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

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20 May 2021

Clerk to Panel on Education
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Attn: Ms Angel Wong)

Dear Ms WONG,

Panel on Education
Follow-up to the Special Meeting on 25 February 2021

Your letter dated 1 March 2021 refers. The requested supplementary information in both Chinese and English related to the discussion at the captioned meeting is provided at the appendix.

For enquiries, please contact Ms Kitty HO of this Bureau on 2863 4681.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to be 'R. Cheung'.

(Ms Rio CHEUNG)
for Secretary for Education

Panel on Education

Supplementary Information Further to the Discussion at the Special Meeting on 25 February 2021

- (a) Number of school bullying cases received since the second half of 2019, among which how many involved victims being bullied by teachers and how many were related to families of police officers

During the period from 1 July 2019 to 31 December 2020, the Education Bureau (EDB) received a total of 32 complaints and reported cases about school bullying (including 25 cases regarding complaints and expression of discontent relating to suspected bullying of Police officers' children in connection with the social turmoil), among which 13 cases involved suspected bullying of students by teachers.

- (b) Party that conducted the investigation of the cases in (a) above, the investigation procedures, the problems identified, the follow-up actions taken and the recommended improvement measures

Under the Enhanced School Complaint Management Arrangements, schools should handle complaints from students, parents or members of the public against the daily operation or internal affairs of schools in accordance with their school-based complaint handling mechanisms and procedures. Upon receipt of a complaint about suspected bullying, the school concerned should assign designated staff members for handling the case as appropriate (if the complaint involves teacher(s), the teacher(s) concerned should not take part in the investigation) and reply to the complainant after the investigation is completed. In case a teacher is found to be the bully, the school has to report it to the EDB. We will follow up on the case in a serious manner.

If the EDB receives a bullying complaint, it will be referred to the school for direct handling upon seeking the complainant's consent under the Enhanced School Complaint Management Arrangements. The EDB requests schools to pay close attention to the situation of the students concerned and provide them with counselling. Schools should also maintain close contact with the parents concerned and work with them to safeguard the well-being of students. Besides, a school is required to submit a copy of the reply to the EDB after an investigation has been completed, so that the EDB would see whether the school has acted in accordance with the school-based procedures to handle the complaints properly, and take follow-up actions if considered necessary. If the nature of the complaint is serious, the EDB will conduct direct investigation.

Regarding the conduct of teachers, the EDB has reminded schools that, as employers of teachers, they have the responsibility to supervise their teachers. If a teacher is found to have committed an act of professional misconduct or misbehaved, a school should, in compliance with the Employment Ordinance, the Codes of Aid and the terms of the employment contract signed with the teacher concerned, take appropriate disciplinary actions in accordance with the school-based mechanism. For a complaint involving suspected professional misconduct of teachers (e.g. suspected bullying of students), when referring to a school, the EDB will request the school to submit an investigation report to the Bureau after completing the investigation. For substantiated cases, the EDB will scrutinise the information available and conduct a comprehensive examination of the case in accordance with the Education Ordinance and from the perspective of education professionalism. If the Permanent Secretary for Education, after considering the details of the case, opines that the teacher is not a fit and proper person to be a teacher, she will cancel the teacher's registration pursuant to the Education Ordinance. If the case does not warrant the cancellation of registration, the Permanent Secretary may also, in light of the nature and severity of the case, take different levels of follow-up actions including the issue of advisory, warning or reprimand letters so as to allow the teacher concerned to make improvements.

Regarding the cases mentioned in (a), the schools have handled the cases in accordance with the guidelines on handling school bullying issued by the EDB and provided emotional support and counselling to the students affected, as well as explained the incidents to the parents concerned. For complaints that are substantiated after investigations, the schools have taken disciplinary actions against the teachers/students involved. Besides, the EDB has conducted follow-up investigations into the cases involving teachers and taken appropriate actions.

(c) Implementation details, key performance indicators and effectiveness of the support measures/programmes/activities in preventing and handling school bullying

The EDB adopts a multi-pronged approach to implement the policy of prevention and handling of school bullying through different aspects. These include further nurturing students' positive values and empathy for others through school curriculum, learning and teaching resources and diversified student learning activities. Regarding student guidance programmes/activities, the details are as follows:

- Understanding Adolescent Project (Primary) (UAP) - At present, a majority of public sector primary schools (434 schools) have joined the UAP and more than 20 000 upper primary students are benefited every year. Findings from students' evaluation questionnaires indicated that students who had participated in the small group, adventure-based and parent-child activities offered by the Intensive Programme (IP) under the UAP generally made progress in emotional control, problem solving, goal setting and

interpersonal relationship. Both parents and teachers considered that the project would help enhance students' optimism, sense of belonging towards their families and schools, communication skills and co-operation with others. Starting from the 2019/20 school year, the EDB has enhanced the existing IP (including outing, day camp/parent-child camp, community/voluntary services and individual session) through adding three group sessions for students at Primary 5 and 6 levels and one group session for their parents. The group size of the IP has also been reduced to provide more appropriate services for students in need.

- Enhanced Smart Teen Project - Each year, around 2 000 Secondary 2 to 5 students from about 70 secondary schools participate in the 5-day-and-4-night Smart Teen Challenge Camps co-organised by various disciplinary forces and the EDB, as well as the post-camp follow-up activities held by schools. These activities have enhanced students' self-discipline, self-confidence, team spirit, resilience and relationship with teachers. The EDB also organises training camps and workshops for teachers every year, with a view to equipping them with the skills in leading and implementing the project. As the project has yielded remarkable outcome and has been well received by schools, we have started to increase the training quotas by phases from the 2018/19 school year so that more students will be benefited.
- “WE” Positive Dynamics Scheme - Schools can make use of teaching materials on personal growth education provided by the EDB to enable students to recognise themselves, enhance self-confidence, and learn to devote to and help others. Moreover, school activities on promoting an appreciation culture can be organised to guide students to appreciate themselves and others. In the 2020/21 school year, over 60 primary and secondary schools have participated in the scheme. After completing the scheme, schools are required to conduct a self-assessment on its effectiveness through the Assessment Program for Affective and Social Outcomes, questionnaires or interviews, etc. Most of the participating schools reflected that the positive culture in school had been enhanced.
- Harmonious School – Anti-bullying Campaign - In the 2020/21 school year, about 100 primary and secondary schools as well as special schools have taken part in the campaign. Participating schools have conducted relevant activities covering different themes such as “understanding bullying”, “caring”, “harmony” and “respect” with resources provided by the EDB. In addition, the EDB has also launched the Harmonious School Net and Peer Mediation Training Project for schools, with the aims of training student leaders to foster a harmonious school culture and enabling them to get familiar with peer mediation skills, so that they can assist schools in resolving minor conflicts and disputes among students, thereby preventing the problems from worsening and resulting in bullying cases.

Students and schools are asked to fill in questionnaires after completing the projects, and positive feedback from the participants has been received.

- The Wise NET School Recognition Scheme – The scheme aims to encourage schools, by adopting the Whole School Approach, to motivate students to become wise Internet users, including the prevention of cyber bullying. Participating schools will review the tasks/items implemented or completed for promoting healthy use of the Internet targeting at four levels, i.e. schools, teachers, students and parents. Schools will be commended for implementing or completing three or more items at each level. Around 30 schools were commended in 2020.
- The Caring School Award Scheme – Jointly organised by the EDB and relevant non-governmental organisations, the scheme serves as a campaign and a sharing platform for promoting a caring and positive culture in primary and secondary schools, special schools and kindergartens, with a view to encouraging more schools and stakeholders to work hand in hand in contributing their efforts to care for others. Schools are required to make self-evaluation on their performance in five aspects, i.e. the belief they hold in the promotion of a caring culture, leadership, environmental factors such as supporting measures, systems and atmosphere conducive to a caring culture, concrete assistance rendered to the needy, and the willingness and ability to share and inspire. Upon ascertaining schools' self-evaluation on their performances by the judging panel, the schools concerned will be awarded as a "Caring School". Grand and merit awards will also be presented to schools with outstanding performance. The scheme has received overwhelming support with about 430 schools taking part in the 2020/21 school year. More than 100 schools have been awarded for 10 consecutive years and around 10 schools have been awarded for 15 consecutive years.

In respect of supporting schools in handling and preventing school bullying, the EDB has provided schools with the School Administration Guide in which the guidelines on the handling and prevention of bullying incidents stipulate the relevant handling procedures, methods and follow-up actions. According to the prevailing guidelines, schools should notify the EDB if the school bullying cases are of a more severe nature (e.g. teachers being the bullies, incidents involving brutal violence, injuries or deaths). The EDB will seriously follow up on every case. If suspected maltreatment is involved, schools may consult the Social Welfare Department (SWD) direct so that case referral and counselling services can be provided as soon as possible. For serious cases, schools should contact the Police immediately to seek assistance. According to the prevailing procedures, the EDB will liaise with schools, the SWD and the Police on appropriate ways to handle the cases. When handling school bullying incidents, the school management, guidance and discipline team(s), professionals and parents, as well as the EDB, the SWD and the Police, perform different roles in dealing with the bullies

and victims by means of appropriate intervention, support, mediation, punishment and follow-up, etc., in order to prevent the occurrence of bullying incidents in schools and safeguard the well-being of students.

- (d) EDB's view on suggested anti-school bullying initiatives such as the setting up of a designated hotline for reporting school bullying and the installation of closed circuit television system at schools

Regarding the enhancement of anti-bullying measures in relation to cases where hostility, bullying or violence are resulted from differences in stance, opinion, or occupation and background of students' family members, the EDB has kept reminding schools to pay special attention to the emotion of students who are more likely to encounter bullying in different periods and their interaction with schoolmates. Schools are also reminded to carefully protect the personal data of students and their family members and not to disclose the family background of any students to others. The EDB issued a letter to all primary and secondary schools in August 2019, explaining the basic principles encompassing those on school bullying that schools should observe amid the social incidents. We also urged schools to re-examine or reiterate their school-based anti-bullying policies and measures, and to ensure their effective implementation by the teaching staff. Furthermore, the EDB issued a circular memorandum in June 2020, calling on schools to enhance the follow-up work and the relevant support at the school level for students who need guidance and discipline support. Schools should nurture students' positive values and thinking as well as formulate and implement a personalised follow-up plan for individual students in accordance with the circumstances. In view of the social situation and schools' needs, we will update the relevant guidelines in a timely manner for the purpose of supporting schools in better handling and preventing school bullying.

To further enhance schools' support for students in need, we organised a webinar titled "Caring for Our Students and Helping them Get Back on the Right Track" in August 2020, inviting the Hong Kong Police Force, Hong Kong Correctional Services Department and a non-governmental organisation to brief school personnel on relevant support from the departments and organisation concerned. In late March and mid-April 2021, we invited social workers with experience in dealing with young offenders to hold a webinar titled "Journey together with Care – Back to the Right Track" for primary and secondary schools respectively, so as to share the strategies to prevent improper behaviours and support students who have breached the rules. We have also re-designed the relevant lesson plans for use by teachers for students at upper primary and junior secondary levels. Through learning activities on game rules, family rules and class rules, students can discuss and reflect on the effect of the rules, as well as the consequences of not following the rules. In addition, the EDB's guidance professional will visit schools to provide support in respect of helping students develop their self-discipline and abide by the rules. Support will be rendered to schools in the form of professional

consultation and exchanges, with a view to enhancing the related work through a multi-pronged approach.

Currently, any person (including students and parents) who wishes to report bullying cases to the EDB may approach the respective Regional Education Offices of the EDB and submit relevant information of the case by telephone, e-mail or in person, so that the EDB will look into the matter and follow up with the school concerned. The person can also call the EDB hotline at 2891 0088 to report the case. The relevant information has been uploaded onto the EDB's website (<https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/contact-us/index.html>). As far as prevention of school bullying is concerned, installing closed-circuit television monitoring systems might not be effective in preventing or reducing the occurrence of school bullying. Instead, we attach importance to fostering students' respect for others, differences and diverse views, and cultivating their empathy as well as the acquisition of communication and social skills through education, so as to assist them in establishing genuine friendships with peers and enhance their sense of belonging to school. The EDB has been keeping in close contact with schools and offering professional advice on their handling of bullying incidents, including how to help the students involved rectify their behaviour and re-create a harmonious school environment through disciplinary and guidance efforts, and how to enhance the anti-discrimination and anti-bullying awareness of students and school personnel through diversified activities.