

**For information**

**LegCo Education Panel on Education**

**Pre-primary Service for Ethnic Minority Children**

This brief note is to provide supplementary information to members on the issue of pre-primary services for ethnic minority children raised at the special meeting held on 3 March 2003.

**Background**

2. Under the existing policy, all eligible local children, including ethnic minority children, are entitled to nine-year free and universal basic education. It is the Government's goal to integrate children of the ethnic groups who wish to settle permanently in Hong Kong into the local community and our mainstream education system. Sufficient places are provided for ethnic minorities both in pre-primary institutions to meet their developmental and educational needs at early ages and in public sector schools for delivery of basic education when they reach the age of nine-year free education.

**Present Position**

3. Care and education are the core needs of children at their earliest ages. For children development, edu-care programmes should be designed with due consideration to their family background and culture. Some pre-primary institutions are set up to nurture and educate children of individual culture groups for maintenance of culture and tradition. At present, there are five kindergartens situated in districts including Eastern, Yau Tsim Mong and Yuen Long, providing education service to 500 ethnic minority children. Some ethnic minorities attend international kindergartens which offer a non-local curriculum. There are 47 international kindergartens and 17 playgroups with a total population of 4 556 pupils and 964 children respectively.

4. On the other hand, some parents of ethnic minorities wish to integrate their children into the local community as early as possible. They choose to send children to local pre-primary institutions. Currently, there are 1 868 ethnic minority children receiving education in 350 local kindergartens and 266 ethnic minority children receiving services in 55 child care centres.

5. While it has always been our objective to help ethnic minority

children to benefit early in the mainstream education system so as to enable them to integrate better and faster into the local community, we recognize from experiences that the best pre-primary services are edu-care programmes considered appropriate by parents to cater for the different needs of their children at different developmental ages. We support pre-primary institutions offering the appropriate edu-care programmes to ethnic minorities. Under the same education principle, our public sector schools admit ethnic minority children. Among these, nine schools with a total provision of about 4 100 places have admitted a greater number of ethnic minority children. Apart from public sector schools, there are about 50 international schools that offer diversified curricula with about 33 000 places available for ethnic minority children.

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Social Welfare Department  
June 2003