorsed by the School Allocation Committee (SAC) comprising both official and non-official members. Between 2000 and 2013, EDB has already completed R&R of 11 special schools, and five more R&R projects are in the pipeline. This amounts to about 25% of the existing special schools in the territory.

Factors considered in projecting the supply and demand of school places and boarding places in special schools for children with moderate intellectual disability (MoID) and severe intellectual disability (SID) in the seven regions of Hong Kong

4. Guided by the principle of vicinity for student placement in special schools as far as possible, provision of special school places for children with MoID and SID is planned on the basis of seven regions, viz. Hong Kong Island Region, Kowloon and Tseung Kwan O Region, Shatin and Sai Kung (excluding Tseung Kwan O) Region, Tai Po and North Region, Kwai Tsing and Tsuen Wan Region, Tuen Mun and Yuen Long Region, and Outlying Islands Region. As for the planning for boarding places in these schools, both regional and territory-wide demand and supply will be considered as no daily commuting between home and schools are required for boarding students. The boarding provision also allows flexibility for parents to choose a school outside the region in which they reside.

5. In projecting the demand for school and boarding places of MoID and SID schools, EDB takes into account a number of factors, including enrolment in these schools, the number of students being waitlisted for admission, the anticipated number of student referrals to special schools having regard to the projected school age population¹ and the projected ratio of students with MoID and SID, the anticipated number of leavers of MoID and SID schools and education policies in force such as the new senior secondary academic structure and the improvement measures on the extension of years of study for students of special schools. In

¹ Projected school age population is based on the population projections released by the Census and Statistics Department

projecting the supply of school and boarding places of these schools, EDB takes into account the design capacity of these existing schools and the potential increase in supply arising from approved R&R projects and conversion work projects of special schools.

A school for social development (SSD) for girls at Choi Hing Road, Kwun Tong, Kowloon

Design of the dormitory of the proposed SSD

6. "Family home" is the design concept of the residential home portion of the SSD. The objective is to provide a family environment for the boarders during their temporary stay in the residential homes as far as possible. There are eight "Family homes" in the residential home portion, each with a sitting room and some bedrooms. Each bedroom can accommodate between two to six boarders depending on its size. Beds are separated by wardrobes to provide some space and privacy. New boarders will be assigned to smaller bedrooms where greater care can be given whilst other boarders will be assigned to bigger bedrooms to encourage social interaction. The above arrangements aim to provide a balance between privacy and "family life".

Surrounding slopes within the boundary of the proposed SSD

7. There are no slopes within the site boundary of the school. The slope surrounding the site is maintained by the Highways Department.

Methodology adopted in estimating the demand for school places and residential home places in SSDs

8. SSDs provide intensive support for students with moderate to severe emotional and behavioural difficulties to help them tide over their transient problems². These students are referred to SSD through the Central Co-ordinating Referral Mechanism (CCRM) operated jointly by EDB and Social Welfare Department (SWD) for vetting on the suitability and referral for placement in SSD and residential home (RH). Factors for consideration of referrals have not changed since the establishment of CCRM in 1997 and these include student's problems and adjustment difficulties in the areas of school, family and personal/social aspects. The background of each referral case is complicated and different in nature. A Vetting Committee has been set up under the CCRM which

² During their growth and development, some children and adolescents may have different kinds of adaptation problems, resulting in some transient emotional and behavioural difficulties of varying degrees of severity. They are often susceptible to various learning difficulties and lacking in effective learning skills, which affect their academic performance.

comprises educational psychologist, educational counsellor, inspector from EDB and Social Work Officer from the Correction Section of SWD, to vet referred cases³ and to ascertain the needs of individual cases for placement in SSD and boarding service from a professional perspective. Planning of provision of SSD places is done on a territory-wide basis having regard to the need for segregating SSD students from their undesirable peers by taking them temporarily away from their neighbourhood, the transient nature of students' difficulties and the relatively high turnover⁴ of students and hence the ever-changing profile of their residential area distribution.

9. In estimating the demand for school places of SSD, EDB takes into account the enrolment of existing SSD, the number of students referred to CCRM, the projected school age population¹ and the proportion of the target students requiring SSD support to the school age population, and impact of the education policies in force such as the new senior secondary academic structure, etc.

10. The provision of RH places for SSD, which is under the purview of the SWD, is based on the existing service demand that about 75% of SSD students are in need of residential care.

Response to the recommendations made by the Ombudsman in its Direct Investigation Report regarding admission of students to SSDs

11. In response to the recommendations made by the Ombudsman in its Direct Investigation Report on "Special Education Service for Students with Moderate to Severe Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties" issued in February 2012, EDB and SWD, after discussing with SSDs and RHs, have duly taken follow up actions to further improve the administration procedures for admission of students to SSDs / RHs as well as the subsequent re-integration of those students into mainstream education.

12. A gist of the follow up actions, completed to the satisfaction of the Ombudsman, is set out in the Appendix. The Ombudsman informed EDB on 29 August 2012 that they were satisfied with EDB's follow up, and they did not require further progress report from EDB in this respect.

³ Referrals can be made by social workers, student guidance personnel, educational psychologists, clinical psychologists and psychiatrists. Referrals from school personnel and social workers should be countersigned by their respective school head and centre-in-charge.

⁴ As the difficulties of the students are transient in nature, they should reintegrate into ordinary schools as soon as their behaviour and performance have improved.

Construction of an Annex to Baptist Lui Ming Choi Secondary School, Shatin, New Territories

Floating classes in the School

13. Originally designed as a 24-classroom secondary school, the School started to operate floating classes at senior secondary level (S4 to S7) in the 1980s.

The School's application for expansion

14. The School applied to the EDB for in-situ expansion in 2007. With the approval by the Permanent Secretary for Education in 2009 after internal vetting, we completed the technical feasibility study, the outline proposals and sketch design of the project from 2010 to 2013. Immediately following this, we sought funding from the Legislative Council Finance Committee in the 2013/14 legislative session. We then proceeded to consult the Shatin District Council in January 2014 and Legislative Council Panel on Education on 12 May 2014 for support.

Yours sincerely,



(Wendy Chung)
for Secretary for Education

Encl.

Appendix

EDB and SWD have accepted the Ombudsman's recommendations and implemented the measures as follows:

1. Referrers must provide updates on students in a timely manner

EDB and SWD have reminded the referrers to strictly observe the requirement for timely updating of the students' latest service need by submitting a standard form to CCRM on a monthly basis.

2. To meet the unsatisfied demand for SSD places

EDB will build a new SSD / RH for girls and relocate and expand an SSD / RH for boys, so as to increase school and residential places.

3. To ensure that all relevant parties start the process of filling the anticipated vacancies as soon as possible

EDB and SWD have required SSDs / RHs to report to CCRM at least once a month by phone and standard forms, on the existing vacancies and anticipated vacancies available within one month. CCRM will then refer cases on the waiting list to SSDs / RHs for admission.

4. To standardize the mechanism for reporting and filling available places

EDB and SWD have enhanced the mechanism for reporting and filling vacancies, and defined "estimated vacancies to be available soon" as vacancies to be available "within one month". The relevant guidelines in the respective circular have been updated for stakeholders' compliance.

5. To monitor the SSDs to ensure their compliance with the relevant requirements for reporting and filling available places

EDB and SWD have implemented the following monitoring mechanism to ensure that SSDs / RHs comply with the requirements for reporting and filling available places – (a) if an SSD / RH fails to provide comprehensive details in a timely manner in the monthly reporting of vacancies to CCRM, CCRM will give an oral or written advice to its principal / superintendent;

and (b) in case the SSD / RH fails to make improvement, CCRM will write to the management of its operating organization and request improvement. Warning letters will be issued whenever necessary.

6. To make more than one referral when a vacancy arises in an SSD so as to maximize admission

CCRM will refer “extra case(s)” on top of the reported number to SSD / RH for follow up if a secondary section of an SSD or RH reports five vacancies or more at one time. SSDs / RHs must strictly adhere to the 28-day rule to complete the admission process. For cases failing to complete the admission process within the time limit, the day / boarding places will be allocated to the “extra case(s)”.

7. To improve the procedures of making referrals to SSD

In order to improve the procedures of referring cases to SSDs and enhance its efficiency, when SWD informs EDB of the vacancies in a particular RH and the referral list, it will send in parallel the referral list and contact details of the referrers to SSDs / RHs concerned. This is to facilitate the SSD / RH to contact the referrers as soon as possible to arrange interviews for the students.

8. To be more flexible with the class size

With effect from the 2012/13 school year, SSDs are allowed to admit more students for individual classes on the following three conditions in order to meet the demand for school places (a) the total enrolment of the whole school not exceeding the total number of places of the approved classes; (b) the total number of students in a class not exceeding the permitted capacity of that classroom; and (c) no adverse impact on the learning of the students.

9. Criteria for discharging students and handling long stay cases

EDB, SWD and SSDs / RHs have carried out the improvement measures with a view to ensuring that similar procedures and criteria are adopted by SSDs / RHs for handling the discharge arrangements and following up with those students with relatively longer period of stay. Specifically, SSDs and RHs should assess the suitability for discharging a student in consideration of

his / her behavior, family and academic conditions. When a student has stayed for about one and a half years, SSD / RH will conduct a comprehensive review on his/her progress and discuss the discharge arrangements with a timeframe.

10. Review on long stay cases

EDB, SWD, SSDs and RHs have established a review mechanism for handling long stay cases. Under the mechanism, SSDs are required to provide, on a regular basis, explanations for long stay cases and the discharge plan. Based on the information provided by SSDs, EDB will study individual long stay cases and provide advice for the schools as appropriate.