



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部教育局
Education Bureau

Government Secretariat, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

本局檔號 Our Ref.: EDB(I) ADM/90/3
來函檔號 Your Ref.: CB4/PL/ED

電話 Telephone: 3509 8504
傳真 Fax Line: 2573 3467

13 March 2018

Clerk to Panel
Panel on Education
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

(Attn: Ms Angel Wong)

Dear Ms Wong,

Panel on Education

Issues relating to the safety of drinking water in schools

I refer to the letter dated 27 February from the Secretariat on the captioned subject, conveying Hon Helena Wong's request for information from the Education Bureau (EDB) on drinking water safety in schools. The following information is provided for reference please.

As expressed by the Government in the paper to the Legislative Council House Committee on 11 July 2016 reporting the follow-up actions after the lead in drinking water incident in 2015¹, EDB attaches great importance to the drinking water quality at the premises of primary and secondary schools and kindergartens, as well as students' health. We have reminded schools and kindergartens from time to time to put in place appropriate measures for ensuring drinking water safety. Since 2016, EDB has issued letters to all schools and kindergartens before the start of every school year to remind them to make suitable arrangements in accordance with

¹ Please refer to Legislative Council Paper No. CB(2)1866/15-16(01) for details.

the advice from the Department of Health (DH) and Water Supplies Department (WSD) related to drinking water safety. Amongst others, schools and kindergartens were reminded to flush at taps before drinking or cooking as appropriate after a prolonged period of stagnation and to drain away water in wall-mounted dispensers before use every morning. They were also advised to refer to the information related to drinking water safety previously circulated as well as newly updated on EDB's webpage.

EDB has been maintaining close liaison with WSD in respect of drinking water safety in schools and continued to assist in disseminating relevant information and advices from WSD to schools and kindergartens to enhance their understanding on safety of drinking water, e.g. the pamphlet on "Water Use Tips" distributed in January 2017 which highlighted the advice related to flushing of water taps. In addition, in collaboration with WSD, a total of four seminars were organised again in Q1 2017 for kindergartens to provide them with tips and guidance on ways to ensure drinking water safety in their premises.

After the incident of excess lead in drinking water in 2015, the Government has engaged consultants to study the experience and practices of handling drinking water safety in other countries, and set up the International Expert Panel on Drinking Water Safety (IEP) to advise on related matters. Taking into account overseas practices and IEP's advice, the Development Bureau (DEVB) and WSD have formulated the Action Plan for Enhancing Drinking Water Safety in Hong Kong ("the Action Plan"), which was promulgated on 21 September 2017, with a view to further safeguarding drinking water quality in Hong Kong. Amongst others, having reviewed relevant information and the situation of drinking water supply at local schools and kindergartens, IEP agreed that the risk of exposure to harmful materials from drinking water at school premises for students is low. So long as schools practise flushing of water taps as a routine, not only is it very effective to reduce lead content in drinking water, it can also avoid other water quality issues such as discolouration and turbidity due to corrosion or deposition of minerals in the water pipes. In addition, since drinking water taken by a student in school (including kindergarten) amounts to only a portion of his or her total daily drinking water consumption, and that the targets of water sampling under WSD's Enhanced Water Quality Monitoring Programme launched in end 2017 cover all local water accounts including kindergartens and schools, IEP considered that there is no need to arrange for separate water tests for kindergartens and schools. Key advice by IEP has been uploaded onto DEVB's website at :

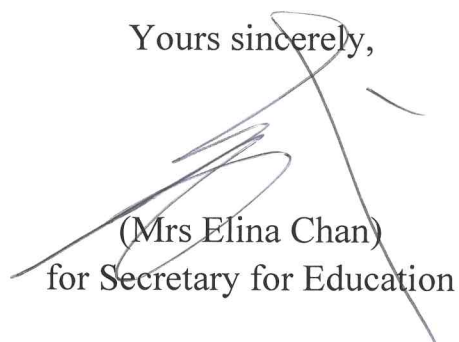
https://www.devb.gov.hk/filemanager/en/content_31/IEP_Advice.pdf (only available in English).

Besides, after announcing the Action Plan in late September 2017, DEVB and WSD has collaborated with EDB and DH to organise a total of four seminars in late October the same year for briefing schools and kindergartens on measures related to drinking water safety at school premises under the Action Plan, as well as other health messages on safeguarding drinking water safety at school premises and presence of metals in drinking water. Contents of the presentation at the said seminars have been uploaded onto EDB's website for schools' perusal at any time.

As regards the improvement works in response to excess lead found in some of the water samples collected from a secondary school in 2015, remedial works for pipings serving for potable consumption at the school (including all drinking fountains and taps at the Home Economics Room for food preparation purpose) were completed in March 2016. Replacement works of water pipes for the assembly hall, toilets and irrigation system at the roof garden were also completed in November 2016. EDB will continue to liaise with WSD and the school concerned and follow up with the remaining pipeworks for non-potable consumption at special rooms taking account of the circumstances of the school.

We value the quality of drinking water at school premises and will continue to keep close communication with WSD and DH in order to provide schools and kindergartens with the latest information and advice on drinking water safety at school premises as appropriate.

Yours sincerely,



(Mrs Elina Chan)
for Secretary for Education