

Information Paper

**Improving Student-Teacher Ratio in
Primary and Secondary Schools**

Purpose

This paper describes briefly the student-teacher ratio for primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong in recent years, and provides relevant information in other countries for comparison.

Present Situation

2. Student-teacher ratio refers to the average number of students per teacher. Over the past few years, the student-teacher ratios for both primary and secondary schools ¹ have improved steadily. From the 1993/94 to 1998/99 school years, the student-teacher ratio for secondary schools has decreased from 20.6:1 to 19.0:1 ². For primary schools, the ratio has also gradually dropped from 25.2:1 in the 1993/94 school year to 22.3:1 in the 1998/99 school year. It is projected that the student-teacher ratios for both secondary and primary schools would continue to improve in the next school year. Relevant statistics are at the Annex.

¹ In calculating the student-teacher ratios, only public sector schools (excluding special schools) are included.

² The student-teacher ratios for the 1998/99 school year are provisional figures only.

Measures to Improve Student-teacher Ratios

3. In recent years, the student-teacher ratios for schools in Hong Kong have improved because the Government has continuously provided additional teaching posts for public sector schools. For secondary schools, additional posts have been provided by the Government since the 1980s to enhance language teaching, counselling service, library services and extra-curricular activities. Each secondary school was also provided with one to two additional teachers in the 1994/95 and 1995/96 school years to enhance teaching, and to provide additional services such as the whole-school approach to guidance. As for primary schools, the Government has increased the teacher to class ratio in order to reduce teacher workload. Starting from the 1992/93 school year, the ratio for whole-day primary school has been increased by phases from 1.2:1 to 1.4:1. As for bisessional primary schools, the ratio has been increased from 1.2:1 to 1.4:1. As from 1993/94 school year. Starting from the same school year, the Government also reduced by phases the number of pupils per class. As a result of these measures, each primary school has been provided with an average of two additional teachers. In the 1997/98 school year, the Government also provided additional Student Guidance Teachers for primary schools to enhance guidance services.

4. In the current school year, the Government has allocated additional resources to provide extra teachers for public sector schools:

- to provide each secondary school with one Native English-speaking Teacher on top of the establishment;
- to provide additional English teachers for secondary schools using Chinese as the medium of instruction. Each secondary school can

employ one to four additional teachers depending on the number of classes; and

- to provide one additional teacher for each whole-day primary school or bi-sessional primary school with 12 classes or more to support the Chinese and English Extensive Reading Schemes and to co-ordinate library services.

In addition, starting from the next school year, 250 secondary and primary schools will each be provided with one additional teacher to co-ordinate IT- related teaching and learning activities. For the measures mentioned above, the Government will provide existing secondary and primary schools with some 490 and 670 additional teaching posts respectively in the next three school years.

Comparison with Other Countries

5. Although the student-teacher ratios for primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong fall behind those for schools in the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia, they compare reasonably with the Mainland and neighbouring Asian countries such as Japan, Korea and Singapore³. For instance, in 1997, the student-teacher ratios for primary schools in UK, USA and Australia ranged between 16:1 to 19:1 while those of the aforesaid Asian countries varied between the lowest at 19:1 and the highest at 31:1. The ratio in Hong Kong was 23.2:1.

³ The information on student-teacher ratios of various countries are from World Education Indicators, UNESCO

6. At secondary level, the student-teacher ratios for secondary schools in 1997 in UK, USA and Australia ranged from 13:1 to 15:1, and those in the Mainland and the three Asian countries mentioned above ranged from 14:1 to 24:1. The student-teacher ratio in Hong Kong was 19.5:1.

Conclusion

7. With more primary schools converting to whole-day operation and the implementation of new support measures, the number of teachers will be increased and hence the student-teacher ratios will continue to improve.

8. Quality education is dependent on a wide range of factors, including leadership of school heads, teacher quality, teaching environment, suitability of the curriculum, school culture, class size, and support given to schools etc. In order to enable teachers to take better care of their students, the Government will continue to strengthen support for schools and teachers, and will review the class size of schools at an appropriate time.

Education Department
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**Student-teacher Ratios
for Public Sector Primary and Secondary Schools in Hong Kong**

School Year	Student-teacher ratio	
	Secondary schools	Primary schools
1993/94	20.6:1	25.2:1
1994/95	20.5:1	24.5:1
1995/96	19.5:1	23.8:1
1996/97	19.5:1	23.2:1
1997/98	19.5:1	22.7:1
1998/99 #	19.0:1	22.3:1
1999/2000 *	18.2:1	21.8:1

Provisional figures only

* Projected on the basis of the number of students and teachers in the 1997/98 school year, taking account of the projected number of students in the relevant age group based on population projections, projected number of operating classes and additional teachers arising from improvement measures.