

On 20 January 2003

LegCo Panel on Education
Reservation of School Sites

Introduction

This paper briefs Members on the number of school sites reserved and the Administration's plan for the use of these sites.

Background

2. On 18 December 2000 and 15 January 2001, the Administration briefed the Panel on the availability of some 200 sites reserved for school development and the factors affecting their availability. Members urged the Administration to advance the availability of these sites.

3. We have carried out a comprehensive land search, following a detailed review of the demand and supply of school sites and taking into account the latest population forecast. We are pleased to report that, with the support of relevant bureaux and departments, we have now reserved adequate sites to meet the Government's committed objectives. Details are set out in paragraphs 4 to 14 below. Furthermore, we have reserved a land bank of 41 and 51 additional school sites to be available by 2005 and 2008 respectively. A breakdown of these sites by district and the year available is at Annex. We intend to use some of these sites to re-provision existing schools which have poor physical conditions. Details of our plan are set out in paragraphs 15 to 17 below.

Provision of adequate school places to meet population demand

4. Government's policy is to provide nine-year free and universal basic education and highly subsidized senior secondary education. Between now and the 2008/09 school year, we would build 20 secondary schools to meet new demand arising from population growth. Adequate school sites have already been reserved for this purpose.

Whole-day primary schooling

5. Government's target is to provide whole-day schooling for 60% of primary students by the 2002/03 school year, and to implement whole-day primary schooling for virtually all students by the 2007/08 school year. We have achieved the 60% interim target through, among other measures, the construction of 78 new schools between 1998 and 2002. For full implementation, another 48 new schools are required based on the previous population projection. However, 19 of these 48 schools could no longer be justified because of the projected decline in student population between now and 2007/08. These 19 schools are located in Central and Western, Eastern, Kowloon City, Wong Tai Sin, Sai Kung, Tsuen Wan and Tuen Mun districts.

6. Other than population demand, we also have to take into account other factors, such as parental choice and the popularity of a school, in planning the conversion from bi-sessional to whole-day primary schooling. Some "popular" schools may be located in districts where the "local" student population is dropping and hence new schools may not be justified on the basis of population demand. Yet, converting these "popular" and fully-enrolled bi-sessional schools, which attract students from other districts, into whole-day operation by phasing out one session would not be in the interest of students. Having regard to these and related considerations, including the existing financial

stringency, we intend to keep 12 out of the 19 new school projects for whole-day conversion purpose. We shall continue to monitor the situation and make necessary adjustments as circumstances change.

7. On the other hand, due to an upsurge of student population in Sham Shui Po, Kwai Tsing, North, Yuen Long and Islands districts as revealed in the latest population projection, 15 additional primary schools will be built in these five districts by 2007. All the sites required have been reserved.

Development of senior secondary schools

8. We are committed to providing subsidized senior secondary and vocational education for all Secondary Three students who are able and willing to continue their study starting from the 2002/03 school year. We need to build a total of 19 senior secondary schools from the 2003/04 to 2006/07 school years. Adequate sites have been reserved.

Development of schools operating in DSS through-train mode

9. To increase diversity and flexibility in the education system, and to provide more choice for parents, we encourage the establishment of direct subsidy scheme (DSS) schools, in particular, “through-train” DSS schools to provide continuity in the curriculum and facilitate whole-person development of students from primary to senior secondary education. Between now and the 2008/09 school year, seven new “through-train” DSS schools will commence operation. Sites have been reserved for this purpose. Where practicable and possible, we would encourage school sponsoring bodies which have been allocated the sites to take the opportunity to re-provision sub-standard primary schools under their charge and operate a “through-train” secondary school so as to minimize any surplus provision.

Private independent schools

10. Same as DSS schools, private independent schools (PISs) are introduced to increase diversity and choice. Between now and the 2007/08 school year, 10 PISs have been planned. Adequate sites have been reserved.

11. At present, only two PISs have commenced operation. With this very limited number of PISs in operation at this initial stage of development, it is difficult to project the overall demand for PIS. Hence, PISs are not at present counted towards the projected supply of schools places under the current mechanism for the planning and provision of school places. As PISs have a lot of flexibility over the curriculum, they provide a useful supplement to international schools to meet unforeseen, and variable, demand from expatriate children of senior executives or professional staff of multinational corporations in Hong Kong. We will review after three to five years how PIS places should be taken into account in planning the supply of school places.

Closure of high cost schools

12. At present, some 30 schools have an operating cost which is more than 100% of the average cost. These are largely small schools or unpopular schools with low enrolment which, due to a lack of scale, are not only costly to operate but also not able to provide all-round education for the students. We intend to merge, relocate or phase out some of the schools over the next five years, depending on the overall provision of school places at the district level, parental choice, class structure, economy of scale and operating standard of the schools. A degree of surplus supply of school places is necessary for parental choice to make an impact on student enrolment and differential between schools.

Provision of more post-secondary places

13. To meet the Chief Executive's policy target of providing more post-secondary opportunities for our senior secondary school leavers, the Government has implemented an interest-free start-up loan scheme and reserved \$5 billion for the purpose. Institutions may apply for the loan to cover the costs of rental, purchase and construction of premises for providing full-time accredited post-secondary programmes. So far, ten new campuses are in operation and two are under construction.

14. In addition, the Government has earmarked five sites for allocation to post-secondary education institutions to develop purpose-built campuses. Applications were invited in late 2002 and we aim to finalize the selection by mid-2003. The Administration will identify further sites for this purpose if there is proven need from the sector.

Reprovisioning and Redevelopment (R&R)

15. At present, about 300 existing primary and secondary schools (33%) have a site area of less than 3 000 square metres (the standard site area for a Y2K primary school and secondary school is 6 200 and 6 900 square metres respectively), and about 350 schools (40%) were built more than 30 years ago.

16. The continued existence of the above schools is incompatible with Hong Kong's vision as Asia's world city that attaches the greatest importance to education. Many of these schools should be redeveloped/ reprovisioned. Starting from the next school year, we will launch a rolling programme to redevelop/ reprovision schools. Given the prevailing budgetary constraints, the number of projects each year will be small and will be subject to the availability of funds and land.

17. We will accord priority for relocation or redevelopment according to the following criteria:

- (a) schools which offer good quality education;
- (b) schools with grossly sub-standard facilities;
- (c) “SIP non-feasible” schools; and
- (d) school development that support the broad direction of education policy, e.g. “through-train” schools.

Way Forward

18. Subject to Members’ views, we shall implement the school development plans as set out in this paper and seek funding approval from the Finance Committee of LegCo at the appropriate time.

Education and Manpower Bureau

January 2003

Breakdown of School Sites by District and Availability

(as at January 2003)

	Available by 2005	Available by 2008	Total
Central & Western	0	0	0
Wan Chai	0	0	0
Eastern	0	6	6
Southern	1	2	3
Islands	1	2	3
Yau Tsim Mong	1	0	1
Kowloon City	5	6	11
Sham Shui Po	1	6	7
Wong Tai Sin	2	2	4
Kwun Tong	2	6	8
Sha Tin	8	0	8
Tai Po	5	2	7
North	1	2	3
Sai Kung	10	4	14
Tsuen Wan	0	0	0
Kwai Tsing	0	2	2
Tuen Mun	1	4	5
Yuen Long	3	7	10
Total	41	51	92