

For discussion
on 12 May 2014

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Temporary Arrangement for Allocating More Students to Each Primary One Class under Primary One Admission 2014

Purpose

This paper outlines the Education Bureau (EDB)'s preparation for the Central Allocation under the Primary One Admission (POA) System. It also gives an account of the arrangements adopted to meet the anticipated demand of applicant children in the current cycle (2014), including the temporary arrangement for allocating more students to each primary one (P1) class in three districts, and the general concerns of the sector.

Overview of POA

2. The POA System administered since the 1982/83 school year aims primarily for allocating public sector P1 places to eligible applicant children in an orderly manner. The POA System consists of two stages¹, viz. the Discretionary Places Admission stage and the Central Allocation stage. At the Discretionary Places Admission stage, parents may apply to any public sector school without any restriction on school nets. Children who have not been offered a Discretionary Place may participate in the Central Allocation stage, which comprises two parts, viz. Unrestricted School Choices and Restricted School Choices. At present, there are 36 school nets in the territory and the school net to which an applicant child belongs is determined by his / her place of residence².

Preparation for Central Allocation

¹ In brief, about half of the P1 places of a public sector primary school are Discretionary Places and the remaining places are for the Central Allocation.

² As regards applicant children residing in the Mainland, to alleviate the shortfall of P1 places in the North District, and to meet the demand from applicant children residing in the school nets concerned while ensuring the right of cross-boundary students (CBS) for allocation of a public sector school place, the EDB has revised the arrangements for the Central Allocation starting from POA 2014 to provide CBS with a separate Choice of Schools List, which is more or less similar to a special "dedicated school net" for them.

3. Upon completion of registration for the Discretionary Places in early December every year, the EDB works out the “provisional number of places for the Central Allocation” for each school based on the number of remaining applicant children anticipated to participate in the Central Allocation and the situation of individual schools (such as availability of remaining classrooms) to prepare for the Central Allocation. The Choice of Schools List by school net will then be compiled for parents’ reference to make school choices in mid-January of the following year. Due to various factors (including the number of newly arrived children from the Mainland, parental choices, etc.), there are uncertainties about the actual demand for P1 places and situation in various districts or school nets in each allocation cycle. These year-on-year changes cannot be fully foreseeable in long-term overall planning. As such, we may have to adjust the “provisional number of places for the Central Allocation” for the schools in light of the actual demand from January (when school choices for the Central Allocation are made) to May (when computer-processing of the Central Allocation of school places is automated) every year. To cope with the year-on-year changes in demand, we have been adopting flexible arrangements to increase the supply of P1 places in individual school nets during the Central Allocation stage. These arrangements include borrowing school places from neighbouring school nets, making use of remaining classrooms and changing use of other rooms³ to additional classrooms. Where necessary, we would also temporarily allocate more students to each P1 class.

4. We anticipate that the demand for public sector P1 places will reach its peak between the 2016/17 and 2018/19 school years and then progressively decrease to a stable level. The relevant projection of school-age population is at the Annex. Reasons for the peak demand are two-fold: about 185 000 Type II babies (i.e. babies born to Mainland women in Hong Kong and whose fathers are non-permanent residents of Hong Kong) were born between 2006 and 2012, and traditionally more babies were born in the Year of Dragon (i.e. 2012). Those babies born in 2012 will reach the school age of six, which is considered appropriate for admission to P1, by 2018. However, it is difficult to predict accurately whether Type II babies would return to Hong Kong for P1 education, and the actual number of such babies who would settle in Hong Kong and if so, when. Furthermore, some of them will choose to attend school in Hong Kong every day as cross-boundary students. Their number and choice of boundary control points through which they access Hong Kong are subject to significant year-on-year changes due to family factors, distribution of their places of residence and adjustment of relevant policies, etc. Following the implementation of the “zero delivery quota” for Mainland expectant mothers in early 2013, the increase in demand for P1 places before the 2018/19 school year is merely transient. Hence, premised on the children applicants’ demand for P1 places and the long-term development of existing schools,

³ Excluding the special rooms of schools.

we will, during the transitional period, adopt the flexible arrangements as mentioned in paragraph 3 above, and proactively and practically explore the feasibility of recycling vacant school premises and expansion of individual schools for more classrooms.

Arrangement for Central Allocation under POA 2014

5. According to the established procedures mentioned above, the EDB, in early December 2013, projected the demand for school places based on the number of remaining applicant children anticipated to participate in the Central Allocation 2014 upon registration of successful applicants for the Discretionary Places Admission stage. The EDB then worked out the “provisional number of places for the Central Allocation” of schools, having regard to the situation of schools in the districts concerned (including the number of remaining classrooms), and compiled the POA 2014 Choice of Schools List by School Net for the Central Allocation for parents’ reference for making school choices on 18 and 19 January 2014. According to the “provisional number of places for the Central Allocation”, among the 36 school nets in the territory, school places have to be increased in Kwun Tong (school nets 46 and 48), Yuen Long West (school net 73), Yuen Long East (school net 74) and Tai Po (school net 84) to meet the anticipated demand from applicant children residing in these school nets in POA 2014. Having engaged schools in the school nets concerned and confirmed that neither sufficient remaining classrooms nor other rooms suitable for changing use to become additional classrooms were available, we have to allocate more students to each P1 class of schools implementing small class teaching in these school nets. The “provisional number of places for the Central Allocation” calculated on the basis of 30 per class (instead of 25 per class which is the basis for allocation for schools implementing small class teaching⁴) of the schools concerned is set out in the Choice of Schools List for parents’ reference for making school choices. This arrangement also addresses parents’ concern over some applicant children’s cross-net / cross-district schooling as a result of borrowing places from neighbouring districts to meet the shortfall of school places.

6. We have engaged schools concerned when compiling the Choice of Schools List for the Central Allocation, and before approving the Class Organisation and Staff Establishment for the 2014/15 school year in early April, according to the computer analysis of parental choices made in January 2014. The sector has generally appreciated the temporary nature of

⁴ The Education Bureau Circular No. 19/2008 on Small Class Teaching in Public Sector Primary Schools clearly pronounces that should the actual demand in any POA cycle exceed the supply of classrooms in the school net where a school situates given that the projection for school-age population is subject to various limitations, the Bureau may, as a temporary arrangement, need to increase the number of students allocated to each class in the school net concerned for that particular school year. This is also the established practice.

the arrangement for allocating more students to each P1 class⁵ where necessary and has been working closely with the EDB to cope with the transient demand for P1 places. Under the existing arrangements, when schools implementing small class teaching in individual school nets are required to temporarily increase the number of places to 30 for each P1 class to work out the “provisional number of places for the Central Allocation”, the schools concerned will be provided with a time-limited additional Assistant Primary School Master/Mistress post. The arrangement is drawn up making reference to the provision of additional teaching posts by phases to schools maintaining 30 students per class upon the implementation of small class teaching progressively starting from P1 in public sector primary schools since the 2009/10 school year. When the actual number of students allocated to each P1 class exceeds 30⁶, the EDB will provide the schools concerned with an additional funding⁷ for each additional student above 30 in each P1 class. The relevant additional resources, including the above-mentioned additional Assistant Primary School Master/Mistress posts and additional funding, will be provided for the schools concerned for six years from the 2014/15 to 2019/20 school years to ensure the learning effectiveness of the 2014/15 P1 cohort until P6 in the schools concerned.

Major Concerns

7. We are aware of the concerns of some schools over the implication on the teaching quality upon temporarily increasing the number of students allocated to each P1 class. The North District (school nets 80, 81 and 83) has adopted the temporary arrangement for allocation of more students per P1 class⁸ under the POA from the 2011/12 to 2013/14 school

⁵ According to the Stakeholder Monitoring Survey on Education Reform and Major Education Initiatives 2010, discounting non-responding stakeholders, the sector and parents preferred maintaining 30 students per class for children to attend school in the school net they reside in the event of mismatch between the demand and supply of school places in the school net.

⁶ There are only nine schools in school net 73. The demand for P1 places is expected to be relatively greater in this school net under POA 2014, and the number of students allocated per class may eventually be increased to 31.

⁷ The additional funding is calculated on the basis of relevant elements of the student unit cost. As at December 2013, the additional funding for each additional place is \$34,656, which is subject to revision according to adjustment in the student unit cost.

⁸ In the 2011/12 and 2012/13 school years, for schools implementing small class teaching in the North District, the number of students allocated to each P1 class was increased to 26 and 27 respectively under the temporary arrangement of allocating more students to each P1 class. In 2013/14 school year, the number of students allocated to each P1 class for all schools in North District was increased to 32 across the board, and relevant additional resources mentioned in paragraph 6 above were provided to schools to ensure the teaching quality.

years to meet the demand of applicant children in the past three school years. Based on our observations, the learning and teaching of the schools concerned is generally smooth. Yet, we have learned that some schools wished to examine further the complementary support under the temporary arrangement of allocating more students per P1 class. While noting their concerns, we must stress that the arrangement of allocating more students to each P1 class is temporary in nature. We have to be prudent with measures that would entail long-term planning and commitments. Nonetheless, we have undertaken to closely monitor the demand for school places and review the complementary support as appropriate in order to embrace the challenges for the coming few years.

8. Some schools are concerned about whether they could be informed of the actual number of P1 classes to be operated in the coming school year at an early stage of the Central Allocation for school-based planning. Given that the demand for school places during the Central Allocation stage is subject to changes depending on parents' decisions (such as whether to participate in Central Allocation and whether to participate in the Central Allocation after the school choice making exercise in January), the "provisional number of places for the Central Allocation" has to be adjusted having regard to the actual demand of school places from working out the "provisional number of places for the Central Allocation" for compilation of the Choice of Schools List in mid-December with the school choice making exercise in January as well as the analysis of parental choices until the computer-processing for the Central Allocation in May of the following year. The actual approved number of P1 classes of a school, including the EDB's proposal for the Class Organisation and Staff Establishment for the following school year in late March / early April every year and the outcome of the September headcount, is determined according to the established criteria and procedures as well as parents' school choices. The EDB cannot guarantee that the number of P1 classes approved and / or operated by a school is tantamount to the school's "provisional number of P1 classes"⁹, which has given rise to the so-called "reduction of class(es)" as so described by some schools.

9. Moreover, stakeholders have diverse views over the use of remaining classrooms to operate additional P1 classes to meet the demand of school places in a particular cycle. Individual schools are concerned that operating more classes at a particular level might affect their long-term development. In other words, schools prefer to have a certain number of classrooms made available for operating P1 classes every year in the future. Premised on optimising the use of remaining classrooms, a symmetrical class structure is not applicable to

⁹ The provisional number of P1 classes by a school is calculated based on the number of Primary Six classes in the school year preceding to the allocation cycle or the total number of classrooms available divided by six, whichever is the greater.

public sector primary schools. However, we will liaise closely with schools on using remaining classrooms to operate additional P1 classes where necessary, having due regard to whether more students would be allocated to each P1 class and if so, the magnitude of the increase. Further, we have proposed, on one hand, that schools in school nets expected to have a larger school-age population should consider having more temporary classrooms to meet the demand. We will explore, on the other hand, the feasibility of recycling suitable vacant school premises with a view to increasing the supply of school places through various flexible measures to cope with the transient demand.

10. The EDB is aware of the implications of changes in student population on stakeholders including schools and parents. We will continue to liaise with major stakeholders to formulate pragmatic measures having balanced different concerns with a view to alleviating the impact of changes in student population, and to collaborate with the sector to embrace the challenges in the transitional period.

Education Bureau
May 2014

Projected School-age Population Aged 6 Who are Residing in Hong Kong⁽¹⁾ by District, 2014/15 – 2019/20

District	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Central and Western	2 600	2 600	2 700	2 900	3 000	2 300
Wan Chai	1 400	1 600	1 500	1 500	1 700	1 300
Eastern	4 500	4 500	4 600	4 900	4 900	4 100
Southern	2 000	2 100	2 100	2 000	1 900	1 600
Yau Tsim Mong	3 400	3 500	3 600	3 900	4 400	3 500
Sham Shui Po	3 300	3 500	3 800	4 200	4 300	3 800
Kowloon City	3 500	3 700	3 900	4 200	4 400	3 600
Wong Tai Sin	2 600	2 500	2 600	2 800	2 500	2 400
Kwun Tong	4 900	4 900	5 400	5 700	5 100	4 600
Sai Kung	4 000	4 100	4 200	4 400	4 400	3 800
Sha Tin	4 600	4 800	5 400	5 800	6 000	5 600
Tai Po	2 100	2 100	2 300	2 600	2 900	2 600
North	2 400	2 400	2 500	2 700	2 900	2 600
Yuen Long	4 600	4 700	5 300	5 700	6 100	5 300
Tuen Mun	3 700	3 900	4 000	4 400	4 900	4 400
Tsuen Wan	2 800	2 900	3 000	3 200	3 300	2 700
Kwai Tsing	3 600	3 700	3 700	3 800	3 200	2 900
Islands	1 500	1 500	1 600	1 700	1 700	1 500
All Districts	57 500	59 000	62 300	66 400	67 500	58 700

- Notes :
- (1) In terms of education planning, apart from the school-age population residing in Hong Kong, the Education Bureau will also take into account the number of students already in public sector school system and the latest demographic changes (including the actual **number of cross-boundary students** (CBS)).
 - (2) School-age population aged 6 is considered appropriate for Primary One.
 - (3) Figures refer to the projected number of local children (i.e. Hong Kong usual residents) aged 6 residing in the districts concerned. The projected figures should not be taken as the projected number of students attending schools in the districts concerned. The latter would be affected by the prevailing distribution of school places, demand for school places and parental choices. Students under or over the age of 6 can also enrol at Primary One. The above figures do not include CBS.
 - (4) The projections of school-age population **residing in Hong Kong** are compiled based on the 2011-based population projections released by the Census and Statistics Department in July 2012. The projections have taken into account a number of factors and assumptions. Any deviations in the assumptions from the eventual situation may render the projected figures different from the actual turnout figures. Amongst those assumptions, of particular relevance is that related to babies born in Hong Kong to Mainland women. It should be noted that the actual numbers of such babies who would settle in Hong Kong and if so, when, are difficult to predict accurately.
 - (5) Figures refer to the position as at September of the respective school years.
 - (6) Figures are rounded to the nearest hundred and may not add up to the respective totals due to rounding.