

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(4)729/15-16(02)

Ref : CB4/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Meeting on 22 March 2016

**Background brief on issues related to
reprovisioning and redevelopment of sub-standard school premises**

Purpose

This paper summarizes the deliberations and concerns of the Panel on Education ("the Panel") on issues related to the reprovisioning and redevelopment ("R&R") of sub-standard public sector school premises.

Current situation

2. At present, there are about 850 ordinary public sector primary and secondary school premises built in different periods in accordance with the standards at the time of construction. Among them, cuboidal shaped school premises (often referred to as "matchbox-style school premises") were constructed between mid-1960s and 1980 at public housing estates for primary school use. These schools premises are considered as sub-standard school premises as compared with the newly built school premises and present-day standards. According to information provided by the Administration in December 2015, there are 28 public sector primary schools operating in such sub-standard premises, one in Hong Kong region, nine in Kowloon region and 18 in New Territories region. While school premises built in different periods follow the standards at the time of construction, all existing school premises in operation are required to comply with present-day statutory requirements.

3. To improve the teaching and learning environment of public sector schools, the Education Bureau ("EDB") launched the School Improvement Programme ("SIP") between 1994 and 2006. Implemented in five phases, SIP had provided 743 public sector schools built according to past standards with enhanced facilities. Apart from SIP, EDB also carries out school premises maintenance works through minor improvement projects. Most of the 28 public

sector schools operating in sub-standard premises had undergone improvements to various extent under SIP.

4. Meanwhile, public sector schools can indicate their intention for R&R in the light of respective schools' vision and mission, development plans, physical conditions of the premises, etc. For reprovisioning of any existing school to a new school site or vacant school premises ("VSP"), allocation is generally done through open and competitive bidding under the School Allocation Exercises ("SAE"). Applications from eligible school sponsoring bodies ("SSBs") are assessed by the School Allocation Committee ("the Committee"), which comprises both official and non-official members. Generally speaking, schools with a site area of less than 3 000 square metres and premises of over 30 years of age without having benefited or having only marginally benefited from SIP warrant serious attention. As informed by EDB in December 2015, two of the 28 schools currently operating in sub-standard premises had been allocated new premises in 2015. For redevelopment, which is in-situ in nature, the relatively small school site area of the 28 schools has limited their potential and feasibility for in-situ redevelopment.

Major views and concerns

5. After commencement of the Fifth Legislative Council, issues related to schools operating in sub-standard premises have been considered by the Panel. Questions on the subject have also been raised at meetings of the Council held on 19 March 2014 and 29 April 2015. The major views and concerns expressed at these meetings are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

Timetable for R&R

6. At the Panel meeting held on 14 December 2015, some members expressed grave concern that 28 public sector primary schools were still operating in sub-standard matchbox-style school premises. Given that their premises were constructed decades ago and their facilities had become outdated, these schools were not preferred by parents and might have difficulty in recruiting students. Members were also worried that the dilapidated conditions of these schools would pose a serious threat to the safety of students, teachers and other users. They urged the Administration to formulate a firm timetable for R&R of schools operating in sub-standard school premises.

7. The Administration advised that since reprovisioning of existing schools hinged on the availability of appropriate school sites/premises in the territory, it was not practicable for EDB to draw up a timetable in this regard. Nevertheless, it would not compromise on safety.

8. In response to members' request for further information on the 28 public sector primary schools operating in sub-standard premises, the Administration informed members that 20 out of these 28 schools had indicated a need or wish for R&R. Among these 20 schools, six had applied for reprovisioning in the past SAE and two of them had been allocated new premises in 2015. The remaining eight schools had not indicated any need or wish for R&R. The Administration would keep the 26 schools which had not yet been allocated new premises posted of SAE for reprovisioning purpose in future.

9. At the Council meeting of 29 April 2015 and the Panel meeting on 14 December 2015, questions had been raised about the reprovisioning of the ELCHK Faith Love Lutheran School ("Lutheran School") located at Yue Wan Estate in Chai Wan, which was the only school on Hong Kong Island operating in sub-standard "matchbox-style school premises". As informed by EDB at the Panel meeting on 14 December 2015, Yue Wan Estate had once been included under the redevelopment plan of the Housing Department ("HD"). However, HD had shelved this redevelopment plan. EDB would follow up with HD on this case.

Operation of SAE

10. Some members had the observation that in the allocation of school premises through SAE, priority had often been given to international schools in recent years. Concern was raised as to how the Committee or the Administration could ensure that the assessment of applications under SAE was conducted in a fair and just manner.

11. The Administration advised that under the existing arrangements, EDB would inform all eligible SSBs in the territory of the conduct of SAE so that they could consider applying for reprovisioning of existing schools. Each application would be carefully considered by the Committee. When assessing the quality of education, the Committee would give due consideration to all relevant factors including the operation track record of SSBs and the school plans submitted. In evaluating the school plans, the Committee would consider the school's vision and mission, management and organization, school ethos, support for students, performance targets, self-evaluation indicators, etc. Under SAE in 2014, new school premises were allocated for use by three ordinary primary and secondary school.

Utilization of VSP

12. Certain members considered that the Government should make proper use of VSP which had not been in use for a long time for R&R of public sector schools operating in sub-standard premises. There was a view that EDB should not return VSP to the Government lightly. Otherwise, the site in question would likely be used for housing development rather than educational use.

13. At the Panel meeting held on 14 December 2015, EDB informed members that among 29 VSP under its purview, seven had been earmarked for specific use by EDB; four had been returned to the Government; and 14 would be used as decanting premises. The remaining four VSP were located on private land and EDB would need to follow up the matter with the Lands Department.

14. Meanwhile, the Public Accounts Committee ("PAC") conducted hearings on issues related to VSP in December 2015 and January 2016. In its Report No. 65 published in February 2016, PAC expressed grave dismay and found it unacceptable that EDB had failed to formulate a comprehensive policy on effective utilization of VSP. PAC urged the Administration to take improvement measures in identification, allocation and management of VSP so as to put these valuable resources to gainful use.

Latest position

15. The Panel will discuss issues related to disposal of VSP and reprovisioning of sub-standard school premises at the meeting to be held on 22 March 2016.

Relevant papers

16. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
16 March 2016

List of relevant papers

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Legislative Council	19.3.2014	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 94-101 (Question 11)
Panel on Education	9.6.2014	Agenda CB(4)765/13-14(05) Minutes
Legislative Council	29.4.2015	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 44-46 (Question 12)
Panel on Education	14.12.2015	Agenda CB(4)321/15-16(03) CB(4)600/15-16(01) Minutes

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
 16 March 2016