

Information Note for meeting on
19 April 2004

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Schools not Allocated Primary One Class in 2004/05 School Year

Purpose

This paper provides Members with information on the 31 primary schools which are not allocated primary one class in the 2004/05 school year and the follow-up measures for these schools.

Background

2. According to the 2001-based Projected Population Distribution by District Council districts in 2001-2011, the total projected school age population aged 6-11 is estimated to decrease from 493,200 in 2002 to 410,600 in 2010, representing a 17% drop of 82,600 over eight years. As a result, there is a sharp decrease in the demand for primary school places in Hong Kong as a whole. The declining population in the 6-11 age group has led to reduction of classes in schools in many districts. The Public Accounts Committee also has called for action to reduce surplus school places, in particular, in under-utilized primary schools.

3. For the 2004/05 school year, the number of children applying for primary one allocation has dropped by 5,500 as compared to the figure of the last school year, resulting in a corresponding reduction of some 160 primary one classes.

Criteria for Operation of Primary One Class

4. The number of Primary 1 class(es) that a Government/aided school is allocated and may hence be granted public funds for their operation depends on a number of factors, including the number of classrooms available, the class structure and parental choices. Based on the number of children admitted by a school during the Discretionary

Places Admission stage and the result of computer analysis of the actual choices made by parents during the Central Allocation stage, the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) will work out the total number of children to be allocated to each primary school. This will form the basis for deciding the number of Primary 1 class(es) that a school is allocated in the following school year. To minimize the situation of under-enrolled classes in primary schools, if the total number of Primary 1 pupils allocated to the residual Primary 1 class in a school is less than 23 and there are still unfilled Primary 1 places in other schools of the same school net, the school may not be allocated that class.

5. If the total number of Primary 1 classes on applying the 23-threshold is insufficient to meet the demand in a school net, some schools may still be allocated the residual Primary 1 class even though the number of children allocated to it is below 23. In such cases, consideration will first be given to special factors such as whether the school is located in a remote area where there are no appropriate alternative schools. After taking into account the special factors, the selection of schools to operate their respective residual Primary 1 class will be based on the parental choice index in the Central Allocation stage. If the parental choice indices happen to be the same for some schools, the schools with the greater remaining number of children allocated will be given higher priority for the allocation of the additional Primary 1 class.

Overview of Schools not Allocated Primary Classes

6. Among the 31 schools which are not allocated primary one class in the 2004/05 school year, 7 of them are bi-sessional schools. These schools will phase out one session for whole-day conversion, which is in line with the existing policy of comprehensive whole-day primary schooling by 2007. The remaining 24 are mainly small-sized schools with the total number of classes ranging from 6 to 12, and only 4 of them have more than 12 classes. In these small schools, the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils and professional development with appropriate subject specialization for teachers is more difficult when the critical mass of teachers becomes too small. It is also noted that all the 31 schools have low parental choice indices (mostly among the bottom three in the school net) in Primary One Allocation 2004, as compared to the other primary schools in the same school net.

Follow-up measures

7. Since the 31 schools were informed in February about their situation of being not allocated primary one class in the 2004/05 school year, there have been frequent contacts between EMB and the schools individually. EMB officials and SEM also met with representatives of 23 primary schools concerned on 27 and 29 March respectively. (Note : The meeting did not involve the 7 bi-sessional schools which will phase out one session for whole-day conversion as well as 1 other school which will pursue merger with 2 primary schools in the same district.) In response to the requests made by these schools, EMB has proposed follow-up measures as set out below -

- (a) If the school considers itself to be providing education services of good quality, it may make a representation to EMB requesting EMB to conduct a special review on the school. Depending on the review result, the school concerned may be allowed to take part in the Primary One Allocation 2005;
- (b) Schools may request EMB to provide information and assistance for them to explore the feasibility of merger with another school;
- (c) Schools wishing to operate primary one class(es) with private funds and employing the same mode of operation for the schools' continual operation may submit proposal to EMB; and
- (d) EMB will make reference to the number of classes remaining in individual schools and decide on the year of ceasing the grants to each school with flexibility.

8. By 14 April 2004, EMB have received responses from 20 schools. Two requested EMB to conduct special review on the school and two were not yet decided on whether to make this request. The other 16 schools will explore other alternatives including merger with another school.

Education and Manpower Bureau
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