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Miss Polly YEUNG
Panel on Education
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Miss YEUNG,

**Panel on Education
Follow-up to the meeting on 12 May 2014**

Thank you for your letter dated 23 May 2014. Regarding the questions raised by Hon IP Kin-yuen in his paper under the agenda item IV “Policy on small class teaching in primary schools and issues related to increasing the number of students allocated to each Primary One (P1) class”, we have, at the invitation of Hon IP, briefed some Members including Hon IP on 9 May 2014 and the consolidated reply is as below.

In the recent deliberations about 2014 Primary One Admission (POA) cycle, i.e. the temporary arrangement for allocating more students to each P1 class when working out the “provisional number of places for the Central Allocation” in the five school nets of the three districts, some members of the sector wish to make reference to Hong Kong’s fertility rate, housing development, etc. to see if the shortfall in P1 places is transient when the demand for public sector P1 places is anticipated to reach its peak between the 2016/17 and 2018/19 school years, which would then progressively decrease to a stable level. That also seems to be the concern of questions 2 to 6 in Hon IP’s paper.

The relevant school-age population projection (vide Annex to LC Paper No. CB(4)645/13-14(01)) refers to the school-age population aged 6 who are residing in Hong Kong, i.e. the projected Hong Kong usual residents¹ aged 6. The projections are compiled based on the Hong Kong Population Projections 2012-2041² released by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) in July 2012. In compiling population projections, the C&SD has taken into consideration the latest population and socio-economic developments, in particular the local trends in fertility, mortality and movement patterns, as well as the assumed time and rate of return of Type I³ and Type II⁴ babies born to Mainland women in Hong Kong.

Following the implementation of the “zero delivery quota” for Mainland expectant mothers in early 2013 and abatement of the effect of the Year of Dragon in 2012 (the year in which traditionally more babies were born), the number of live births in Hong Kong has dropped significantly from 95 451 in 2011 and 91 558 in 2012 to 57 138 in 2013 (details at Annex I). According to the population projections, Hong Kong’s total fertility rate will remain at the current level for a while in the foreseeable future before decreasing progressively. Those babies born in 2013 will reach the school age of 6, which is considered appropriate for admission to P1, in 2019. Hence, it is anticipated that we will see a marked drop in P1 school-age population in the 2019/20 school year before it returns to a stable level.

The population projections have taken into account various factors and assumptions. Any deviations in the assumptions from the actual situation may render the projected figures different from the actual ones. Amongst those assumptions, of particular relevance are those related to babies born in Hong Kong to Mainland women. It is difficult to accurately project the actual numbers of such babies who would settle in Hong Kong and if so, when. An assumed across-the-board return rate is applied to all birth cohorts for the purpose of long-term projections only, rather than projecting their exact number in a particular year.

In compiling the district-based school-age population projections, reference has also been made to the “Projections of Population Distribution 2013-2021” published by the Planning Department in March 2013. The

¹ In brief, excluding cross boundary students.

² Please see the uploaded version of Hong Kong Population Projections 2012-2041 which can be accessed through the following link:

<http://www.statistics.gov.hk/pub/B1120015052012XXXXB0100.pdf>.

³ Referring to babies born to Mainland women in Hong Kong whose fathers are permanent residents of Hong Kong.

⁴ Referring to babies born to Mainland women in Hong Kong whose fathers are non-permanent residents of Hong Kong.

projections of population distribution are compiled with reference to the above projections of territory-wide population as the control totals, together with all information of housing development proposals known up to the third quarter of 2012 as well as other detailed assumptions (among which reference has been made to the detailed data on various districts obtained from the population census and by-census, such as age, sex, population movements, etc.). Any subsequent changes to the type, planning or timing of the housing development proposals concerned or the adopted assumptions will be taken note of and updated in the next round of projections by the Planning Department, and the Education Bureau (EDB) will update the district-based school-age population projections accordingly.

Hence, the assumption adopted in the projected school-age population aged 6 who are residing in various districts (including Kwun Tong) has taken into account the impacts stemming from the fertility rate, inflow of population, etc. However, the projections cannot provide a detailed picture regarding the effects of individual factors and the projected figures. As regards Type II babies, the C&SD expects that about 50% of them will return to Hong Kong for settlement before the age of 21. As a result, the projected school-age population aged 6 has taken into account the anticipated number of Type II babies who would return to Hong Kong for settlement. Also, the school-age population aged 6 who are residing in Hong Kong is a projection, it is inappropriate to compare it with the actual figures in previous years (corresponding projections for the 2012 and 2013 school years are set out in Annex II). Separately, as the EDB will provide all the children eligible for participation in POA⁵ with a school place in public sector schools, we have not collected information on the residency status of their parents, and are therefore not able to provide the number of Type II babies among P1 students residing in various districts.

To conclude, based on the aforesaid projections, it is anticipated that the demand for public sector P1 places would reach its peak between the 2016/17 and 2018/19 school years and then progressively decrease to a stable level. During the transitional period, we will continue to adopt the flexible arrangements to meet the transient demand for P1 places, including borrowing school places from neighbouring school nets, making use of remaining classrooms and changing use of other rooms to additional classrooms. Where necessary, we would also temporarily allocate more students to each P1 class. The situation mentioned above was anticipated when small class teaching was implemented in public sector primary schools by phases since the 2009/10 school year.

⁵ For participation in POA, a child must reach the age of 5 years 8 months when he/she is enrolled in P1; be a Hong Kong resident; not attending any primary schools; and has never been allocated a P1 place.

The remaining questions 1 and 7-9 of the paper are about small class teaching and arrangements for provision of additional resources for schools allocated with more students in each P1 class. The Government has, where circumstances permit, progressively implemented small class teaching in public sector schools starting from P1 in the 2009/10 school year. In working out the implementation details, the EDB has consulted the major stakeholders. As mentioned above, the “provisional number of places for the Central Allocation” of individual school nets/districts may, as in the past, be adjusted in a particular allocation cycle to meet the demand to tackle the year-on-year changes. Construction of schools requires precious land resources and relatively substantial expenditure, and should therefore tie in with the long-term development of the district concerned as well as the existing schools in the district. As such, the EDB will continue to adopt the flexible arrangements mentioned above (including temporarily increasing the number of students allocated to each P1 class where necessary as set out in the implementation details of small class teaching). This is an essential arrangement for temporary increase of the supply of P1 places in individual school nets during the Central Allocation stage to meet the transient increasing demand in the transitional period, and to tackle the year-on-year changes in individual school nets. While student population in districts would fluctuate between years, school premises should be used for many years. With the flexible arrangements mentioned above, the possible impact on schools arising from student population drop in the future on schools would also be alleviated. In other words, the temporary arrangement for allocating more students to each P1 class is only a flexible arrangement adopted to temporarily increase the supply of P1 places to meet the actual demand for P1 places in each allocation cycle. This temporary arrangement and the small class teaching policy are not mutually exclusive.

We appreciate the possible impact of student population changes on schools and parents. Under POA 2014, when deciding to adopt the arrangement for allocating more students per P1 class in the five school nets of the three districts to work out the “provisional number of places for the Central Allocation” of the schools concerned, we have made reference to the learning and teaching of the schools which maintain 30 students per P1 class to provide additional resources for schools allocated with more students per P1 class to safeguard the learning effectiveness of the students concerned. Regarding the sector’s request for further increasing the provision of learning and teaching resources for the schools allocated more students per P1 class, we have undertaken to explore further from the perspective of priority in utilisation of public resources with a view to planning for the coming allocation cycle.

We will continue to closely monitor the demand for school places and engage major stakeholders for practical measures, having balanced different concerns, with a view to alleviating the impact of student population changes. With the collaboration of the sector, we will embrace the challenges arising from the transient increasing demand for P1 places during the transitional period.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'L B IP', written in a cursive style.

(Ms L B IP)
for Secretary for Education

Number of Live births born in Hong Kong

Reference Period	Number of live births ⁽¹⁾	Of which:						Others ⁽³⁾
		Number of live births born in Hong Kong to Hong Kong women (Total- Type I babies - Type II babies - Others) ⁽²⁾		Number of live births born in Hong Kong to Mainland women whose spouses are Hong Kong Permanent Residents (Type I babies)		Number of live births born in Hong Kong to Mainland women whose spouses are not Hong Kong Permanent Residents (Type II babies)		
1993	70 451	61 609 [#]	(87.3%)	8 842	(12.6%)	-	-	-
1994	71 646	62 379 [#]	(87.1%)	9 267	(12.9%)	-	-	-
1995	68 637	61 612 [#]	(89.8%)	7 025	(10.2%)	-	-	-
1996	63 291	56 797 [#]	(89.7%)	6 494	(10.3%)	-	-	-
1997	59 250	53 420 [#]	(90.2%)	5 830	(9.8%)	-	-	-
1998	52 977	46 868*	(88.5%)	5 651	(10.7%)	458	(0.9%)	-
1999	51 281	44 101*	(86.0%)	6 621	(12.9%)	559	(1.1%)	-
2000	54 134	45 961*	(84.9%)	7 464	(13.8%)	709	(1.3%)	-
2001	48 219	40 409*	(83.8%)	7 190	(14.9%)	620	(1.3%)	-
2002	48 209	39 703*	(82.4%)	7 256	(15.1%)	1 250	(2.6%)	-
2003	46 965	36 837	(78.4%)	7 962	(17.0%)	2 070	(4.4%)	96
2004	49 796	36 587	(73.5%)	8 896	(17.9%)	4 102	(8.2%)	211
2005	57 098	37 560	(65.8%)	9 879	(17.3%)	9 273	(16.2%)	386
2006	65 626	39 494	(60.2%)	9 438	(14.4%)	16 044	(24.4%)	650
2007	70 875	43 301	(61.1%)	7 989	(11.3%)	18 816	(26.5%)	769
2008	78 822	45 257	(57.4%)	7 228	(9.2%)	25 269	(32.1%)	1 068
2009	82 095	44 842	(54.6%)	6 213	(7.6%)	29 766	(36.3%)	1 274
2010	88 584	47 936	(54.1%)	6 169	(7.0%)	32 653	(36.9%)	1 826
2011	95 451	51 469	(53.9%)	6 110	(6.4%)	35 736	(37.4%)	2 136
2012	91 558	58 359	(63.7%)	4 698	(5.1%)	26 715	(29.2%)	1 786
2013	57 138 [@]	51 641 [@]	(90.4%)	4 670	(8.2%)	790	(1.4%)	37

Notes: (1) Figures refer to the total number of live births born in Hong Kong in the reference period counted by the occurrence time of the events (i.e. births actually taking place in that reference period).

(2) Figures include a small number of live births born in Hong Kong to foreigners.

(3) Figures refer to number of live births born to Mainland mothers who did not provide her spouse's residency status during birth registration.

As statistics on the number of live births under the categories of "Type II babies" and "Others" for 1992 to 1997 are not available from the Census and Statistics Department, these figures are derived as the total number of live births less the number of Type I babies born during the period by assuming those categories as zero in the same period.

* As statistics on the number of live births under the category of "Others" for 1998 to 2002 are not available from the Census and Statistics Department, these figures are derived as the total number of live births less the number of Type I and Type II babies born during the period by assuming that category as zero in the same period.

@ Provisional figures.

Source: Demographic Statistics Section, Census and Statistics Department.

**Projected School-age Population Aged 6 Who are Residing in Hong Kong⁽¹⁾
by District, 2012/13 and 2013/14**

District	2012/13	2013/14
Central and Western	1600	2 100
Wan Chai	1000	1 200
Eastern	3700	4 000
Southern	1800	1 800
Yau Tsim Mong	2300	3 100
Sham Shui Po	2800	3 200
Kowloon City	2500	3 100
Wong Tai Sin	2500	2 800
Kwun Tong	4400	5 000
Sai Kung	3600	3 500
Sha Tin	4400	4 100
Tai Po	1900	1 800
North	2400	2 100
Yuen Long	4800	4 100
Tuen Mun	3200	3 400
Tsuen Wan	2500	2 500
Kwai Tsing	3800	3 200
Islands	1300	1 300
All Districts	50600	52 300

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 ones. 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.