

For information on

17 June 2009

Legislative Council Panel on Education
Arrangements of Class Suspension under Human Swine Influenza

Purpose

This paper informs members of the precautionary work and the arrangements of class suspension in schools against the spread of Human Swine Influenza (HSI).

Precautionary Work

2. Since the first report of human infection of HSI in Mexico and the United States of America in April, the Education Bureau (EDB) has been working closely with the Department of Health (DH) and maintaining close contact and communication with schools.

3. To remind schools to guard against the spread of HSI, the EDB issued the first letter on prevention of HSI to schools on 27 April 2009 with the advisory letter from the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the DH. A series of nearly 10 letters to advise schools to step up all preventive measures against HSI were further issued between April and June. Advisory messages and guidelines from the CHP were also conveyed to schools in the first instance.

4. To assist schools to formulate contingency measures against HSI, the "Handbook on Prevention of Human Swine Influenza in Schools" and the "Guidelines on the Prevention and Management of Human Swine Influenza in Schools" were compiled by EDB and CHP respectively and uploaded onto EDB's homepage for schools' reference.

5. A one-off grant of \$3,000 has also been disbursed to all schools in Hong Kong to help them implement the various preventive measures and purchase the necessary cleansing materials to guard against the spread of HSI.

6. In addition, a series of discussion sessions have also been held with the representatives from kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools and special schools to update them of the latest situation of HSI and to consult their views on the various arrangements including class suspension in the light of the development of the disease. A letter was also issued to all schools on 12 May, informing them that as a prudent measure, EDB would consider suspending first all kindergartens, kindergartens-cum-child care centres, primary schools and special schools for 14 days in the first instance of a confirmed local HSI case with no identifiable link.

Arrangements of Class Suspension

7. A local case of HSI was confirmed on 10 June. It was further confirmed on 11 June by CHP as the first local HSI outbreak affecting a total of 12 students without linkage to imported cases. The pandemic situation was carefully studied and thoroughly discussed at the meeting of the Steering Committee on Pandemic Strategies in the morning of 11 June and it was decided that classes of all kindergartens, kindergartens-cum-child care centres, primary schools (including English Schools Foundation and International) and special schools (except the Schools for Social Development with secondary section only) would be suspended for 14 days from 12 to 25 June. Based on the assessment and advice of the DH, the EDB would decide on whether classes could be resumed or further suspended and make announcement on or before 23 June.

8. We have further consulted the primary school sector on arrangements for class suspension and a letter setting out the arrangements as agreed with the sector was issued to schools on 11 June ([Annex](#)). In the letter, schools were clearly informed that class suspension was a mitigation measure, the purposes of which are to reduce the social contact of students, minimize the possibilities of students to be infected and let schools have an opportunity to clean up the premises. If classes were resumed before 10 July, schools could conduct school activities, including internal examinations, before the start of the summer holiday. In the event that classes could not be resumed before 10 July, EDB would issue guidelines on special arrangements for schools to conduct the second-term examination for Primary 5 (P5) students in early July. The guidelines are now under preparation by DH. If for some reasons schools cannot conduct the P5 second-term examination in early July, they can consider making school-based decision in arranging the P5 second-term examination between July and early September 2009 for the purpose of Secondary School Places Allocation. The Territory-wide System Assessment scheduled for 17 and 18 June has

been cancelled.

9. As for secondary schools, we have consulted their views separately. We understand that many schools are conducting internal examinations during this period and they hope that a decision on class suspension should be taken prudently. The secondary school sector generally found the arrangements similar to those agreed with the primary school sector feasible. It was agreed that a letter detailing the arrangements would be issued to secondary schools should classes be required to be suspended.

Education Bureau
June 2009



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部教育局

Education Bureau

Government Secretariat, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

本局檔號 Our Ref.: EDB(SD_CT)ADM/20/05/1(1)

電話 Telephone:

11 June 2009

To : Supervisors / Principals of all Primary Schools, Kindergartens, Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres and Special Schools (including Private Independent schools, ESF Schools and International Schools)

Dear Supervisor/Principal:

Preventing the Spread of Human Swine Influenza in Schools
Class Suspension Arrangements

A local case of human swine influenza (HSI) (or referred to as influenza A/H1N1) was confirmed on 10 June. It was further confirmed as the first local HSI case with no identifiable link on 11 June. At present clinical severity of HSI on young people remains uncertain, and young school children who are more vulnerable to respiratory viral infection including HSI are less capable of taking care of their personal hygiene. Having assessed the situation carefully and consulted the Department of Health (DH) and other relevant departments, as a prudent measure, we now announce territory-wide suspension of classes for 14 days among kindergartens, kindergarten-cum-child-care centres, primary schools and special schools (except those Schools for Social Development with secondary section only) from 12 June (Friday) to 25 June 2009 (Thursday). During class suspension, all school or out-of-school assembly / extra-curricular activities, including schools' internal examinations, should be cancelled.

We will pay close attention to the latest situation and make review as appropriate. Announcements will also be made on or before 23 June as to whether

suspension of classes would be extended. Should territory-wide class suspension extend beyond 10 July, the Education Bureau (EDB) would not make any announcement on class resumption. Instead, on the advice of DH, we would inform schools when school activities could be resumed and the appropriate preventive measures that schools should take. Schools and parents are requested to take note of our announcements.

The arrangements of tests/examinations and the announcement of Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) results for primary schools during the class suspension period are summarized as follows:

Internal Examinations (including the P5 second-term examination for SSPA purpose)

- If classes could be resumed before 10 July, schools should have sufficient time to conduct school activities, including internal examinations, before the start of the summer vacation. If schools would not be able to carry out all activities because of time constraints, they should still conduct the P5 second-term examination.
- If classes could not be resumed on or before 10 July, EDB would make announcement, according to DH's advice, on whether school's internal activities could be resumed and what precautionary measures could be taken by schools. Schools could refer to DH's guidelines for determining whether or not to conduct the P5 second-term examination at school in early July during the period of class suspension. If the situation does not permit conduct of the P5 second-term examination in early July, schools should, taking into account EDB's announcement on the arrangements for resuming school's internal activities, adopt school-based arrangement for conducting the P5 second-term examination between July and early September.
- Schools should inform parents clearly on the arrangements of the P5 second-term examination in advance.

Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA)

- TSA originally scheduled for 17 and 18 June will be cancelled. No alternative dates would be arranged for the assessment.

Learning Achievement Measurement Kit (LAMK)

- If government and aided primary schools are unable to submit student information of low academic achievers according to their LAMK results in or before mid July due to class suspension, EDB would make special arrangements, details of which will be announced separately.

2009 Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA)

- The 2009 SSPA results would be released on 7 July and S1 registration would be held on 9 and 10 July as scheduled. On the day of releasing the SSPA results, if classes for primary schools have yet to be resumed, students are not required to collect their allocation slips and admission slips in person and their parents/guardians/authorized persons would do it on their behalf. As for registration, students are not required to complete the registration procedures at their allocated secondary schools in person and their parents/guardians/authorized persons would do it on their behalf.

Schools should remind parents that class suspension is a mitigation measure and students should stay at home during class suspension period. Parents should avoid letting their children go to crowded places and avoid visiting places being affected by HSI with their children. During the suspension period, schools should keep the school premises and boarding section open, strengthen measures to ensure environmental hygiene, and arrange staff to be on duty to handle school affairs and answer parents' enquiries. In case of practical needs, schools should take care of those students who would be unattended at home and have to come back to school. Please refer to **Annex 1** for the administrative arrangements which require school's special attention during the period of class suspension.

For the specific administrative arrangements during the period of class suspension, please refer to and act in accordance with the guidelines set out in paragraphs 3 and 4 of the "Handbook on Prevention of Human Swine Influenza in Schools" compiled by EDB. The Handbook has been uploaded to our website (<http://www.edb.gov.hk>). Schools can download the Handbook via the path below:

EDB Homepage > School Administration > Administration > Prevention of Influenza and Other Communicable Diseases in Schools > 1. Prevention of Human Swine Influenza > Guidelines > Handbook on Prevention of Human Swine Influenza in Schools

When issuing notice to parents and making relevant administrative arrangements, schools may refer to the attached documents:

- Annex 2** Sample Letter to Parents
- Annex 3** Submission of Information on Human Swine Influenza to Education Bureau

Schools are advised to refer to the “Guidelines on the Prevention and Management of Human Swine Influenza in Schools” issued by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of DH (the guidelines has also been uploaded to the EDB website) to duly implement various hygienic measures and keep the campus clean. Please further remind parents to attend to their children’s personal health condition and hygiene and to keep their home clean.

We will release the latest information on HSI from time to time. Schools are advised to pay attention to the latest information on EDB website. For enquiries or requests for support during class suspension, please contact your respective Senior School Development Officer/Pre-primary Services Officer.

Yours sincerely,



(Y F LEE)
for Secretary for Education

**Administrative arrangements which require school's special attention
during the period of class suspension**

- Schools should issue a letter to parents to explain the arrangements for class suspension, including the arrangement on student learning, the re-arrangement for school examinations and tests etc. during the suspension period. Schools should also remind parents to take necessary preventive measures and pay attention to the health condition of their children.
- Schools should remind parents that class suspension is a mitigation measure aiming at reducing social contact to minimize the chance of HSI infection. Therefore, students should stay at home during class suspension period. Parents should avoid letting their children go to crowded places, children playgrounds etc, or visiting places being affected by HSI with their children.
- Schools could make school-based arrangement and discuss with parents and teachers on the ways to provide learning supports for students so that they could make good use of time and various kinds of information to sustain their learning during class suspension. If necessary, schools can also consider to make up for the un-covered curriculum to be taught at the beginning of next school year.
- Schools should give full consideration to the impact of class suspension on the progress of learning. They should adopt contingency measures for and handle flexibly the arrangements of school tests and examinations (including the scope of examinations). Schools may also consider replacing tests and examinations with formative assessment of students' performance. School should obtain consent from teacher representatives, the parent-teacher association and the school management committee/incorporated management committee, and should clearly explain the decision to parents.
- To meet practical needs during the period of class suspension, schools should keep the school premises and boarding section open, strengthen measures to ensure environmental hygiene, and arrange staff to be on duty to handle school affairs and answer parents' enquiries. In case of practical needs, schools should take care of those students who would be unattended at home and have to come back to school and those boarders whom could not be arranged to return home, and make appropriate arrangements to avoid overcrowding of students and boarders to minimize the risk of disease transmission. In the meantime, schools

should provide students with appropriate learning activities, such as reading, watching educational videos, etc.

- During the period of class suspension, if schools are informed that a staff member or a student is confirmed/suspected of having contracted HSI, and/or a staff member or a student has close contact with a person who is confirmed/suspected of having contracted HSI, they should report to the EDB and the CHP immediately.
- Schools should discuss with school bus operators and lunch box suppliers all the necessary arrangements during the period of class suspension. Schools should also keep in contact with them to ensure normal services can be provided promptly on the day of class resumption.
- For those teachers employed under the “Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme”, most of them will go back to their home countries during summer vacation and need to book the air ticket. To facilitate the teachers’ preparation for leaving Hong Kong and the schools’ making of appropriate arrangements, schools should discuss and reach a consensus with the teachers on related issues as soon as possible, taking school-based situation into consideration. On the other hand, schools are advised to remind specifically those teachers who return from places being affected by HSI to wear masks for 7 days and pay close attention to their health condition. If a teacher has symptoms of fever or influenza-like-illness, he/she should seek medical consultation from public clinics or hospitals promptly and contact the DH hotline (2125 1111).

Sample Letter to All Parents on Class Suspension
(Schools may revise the content according to their specific situation)

<Date>

Dear Parents,

A local case of human swine influenza (HSI) (or referred to as influenza A/H1N1) was confirmed on 10 June. It was further confirmed as the first local HSI case with no identifiable link on 11 June. Since clinical severity of HSI on young people remains uncertain at present, and young school children who are more vulnerable to respiratory viral infection including HSI are less aware and capable of taking care of their personal hygiene, as a prudent measure, the Education Bureau (EDB) has announced territory-wide suspension of classes for 14 days among kindergartens, kindergarten-cum-child-care centres, primary schools and special schools (except Schools for Social Development which only operate secondary sections) from 12 June (Friday) to 25 June 2009 (Thursday) after assessing the situation and undergoing thorough deliberation in conjunction with the Department of Health (DH) and other relevant departments. During class suspension, all school or out-of-school assembly / extra-curricular activities, including schools' internal examinations, should be cancelled.

The EDB stated that they would pay close attention to the development of the matter and make review as appropriate. Announcements will also be made on 23 June as to whether suspension of classes should be extended. Parents are requested to take note of the EDB's announcements.

Parents are advised to note that class suspension is a mitigation measure aiming at reducing social contact to minimize the chance of HSI infection. Therefore, students should stay at home during class suspension period. Parents should avoid letting their children go to crowded places, children playgrounds etc, or visiting places being affected by HSI with their children.

To meet practical needs during the period of class suspension, we will arrange for an appropriate number of staff to be on duty to handle school affairs/boarding services and answer parents' enquiries, clean and disinfect the school premises. If necessary, the school premises (including the boarding section) will remain open to take care of those students who would be unattended at home and have to come back to school/stay in the boarding section. If parents are unable to arrange their relatives

or friends to take care of their children, please contact our teacher Mr/Ms XXX (Tel. No.) for the arrangement of sending their children back to school. As the school bus service and lunch provision have been suspended, parents will have to escort their children to and from school and make lunch arrangements for them.

The examinations/tests arrangements during the period of class suspension are as follows (only applicable to primary schools):

- If classes could be resumed before 10 July, schools should have sufficient time to conduct internal activities, including internal examinations, before the start of the summer vacation. If schools would not be able to carry out all activities, they should still conduct the P5 second-term examination.
- If classes could not be resumed before 10 July, EDB would make announcement, according to DH's advice, on whether school's internal activities could be resumed and what precautionary measures could be taken by schools. Schools would refer to DH's guidelines for determining whether or not to conduct the P5 second-term examination at school in early July during the period of class suspension. Alternatively, as the situation warrants, we would adopt school-based approach for conducting the P5 second-term examination between July and early September.
- Territory-wide System Assessment originally scheduled for 17 and 18 June will be cancelled.

To minimize the effect on student learning, we have prepared learning materials and readers for students during the period of class suspension. Parents are requested to pay attention to the learning of their children.

If any of the following occurs during the period of class suspension, please inform our teacher Mr/Ms XXX (Tel. No.) immediately to facilitate our school to decide on the contingency measures and notify the DH and the EDB accordingly:

- (i) your child is confirmed/suspected of having contracted HSI; and
- (ii) any person in close contact* with your child is confirmed/suspected of having contracted HSI.

* “Close contact” means having cared for, having lived with, or having had direct contact with respiratory secretions and body fluids of a person with HSI.

Parents should inform us if their children have visited places with HSI cases. The students concerned should wear masks for 7 consecutive days, avoid going to school and pay close attention to their health. We will take the temperature of these students to double-check the temperature taken by parents for safety. If the students have influenza-like symptoms during this period, medical advice should be sought promptly. Parents should notify us and the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) (Tel No.: 2125 1111) of the case immediately and take the preventive and control measures as required by the CHP.

To safeguard your children and family members from HSI infection, please take appropriate preventive measures at home according to the guidelines in the attached leaflet on “Human Swine Influenza” prepared by the DH.

We enclose herewith the telephone list of our school and relevant government departments for your reference. If you have any enquiries, please feel free to contact us.

Yours sincerely,

<Signature>

School Principal/Supervisor,

<Name of school>

[Word file of this letter can be downloaded from the following path : <http://www.edb.gov.hk>-> School Administration>Administration>Prevention of Influenza (including Human Swine Influenza / Avian Flu) and Other Communication Diseases (including SARS) in Schools > Prevention of Human Swine Influenza – Useful materials]

