

For discussion on 14 May 2007

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Disposal and Use of Vacant School Premises

Purpose

This paper informs Members how the Administration is handling the disposal and use of vacant school premises.

Background

2. All along, individual school premises may become vacant for various reasons, e.g. after reprovisioning of a school to better-facilitated premises, after a school has ceased to operate, after a school has merged with another school and started to operate from another location, etc.

3. Following the implementation of consolidation policy since the 2003/04 school year for schools which are under-enrolled at Primary One level, some primary schools have not been allocated Primary One students and have either closed or will be phased out in the coming few years. Up to the 2006/07 school year, 39 primary schools without Primary One classes under the consolidation policy have ceased operation. Another 15 have confirmed that they will be ceasing operation in the 2007/08 school year. The relevant breakdown by district of these 54 schools is at **Annex A**¹.

Disposal and Use of Vacant School Premises

School and other educational uses

4. We have implemented a mechanism for the identification, screening and allocation of vacant school premises which we would like

¹ It is anticipated that some 25 schools currently without Primary One will cease operation beyond the 2007/08 school year under the consolidation arrangements. We are, however, not in a position to provide detailed information on the precise timing in which they will cease operation as this is subject to discussion between this Bureau and the school management concerned.

to re-cycle for school or other education uses. Once there is a prospect of individual premises being vacated in future, we will consider if the size, location and physical conditions of the premises would render it suitable for re-allocation for school use such as whole-day primary schooling, non-profit-making international school, reprovisioning and decanting (i.e. occupation by schools undergoing in-situ redevelopment or awaiting availability of permanent premises), etc. The demand for premises to support other educational purposes such as vocational training and post-secondary education will also be considered.

5. For premises which are considered suitable to be so re-cycled by the Education and Manpower Bureau, we will consult the relevant bureaux/departments to see if re-allocation for further school use or other educational uses as identified is possible having regard to the status of the land on which the premises are situated as well as the lease conditions (if any) involved, and to ascertain that the proposed non-school educational uses at the premises are in compliance with relevant ordinances and regulations. Where necessary, the Lands Department and Planning Department will verify whether there are any designated or competing uses for the sites in question (e.g. land sale or other specific Government, Institution or Community uses). For premises falling within private land, the land would have to be surrendered by the landowner or re-entered by the Government before it can be put to alternative uses².

6. Once the suitability and availability date of the premises are confirmed (usually no later than nine months before school closure), we shall invite applications for the designated uses as early as possible so as to minimize the idling time of the relevant premises. Where appropriate, we may first invite expressions of interest, on a non-committal basis, before inviting detailed proposals. In accordance with the current practice, allocation of vacant school premises is normally done through a competitive process. Specifically, as in the case of other school projects, we consider the allocation of vacant school premises for whole-day primary schooling, non-profit-making international school use and reprovisioning on the advice of the School Allocation Committee. The Committee comprises both official and non-official members who are familiar with the education system of Hong Kong.

² If the grantee of private land proposes any change of land use, the Lands Department will consider the proposal according to established policies and procedures. In cases involving private land without any breach of the lease conditions and in compliance with relevant ordinances and regulations, the right to use the land rests with the landowner and no re-entry action can be taken by the Government.

Premises not suitable for school or other education purposes

7. As for the remaining premises which are not suitable for school or other educational uses given their limited size, remote locations and/or poor physical conditions, they will be returned to or taken back, where appropriate, by the Government for disposal in accordance with established Government policy and/or relevant lease conditions. Should individual bureaux/departments indicate an interest to earmark any of these premises/sites that are on Government land³ for initiatives under their purview, the Lands Department and Planning Department will again verify whether there are any designated or competing uses for the sites and, depending on the verification results, the Government Property Agency (GPA)/the Lands Department would process bureaux/departments' requests in a timely manner according to the established policy. Subject to there being no other preferential uses, the Lands Department could then allocate the sites/premises to the interested user bureau/department through Government Land Allocation. Where appropriate, the bureau/department concerned may then lease the sites/premises to non-Governmental organizations (NGOs) through appropriate means.

8. For vacant premises already returned to the Government and vested with the Lands Department or GPA, the two departments will process the applications according to their established policy in a timely manner should they receive any applications (say from NGOs) for use of the sites/premises subsequently.

Current position

9. Among the 54 primary schools that have ceased/will cease operation under the consolidation policy up to the 2007/08 school year, 21 (mostly vacated/to be vacated in or after the 2006/07 school year) have already been allocated or earmarked for educational uses such as whole-day primary schooling, non-profit making international school use, decanting, expansion of other school and other educational uses, etc. as per the mechanism in paragraphs 4 to 6 above. The remaining 33 (the majority being the premises of former village schools) are found unsuitable to be used further for educational purposes because they are too small, located in remote areas and/or with sub-standard physical conditions. These premises have already been/will be returned where appropriate to the Government for disposal in accordance with

³ For premises falling within private land, the land would have to be surrendered by the landowner or re-entered by the Government before it can be put to alternative uses as mentioned above.

established Government policy and/or relevant lease conditions as described in paragraphs 7 and 8 above. The relevant breakdown by use type and by district is at **Annex B**.

Way Forward

10. The Administration has been making its best endeavour to put suitable vacant school premises to gainful use in the shortest possible time after the premises are vacated. As an ongoing process, this Bureau will closely liaise with the relevant bureaux/departments in order to identify premises suitable for further school or other educational uses and re-allocate them accordingly, or otherwise dispose of the premises for any other uses where appropriate in an expeditious manner.

Education and Manpower Bureau
May 2007

Annex A

**Number of Primary Schools Closed / to be Closed
under the Consolidation Policy**

District	School year in which the relevant schools ceased/will cease operation				
	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Central & Western	0	0	0	0	0
Hong Kong East	0	0	0	0	1
Islands	0	0	1	2	0
Kowloon City	0	0	0	1	1
Kwai Tsing	0	0	1	2	0
Kwun Tong	0	0	0	0	1
North	0	1	2	5	1
Sai Kung	0	1	0	0	2
Sham Shui Po	0	0	0	1	2
Sha Tin	0	0	0	1	1
Southern	0	0	0	0	0
Tai Po	0	3	0	1	1
Tsuen Wan	0	0	0	0	1
Tuen Mun	0	0	1	3	0
Wan Chai	0	0	0	1	0
Wong Tai Sin	0	0	0	0	0
Yau Tsim Mong	0	0	0	1	1
Yuen Long	0	0	3	8	3
Total (No. out of the “Total” suitable for school or other educational uses)	0(0)	5(0)	8(1)	26(10)	15(10)

Annex B**Uses of Premises of Primary Schools which have Ceased/will Cease Operation**

District	Use of Premises			
	School uses ^{Note 1}	Decanting (i.e. occupation by schools undergoing in-situ redevelopment or awaiting availability of permanent premises)	Other educational uses ^{Note 2}	Premises not suitable for education uses and returned/to be returned to Government for disposal
Central & Western	0	0	0	0
Hong Kong East	0	1	0	0
Islands	1	0	0	2
Kowloon City	1	0	1	0
Kwai Tsing	1	0	2	0
Kwun Tong	0	1	0	0
North	0	0	0	9
Sai Kung	0	1	1	1
Sham Shui Po	1	1	1	0
Sha Tin	1	0	1	0
Southern	0	0	0	0
Tai Po	1	0	0	4
Tsuen Wan	0	0	1	0
Tuen Mun	0	0	0	4
Wan Chai	0	1	0	0
Wong Tai Sin	0	0	0	0
Yau Tsim Mong	1	0	1	0
Yuen Long	0	0	1	13
Total:	7	5	9	33

Note 1: "School uses" include mainly whole-day primary schooling, non-profit-making international school use and expansion of adjacent school.

Note 2: "Other educational uses" include onscreen marking centre of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, vocational training centres, post-secondary education uses, etc.