



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

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11 September 2009

Ms Odelia Leung
Clerk to Panel on Education
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road, Central
Hong Kong

Dear Ms Leung,

**Panel on Education
Provision of School Places on Islands**

Thank you for your letter dated 17 July 2009 to the Secretary for Education. I am authorized to reply on his behalf.

The Education Bureau has attached utmost importance to the educational needs of the students in South Lantau all along. We have carefully considered the issues raised by Ms Carol Leung and our response is enclosed at **Annex**.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RS' or similar initials, written over a white background.

(Raymond Sy)
for Secretary for Education

**Responses to issues raised by Ms Carol Leung
in her letter dated 14 July 2009**

Demand for primary and secondary school places in South Lantau

Ms Carol Leung has expressed concerns over the educational needs in South Lantau in her letter dated 14 July 2009. The Education Bureau (EDB) has carefully considered the issues raised by Ms Leung and our response is set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

2. It is the long-standing policy of the Government to ensure that there are sufficient public sector primary and secondary schools to provide free and universal education for all eligible school-age children. At present, there are two public-sector primary schools in South Lantau, namely, Mui Wo School and Bui O Public School. These two schools can offer a total of 50 places. As at 31 May 2009, there were 27 and 12 Primary 1 (P1) students studying in Mui Wo School and Bui O Public School respectively. This year, 41 P1 applicants have been allocated under the Primary One Admission System to the two primary schools for the 2009/10 school year. We will closely monitor the provision of school places in the area to meet its demand. This Bureau is also prepared to explore with the Mui Wo School to help improve its facilities so as to enhance the students' learning environment in the school as well as to facilitate the school to expand its classes if necessary to meet the educational needs of students in the area.

3. As for the demand for secondary school in Mui Wo, only around 50 Primary 6 (P6) students in Mui Wo participated in the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System annually in recent years. With this student population, the Administration has difficulty in justifying a public sector secondary school which requires at least three classes at each level to offer a broad and balanced curriculum with combinations of subject electives to suit students' preference.

4. Ms Leung has suggested that P6 students graduated from Lantau International School in Tong Fok and Holy Family School, the aided primary school in Peng Chau, should also be taken into account. Under the current SSPA System, parents may choose schools in or outside the Island District at both the Discretionary Places Admission stage and the Central Allocation stage. Hence, we do not consider it appropriate to assume that all the students from these schools would come to Mui Wo for schooling. In fact, the Secondary 1 (S1) enrolment of ex-New Territories Heung Yee Kuk Southern District Secondary School in Mui Wo

was far from satisfactory in the two school years before the school ceased admitting S1 students. Many parents chose to send their children to the secondary schools outside Mui Wo.

5. Though we do not anticipate significant increase in student enrolment in the coming few years, EDB will closely monitor the demand for secondary school places in Mui Wo. Should there be proven demand, we will revisit the request of Mui Wo residents and consider the need for establishing a public-sector secondary school in Mui Wo in order to cater for the educational needs of students in the Islands District as a whole. Meanwhile, to give the students and parents in Mui Wo more choices, the primary school graduates in Mui Wo can apply for the secondary schools located in the Islands District (five in Tung Chung and two in Cheung Chau) and nearby districts (more than 10 on Hong Kong Island). Indeed, there are some 30 secondary school choices for the students under SSPA in 2009 to meet their demand.

Education policy on isolated rural villages

6. EDB has implemented the policy of “Consolidation of Under-utilised Primary Schools” since the 2003/04 school year. If the number of pupils allocated to a P1 class of a school is less than 23 and there are still unfilled places in other schools of the same school net, the school may not be allowed to operate the P1 class in order that limited resources will be properly employed and the overall education quality enhanced.

7. Starting from the 2008/09 school year, the class size for P1 has been reduced from 32 or 37 to 30 or 35, and the original threshold for operating P1 classes has also been adjusted downwards from 23 to 21. Besides, to tie in with the implementation of small class teaching in public sector primary schools by phases starting from P1 and then progressively extending to P6 in the subsequent years, the threshold for operating P1 classes has been further reduced from 21 to 16 in the 2009/10 school year.

8. In fact, the adjustment of the threshold for operating P1 classes to 16 pupils has been a very low level. A school must operate in certain scale in order to nurture a good learning environment with well-equipped facilities as well as provide adequate manpower resources for delivery of quality education. If the number of pupils in a school is too small, it will hinder pupils’ social learning which may in turn affect their all round development. Moreover, the Government should not lose sight of the cost-effectiveness of resources deployment. Nevertheless, EDB will continue to keep under review the supply and demand of P1 places in the Primary One Admission school nets (including those in remote

areas). Apart from considering the number of pupils allocated to individual schools, EDB will also take into account other special factors. For example, if a school is located in remote areas, consideration can be given to allow the school to operate P1 classes even if its enrolment falls below 16 pupils.

Educational needs of non-Chinese speaking students in the Islands District

9. We are also aware of the demand for education services by non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students in the Islands District. To better cater for their needs, on top of a primary school already serving as a designated school for NCS students in the area, Bui O Public School, as well as another secondary school in Lantau, have been selected as additional designated schools in the 2009/10 school year. The purpose of assigning designated schools is to strengthen focused support to schools having admitted a critical mass of NCS students, with a view to facilitating the development of supporting teaching materials and school-based support programmes for NCS students and the sharing of good practice and professional experiences with other schools admitting NCS students. Each designated school is provided with an annual special grant ranging from \$300,000 to \$600,000 to put in place school-based support programmes for NCS students.

Travelling situation of secondary school students in South Lantau

10. Shuttling of secondary school students in Lantau Island is mainly served by public bus transport, supplemented by some private school bus service. For secondary students in Mui Wo, there are one public bus route each to Tung Chung and Tai O respectively, at 30-40 minutes frequency. Some schools also provide school bus service for the students with subsidy, e.g. Buddhist Fat Ho Memorial College has school bus running between Mui Wo and Tai O at \$6.00 per trip. For school trips out of Lantau, the First Ferry links Mui Wo to the Central by regular ferry services, with traveling time varying from 35-55 minutes, depending on the types of ferry. At present, subject to means tests, transport subsidies are provided to eligible students under the Student Travel Subsidy Scheme. Under the current arrangement, students with financial hardship can receive appropriate assistance.

11. EDB will continue to closely monitor the education needs of the students in South Lantau and ensure that their needs are appropriately taken care of.