

Primary One Admission 2017 Operation of “Time-limited” Schools

Purpose

This paper aims to elaborate on the administering of the Primary One Admission (POA) System, and circumstances leading to the setting of three “time-limited” schools as well as their situation in the current POA cycle (i.e. POA 2017).

Challenges for POA

2. The POA aims for allocating the public sector Primary One (P1) places to eligible applicant children¹ in an orderly manner. The 18 districts in the territory are further demarcated into 36 POA school nets. It is impossible to have perfect match of the demand and supply of school places in all school nets in each POA cycle. Due to various factors (including demographic changes, the number of newly arrived children from the Mainland, parental choices (e.g. whether to get admission to public sector schools or other schools, joining the POA after the deadline for making school choice for the Central Allocation, etc.)), there are uncertainties about the number of applicant children for POA and demand for school places in each school net for every cycle. These year-on-year changes are not fully foreseeable in long-term planning, especially during the period from school choice making for the Central Allocation (in January / February) to automation of the computer-processing of the Central Allocation (in May). As such, there are established contingency measures to increase the supply of P1 places flexibly in individual school nets at the Central Allocation stage, which include borrowing school places from other school nets and making use of remaining classrooms for operation of additional P1 classes under the POA. Upon completion of the registration for applicant students who have secured a discretionary place in each cycle, the Education Bureau

¹ EDB has administered the POA since the 1982/83 school year. The POA consists of two stages, viz. the Discretionary Places Admission stage and 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 secured a Discretionary Place may participate in the Central Allocation, which comprises two parts, viz. Unrestricted School Choices and Restricted School Choices. The school net to which an applicant child belongs is determined by his / her place of residence.

It is worth noting that to meet the demand for P1 places from applicant children residing in the Mainland (cross-boundary students), EDB has revised the arrangements for the Central Allocation starting from the 2014/15 school year to provide cross-boundary students (CBS) with a “dedicated school net”. The objective is to divert CBS to other districts as appropriate to alleviate the excessive demand for school places arising from them in some districts close to the Immigration Control Points (especially the North District and Tai Po District), and to meet the demand for P1 places from applicant children residing in the school nets while ensuring the right of CBS for allocation of a P1 place in government or aided schools. The “dedicated school net” consists of all schools in the 8 School Nets close to the Immigration Control Points (i.e. Tuen Mun : 70 (Tuen Mun West), 71 (Tuen Mun East); Yuen long : 72 (Tin Shui Wai), 74 (Yuen Long East); the North District : 80 (Sheung Shui), 81 (Fanling), 83 (Sha Tau Kok); Tai Po : 84 school nets) and individual schools in other districts having CBS and are ready and willing to support CBS.

(EDB) will base on the number of remaining applicant children to estimate the demand for school places for the Central Allocation and take into account the situation of schools in each district to work out the “provisional number of places for the Central Allocation” for each school for compilation of the “Choice of Schools List by School Net for Central Allocation”. The “provisional number of places for the Central Allocation” is subject to adjustment based on the actual demand.

Flexible arrangements to meet the transient increase in demand for P1 places

3. EDB announced in 2013 that the overall demand for P1 places will increase temporarily to the projected peak² in the 2018/19 school year and then progressively decrease to a stable level. However, it is difficult to predict accurately whether the babies born in Hong Kong to Mainland women 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 Immigration Control Points for entry to 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 transient in nature.

4. To meet the demand for P1 places from applicant children during the transitional period in each POA cycle, EDB and the sector have had close liaison and reached a consensus that construction of new schools to meet any transient demand for P1 places should be avoided as far as possible. The use of land, which is a valuable resource, should tie in with the long-term and sustainable development of the districts concerned. This will also help relieve any impact on the stable development of primary schools when the demand for school places subsides. Premised on the sustainable development of existing schools, we will adopt flexible arrangements to meet the projected transient increase in demand for school places. The flexible arrangements include the contingency measures mentioned in paragraph 2, i.e. borrowing school places from other school nets and making use of remaining classrooms, as well as deployment of vacant school premises and temporarily allocating more students for each P1 class (i.e. “temporarily allocating more students”), etc. We understand that various stakeholders may have different concerns about the flexible

² 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 the 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.

arrangements to be adopted. In light of the general concern about the number of students to be allocated for each P1 class, EDB will explore proactively the feasibility of deploying vacant school premises (if any) for operation of schools or extension of existing schools on a time-limited basis, if necessary, and constructing temporary classrooms in individual schools. Against the above, “temporarily allocating more students”³ will be implemented as a measure out of absolute necessity and additional resources will be provided to the schools concerned. EDB and the sector (including primary schools in the districts concerned) will liaise closely about the flexible arrangements to be adopted in each POA cycle with a view to having synergy of different flexible measures (especially to avoid “temporarily allocating more students” as far as possible or lower the magnitude of “temporarily allocating more students”).

Circumstances leading to setting up and operation of “time-limited” schools

5. With prudent consideration, we have decided to deploy two vacant school premises (VSP) located in School Net 46 (Ngau Tau Kok) of Kwun Tong and another VSP in School Net 72 (Tin Shui Wai) of Yuen Long in 2014. The VSP concerned were allocated through the Second School Allocation Exercise 2014 (including two VSP in Kwun Tong) and the Third School Allocation Exercise 2014 (including the VSP in Tin Shui Wai) for eligible applicant school sponsoring bodies for extension of the existing aided primary schools and/or operating aided primary schools (both having a specified timeframe). The mission of the VSP concerned has been stated in detail in the relevant documents (including the press release issued on 5 June 2014 and 30 September 2014 respectively for the two school allocation exercises). For example, it is stated in the press release that “The successful applicant of the premises is expected to fully utilise the premises to meet the transient shortfall as far as practicable from the 2015/16 school year to 2023/24 school year upon the school allocation. The premises allocated need to be returned to the Government when the demand and supply position of primary school places in the districts concerned has stabilised. The successful applicant will be required to

³ The prevailing additional resources include: when eligible schools are required to temporarily allocating more students to 30 per P1 class, based on the prevailing arrangements for schools maintaining 30 students allocated for each P1 class, they will be provided with a time-limited additional Assistant Primary School Master/Mistress (APSM) post. The details are in the EDB Circular No. 19/2008. Since the 2013/14 school year, when the number of students allocated for each P1 class exceeds 30, EDB will provide the schools concerned with an additional funding for each additional student above 30 in each P1 class according to the Headcount in September. The current rate of additional funding for each additional student in question is \$41,508.

On top of the above-mentioned enhanced support, EDB has, starting from the 2015/16 school year, provided eligible schools implementing small class teaching (SCT) with the Additional Supplementary Learning Grant (ASLG) upon temporarily allocating more students per P1 class. The ASLG would be provided to the 26th to the 30th students for a period of six years. The current rate of funding for each additional student allocated is \$13,725. According to the Headcount in September, EDB will provide the ASLG when the actual number of students of the P1 classes of the school on average is 28 and capped at the number of students allocated upon temporarily allocating more students.

surrender the allocated premises to the Government upon reasonable notice by the Government in accordance with the tenancy agreement.”. We have also stated clearly that allocation of premises is on a competitive basis and all applications will be considered by the School Allocation Committee. Priority will be given to applications which can best meet the projected transient shortage of P1 places within the timeframe required if other factors to be considered of the applications being comparable. In sum, we believe that the successful school sponsoring bodies have the capabilities and are well-prepared to operate the “time-limited” schools especially in coping with the need for having more P1 classes (including deployment of resources and staff) and to ensure learning and teaching effectiveness. EDB will render assistance to the schools concerned as appropriate.

6. Upon commencement of operation of public sector schools, EDB will provide resources to all schools (including the afore-mentioned “time-limited” schools). The number of approved classes (including all P1 classes) of each public sector primary school is based on the actual number of students of the school. Provision of resources and teaching and non-teaching staff entitled for each class are determined according to the established criteria and arrangements.

7. POA 2017 (the current cycle) is approaching the projected peak of the demand in the 2018/19 school year. At the Central Allocation stage, School Net 48 of Kwun Tong (having two school nets, i.e. School Net 46 (Ngau Tau Kok) and School Net 48 (Anderson Road)) is estimated to be short of school places after deploying all classrooms there. According to the established arrangement mentioned above, School Net 48 has to borrow places from School Net 46 of the same district (including the two afore-mentioned “time-limited” schools). Besides, Kowloon City (KC) District has faced similar situation as that of School Net 48 and School Net 34 of KC has to borrow places from some schools in School Net 46 (including the two “time-limited” schools).

8. Regarding Yuen Long (having three school nets, i.e. School Net 72 (Tin Shui Wai), School Net 73 (Yuen Long West) and School Net 74 (Yuen Long East)), all classrooms in School Nets 73 and 74 and some schools of School Net 72 have been used up. Some schools in School Net 72 (including the afore-mentioned “time-limited” school) have to continue to lend places to School Net 74 (Yuen Long East) while School Nets 73 and 74 have to adopt the flexible measure of “temporarily allocating more students” (viz. 32 and 33 for each class respectively). Individual schools in Yuen Long District will change use of other rooms / construct temporary classrooms (18 in total) for operation of additional P1 classes on a need basis in the 2017/18 and 2018/19 school years. Besides, schools in School Net 72 (Tin Shui Wai) (including the “time-limited”

school) are also required to provide school places for the “dedicated school net”⁴ for applicant children residing in the Mainland.

9. Since the three “time-limited” schools⁵ have only operated since the 2015/16 school year, they have relatively more vacant classrooms and it is inevitable that more applicant children would be allocated to the schools concerned when approaching the projected peak of demand for P1 places. Same as all other schools, the actual number of approved P1 classes of the three “time-limited” schools is determined according to the established criteria and procedures and subject to parents’ choice on transfer between schools.

10. We understand some parents are concerned about individual schools having been allocated more applicant children in POA this year. As mentioned above, the demand for school places for the Central Allocation varies every year during the period from school choice making for the Central Allocation to automation of the computer-processing of the Central Allocation. We have therefore reminded parents of the aforementioned flexible arrangements to increase the provision of school places through major POA documents. For example, it is stated at the back of the cover page of the “Primary School Lists by School Net for Discretionary Places Admission Stage”: “Please note: ... Subject to the demand and supply of P1 places, at the Central Allocation stage, some schools may also serve adjacent school nets and/or increase the school places for allocation, i.e. their “provisional number of places for Central Allocation””. In addition, in the “Choice of Schools List by School Net for Central Allocation”, the “Provisional Number of Places for Central Allocation” is elaborated as “the remaining P1 places of each school after the Discretionary Places Admission Stage, which is basically calculated according to the provisional number of P1 classes of the school. The figure is provisional in nature and is subject to adjustment based on the actual demand at the Central Allocation Stage. Besides, the actual number of P1 classes approved for a school is determined according to the established criteria taking into account the actual demand.”, etc. To provide parents with relevant information as far as possible, we have added remarks to those schools that may provide additional P1 places for Central Allocation if necessary in the Choice of Schools List for reference of parents.

11. Besides, EDB has been closely liaising with the schools concerned and have reminded them to get prepared for deployment of resources and recruitment of staff, and to keep parents duly informed. The two “time-

⁴ Refer to Footnote 1.

⁵ There are 24 classrooms and 5 special rooms in the two “time-limited” schools in Kwun Tong with the internal floor area of about 3 100 m². For the “time-limited” school in Yuen Long, there are 30 classrooms and 14 special rooms with internal floor area of about 6 200 m².

limited” schools in Kwun Tong have organised meetings with parents having children allocated to and registered with the schools on 17 and 23 June 2017 respectively. The “time-limited” school in Yuen Long will also organise a meeting for parents on 8 July 2017. We believe that parents’ worries about deployment of resources and recruitment of teaching and non-teaching staff by the schools concerned would be allayed. Besides, during the transitional period with increasing demand for P1 places, EDB has commissioned tertiary institutions to provide additional professional development support for public sector primary schools (including the afore-mentioned “time-limited” schools) annually starting from the 2015/16 school year. Teachers would share effective teaching practices and experience, and have lesson observations cum evaluation on the use of teaching strategies in respect of the four different Key Learning Areas through workshops, learning circles, etc. We are inviting all schools (including the afore-mentioned “time-limited” schools) to participate in the professional support of the 2017/18 school year and will encourage the schools concerned to join.

12. We understand that some parents are concerned about the impact of the student population changes on individual schools. We will continue to liaise closely with schools (including the schools concerned) to ensure learning effectiveness and to embrace the challenges arising from the transient increase of the P1 school-age population with concerted efforts.

Education Bureau
June 2017