



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

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29 April 2019

Ms Angel WONG
Clerk to Panel
Legislative Council Panel on Education
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Ms WONG

Panel on Education

Follow-up to the meeting on 1 February 2019

I refer to your letter dated 4 February 2019. The supplementary information and our responses to the four motions passed under the agenda item "Planning for the provision of primary and secondary school places in the light of student population and related stabilization measures" are set out in the Appendix for Members' reference.

Yours sincerely,

(Ms Teresa Chan)
for Secretary for Education

Encl.

Panel on Education

Meeting on 1 February 2019

Agenda item “Planning for the provision of primary and secondary school places in the light of student population and related stabilization measures”

Supplementary information and responses to the motions passed

- (a) The number of Secondary One (“S1”) places offered by each school participating in the Secondary School Places Allocation (“SSPA”) System in each of the past five years**

- (b) The first three restricted school choices made by each Primary 6 (“P6”) student on the Secondary One Choice of Schools Form in each of the past five years**

There were 388 secondary schools and 51 649, 48 811, 46 659, 45 544 and 47 203 Primary 6 (“P6”) students participating in the Secondary School Places Allocation (“SSPA”) System from 2013 to 2017 (i.e. for admission to Secondary One (“S1”) in the 2013/14, 2014/15, 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18 school years) respectively. The number of S1 places provided by each secondary school participating in SSPA in the Discretionary Places stage and their planned S1 places in the Central Allocation stage have been set out in the Handbook for Application for Secondary 1 Discretionary Places, Handbook for Unrestricted School Choices and Secondary School Lists for each SSPA cycle, including the S1 places provided by the schools operating one or two S1 classes and participating in the next SSPA with a cap of three S1 classes under the targeted relief measures introduced in the 2013/14 school year. The number of S1 classes operated by each school ultimately is subject to the actual demand. There is a consensus between the Education Bureau (“EDB”) and the sector that the number of S1 classes and places of individual schools in each school year would not be disclosed to avoid misinterpretation and labelling effect on individual schools.

Besides, there are various factors affecting parents' school choices in the Central Allocation stage of SSPA. Apart from the voluminous data involved due to large number of participating students, disclosing the first three restricted school choices made by each P6 student would unavoidably have labelling effect on schools and undermines the stability and long-term development of schools even the personal data of students such as their names could be removed. There is a consensus between EDB and the sector that the relevant information would not be disclosed.

Based on the discussion at the meeting of the Panel on Education on 1 February 2019, Members were mainly concerned about the demand and supply of school places in different districts. The number of S1 places in public sector schools from the 2013/14 to 2017/18 school years and the number of P6 students in public sector schools from the 2012/13 to 2016/17 school years by district are provided at Annex 1 for Members' reference.

(c) The number of public sector S1 places and S1 students by district in the 2018/19 school year

The number of S1 places and S1 students in public sector schools by district in the 2018/19 school year are tabulated at Annex 2 for Members' reference.

(d) The projected number of S1 places and S1 students in public sector schools by district after implementing the across-the-board "place reinstating" by one school place for SSPA 2019

As SSPA 2019 has not yet completed, the estimated demand and supply for SSPA will still be affected by different factors, including cross-net applications, late applications, students admitted by Direct Subsidy Scheme schools or other schools, remaining places in each district after the Discretionary Places stage, etc., and hence the relevant figures are

subject to change before the allocation process commences. Moreover, the projections of demand and supply of school places in different districts for each SSPA cycle involve different assumptions. To avoid unnecessary speculation and misinterpretation, there is a consensus between EDB and the sector that the relevant information would not be disclosed. Under the confidentiality principle, EDB has provided the relevant projections to the sector (including the Secondary School Places Allocation Committee, the representatives of Hong Kong Subsidised Secondary Schools Councils and the secondary school heads from 18 districts) for discussion of the arrangements for SSPA 2019.

(e) The number of students in each special school and each school for social development in the 2018/19 school year

Children are referred to special schools by EDB based on the assessment and recommendations of specialists and the procedures of the referral and placement mechanism¹. Parental choices will be considered as far as possible. In general, the number of students in special schools is relatively small. Disclosing the enrolment of individual schools may induce unnecessary pressure to the schools with lower enrolment since they may be perceived as an unpopular school in comparison to other special schools of the same type. Therefore, we will not disclose the number of students of individual schools to avoid possible labelling effect.

(f) The projected number of students in each special school and each school for social development in each of the coming five years

The demand for placement in special schools in a school year will be affected by a number of factors, such as the number of pre-school referrals from different sources, parental choice, the number of ordinary school students recommended for placement in special schools, the number of special school students on extension of years of study, etc.

¹ For referrals to schools for social development, they should follow the procedures of the central coordinating referral mechanism managed by both EDB and the Social Welfare Department.

The projected demand for placement in special schools of school years is very fluid. Therefore, we are only able to provide the enrolment of special schools² in the current school year and the estimated number of students in special schools in the next school year, which are tabulated at Annex 3.

(g) Written responses to the four motions passed are set out at Annex 4.

² For the school type of hearing impairment, the number of students provided is the enrolment of the only school for children with hearing impairment in Hong Kong. The situation is the same for the Hospital School.

Number of S1 places in public sector schools
from the 2013/14 to 2017/18 school years

District	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Central and Western	1 200	1 146	1 127	1 094	1 094
Wan Chai	1 708	1 676	1 644	1 836	1 836
Eastern	3 514	3 427	3 244	3 116	3 020
Southern	1 582	1 438	1 396	1 364	1 396
Yau Tsim Mong	2 031	2 015	1 869	1 836	1 836
Sham Shui Po	2 649	2 576	2 471	2 471	2 471
Kowloon City	4 154	4 065	3 976	4 104	4 136
Wong Tai Sin	3 064	2 940	2 786	2 786	2 754
Kwun Tong	3 735	3 630	3 525	3 525	3 525
Sai Kung	2 468	2 371	2 308	2 308	2 308
Shatin	5 257	5 073	4 859	4 731	4 731
Tai Po	2 278	2 211	2 112	2 112	2 144
North	2 555	2 516	2 409	2 442	2 409
Yuen Long	4 699	4 577	4 391	4 327	4 359
Tuen Mun	4 604	4 303	4 140	3 980	4 076
Tsuen Wan	1 788	1 740	1 692	1 660	1 660
Kwai Tsing	4 114	3 927	3 808	3 808	3 776
Islands	855	830	773	773	773
Total	52 255	50 461	48 530	48 273	48 304

Notes:

- (1) Figures exclude special schools.
- (2) Figures refer to the position as at September of the respective school years.
- (3) Figures on school places refer to the number of students that can be accommodated in operating classes (excluding vacant classrooms) in accordance with the planned class sizes as adopted by the schools concerned.
- (4) Figures on school places have incorporated the impact arising from the schools' adoption of the mode of "2-1-1" or "1-1-1" to reduce the number of students allocated to each S1 class progressively under the targeted relief measures from the 2013/14 to 2015/16 school years.

Annex 1 (Cont'd)

Number of P 6 students in public sector schools
from the 2012/13 to 2016/17 school years

District	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Central and Western	1 272	1 175	1 172	1 115	1 178
Wan Chai	1 624	1 446	1 323	1 288	1 272
Eastern	2 719	2 520	2 409	2 380	2 424
Southern	971	927	879	767	845
Yau Tsim Mong	2 100	2 011	1 988	1 965	1 980
Sham Shui Po	2 614	2 460	2 287	2 266	2 250
Kowloon City	3 198	3 094	2 944	2 814	3 134
Wong Tai Sin	2 778	2 532	2 476	2 384	2 233
Kwun Tong	4 076	3 934	3 946	3 805	3 869
Sai Kung	2 198	2 009	1 840	1 757	1 794
Shatin	3 890	3 639	3 608	3 544	3 731
Tai Po	1 772	1 697	1 645	1 668	1 776
North	2 990	2 884	2 756	2 779	2 936
Yuen Long	4 888	4 538	4 236	4 051	4 209
Tuen Mun	3 384	3 097	2 849	2 789	3 055
Tsuen Wan	2 347	2 164	2 057	2 016	2 108
Kwai Tsing	3 291	3 138	2 927	2 890	2 880
Islands	1 107	1 013	965	835	828
Total	47 219	44 278	42 307	41 113	42 502

Notes:

(1) Figures exclude special schools.

(2) Figures refer to the position as at September of the respective school years.

Number of S1 places and students in public sector schools
in the 2018/19 school year

District	Number of S1 places	Number of S1 students
Central and Western	1 127	1 057
Wan Chai	1 836	1 689
Eastern	3 116	2 703
Southern	1 396	1 143
Yau Tsim Mong	1 835	1 658
Sham Shui Po	2 471	2 410
Kowloon City	4 136	3 826
Wong Tai Sin	2 818	2 679
Kwun Tong	3 525	3 402
Sai Kung	2 340	2 156
Shatin	4 731	4 396
Tai Po	2 240	2 072
North	2 970	2 764
Yuen Long	4 359	4 151
Tuen Mun	4 172	3 782
Tsuen Wan	1 660	1 539
Kwai Tsing	3 808	3 504
Islands	741	626
Total	49 281	45 557

Notes: (1) Figures exclude special schools.

(2) Figures refer to the position as at September 2018.

(3) Figures on school places refer to the number of students that can be accommodated in operating classes (excluding vacant classrooms) in accordance with the planned class sizes as adopted by the schools concerned.

(4) Figures on school places have incorporated the impact arising from the schools' adoption of the mode of "2-1-1" or "1-1-1" to reduce the number of students allocated to each S1 class progressively under the targeted relief measures from the 2013/14 to 2015/16 school years.

Annex 3

Number of students in the 2018/19 school year and
the estimated number of students
in the 2019/20 school year by special school type

School type	Number of students	
	2018/19 school year (as at September 2018)	2019/20 school year (estimate)
Visual impairment	110	120
Hearing impairment	64	60
Physical disability	907	930
Mild Intellectual disability	3 218	3 290
Moderate intellectual disability	2 040	2 140
Severe intellectual disability	706	730
School for social development	614	630
Hospital school	280	310

**Panel on Education
Meeting on 1 February 2019
Agenda item “Planning for the provision of primary and
secondary school places in the light of student population and
related stabilization measures”**

Response to the motion by Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan

Wording of the Motion

Student population goes up and down, and such fluctuations in student population should not trigger off adverse ramifications in schools. This Panel urges the authorities to set up a committee comprising representatives of principals and teachers to explore a systematic adjustment mechanism to stabilize the school system through proper planning and adjustment, thereby avoiding the impact brought about by population fluctuations on the school system.

Response

The Education Bureau (“EDB”) understands that changes in student population would have impact on the planning of public sector school places and the sector. We have been maintaining close liaison with the sector on the issue and adopted corresponding measures to ensure sufficient public sector school places to meet the demand, balance different stakeholders’ concerns, including schools and parents, and to reduce the impact on schools.

As for primary schools, EDB had projected back in 2013 that the overall demand for Primary One (“P1”) places would increase temporarily and reach the peak in the 2018/19 school year, drop in the 2019/20 school year and then progressively decrease to a stable level. Over the past few years, EDB has implemented flexible measures based on the

consensus with the sector (including the representatives of the Subsidised Primary Schools Council and the Hong Kong Aided Primary School Heads Association) to cope with the transient increase in demand for school places. Following the drop of P1 school-age population, the flexible measures will be adjusted or withdrawn in light of the demand as planned starting from the 2019/20 school year. This will help offset the impact of a declining student population on schools. Since the P1 enrolment has been increasing in the past few years, it is expected that the overall primary student population, the number of operating classes and teaching posts on establishment of public sector primary schools will remain generally stable in the next few years.

With regard to the concerns about the decrease in P1 school-age population, EDB had discussed with the sector the related follow-up measures back in January 2018. To maintain a stable teaching force and to facilitate the sustainable development of schools in the coming few years, both parties agreed to implement further measures. The primary schools concerned can apply on a yearly basis for retaining up to a maximum of three years the redundant teachers arising from class reduction due to the decrease of P1 population who fail to secure a teaching post or be absorbed through the prevailing mechanism for handling redundant teachers. EDB will keep in view the implementation and review timely. Besides, starting from P1 in the 2019/20 school year, the basis for calculating the number of approved classes will be reduced from 25 to 23 students per class if there are redundant teachers arising from class reduction after the student headcount in mid-September. The basis will be extended progressively to Primary 6 together with that cohort of students. The sector generally support the above measures and agree that they could help stabilise the teaching force.

As regards secondary schools, in light of the decline of Secondary One (“S1”) student population, EDB has continuously introduced a number of relief measures since the 2006/07 school year, which included reducing the number of students allocated to each S1 class from 38 in the 2008/09 school year to 34 in the 2012/13 school year. Starting

from the 2013/14 school year, EDB has further implemented a basket of targeted relief measures to help sustain the development of schools, stabilise the teaching force and maintain the quality of education in order to minimise the impact of the decline in student population on the sector.

According to the information available, the population of S1 students has started to rebound from the 2017/18 school year. It is anticipated that the overall S1 student population will gradually rise and reach the peak in the 2024/25 school year. To address the projected increase in the demand for S1 school places, EDB and the sector (including the representatives of Hong Kong Subsidised Secondary Schools Council and the secondary school heads from 18 districts) discussed and reached a consensus in October 2017 on the framework of direction and strategies for tackling the issue, which include adopting the established netting arrangements under the Secondary School Places Allocation (“SSPA”) System, progressively reverting the allocation class size to 34 upon the rebound of the S1 student population (hereafter referred to as “place reinstating”) as pledged by the sector prior to the implementation of the targeted relief measures, and according to the relevant criteria, increasing the number of S1 classes in the districts with a shortfall in school places after adopting the netting arrangements and “place reinstating” to meet the demand of each SSPA cycle.

For SSPA 2019, EDB met with the sector again in October 2018. Both parties agreed that the anticipated demand for S1 places would be coped with through the established netting arrangements, complemented by an across-the-board “place reinstating” by one school place and operating 35 additional S1 classes in North, Tai Po, Yuen Long and Sha Tin districts.

We understand that different stakeholders have different concerns on the planning of school places. We will continue maintaining close communication with the sector, with a view to balancing the concerns of different stakeholders and maintaining the quality of education while sustaining schools’ stable development and ensuring prudent use of resources.

**Panel on Education
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Agenda item “Planning for the provision of primary and
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related stabilization measures”**

Response to the motion by Hon SHIU Ka-chun

Wording of the Motion

This Panel urges the Government to properly handle the serious impact on the school system caused by the transitional measures implemented to cope with the changes in primary school-age student population, including “allocation of more students”, “partly-enlarged class structure” and “time-limited schools”. The Government should put forth concrete and effective ways, such as considering the implementation of targeted relief measures to sustain the development of schools, stabilize the teaching force and maintain the quality of education, or other enhanced measures in primary schools by drawing reference from the model adopted by secondary schools, so as to ensure the stable development of primary schools.

Response

According to the current projections of Primary One (“P1”) school-age population, the overall demand for P1 places in public sector schools is expected to reach the peak in the 2018/19 school year, drop in the 2019/20 school year and then progress to a stable level. However, since the P1 enrolment has been increasing in the past few years, despite the decline in P1 school-age population starting from the 2019/20 school year, it is expected that the overall primary student population, the number of operating classes and teaching posts on establishment of public sector primary schools will remain generally stable in the next few years.

Over the past few years, the Education Bureau (EDB) has implemented flexible measures based on the consensus reached with the sector (including representatives of the Subsidised Primary Schools Council and the Hong Kong Aided Primary School Heads Association) to cope with the transient increase in demand for P1 places. These include borrowing school places from other school nets and making use of vacant classrooms, constructing temporary classrooms, deploying vacant school premises and temporarily allocating more students to each P1 class. Following the drop of P1 school-age population, the flexible measures will be adjusted or withdrawn in light of the demand as planned starting from the 2019/20 school year. This will help offset the impact of a declining student population on schools.

With regard to the concerns about the decrease in P1 school-age population, EDB discussed with the sector the related follow-up measures back in January 2018. To maintain a stable teaching force and to facilitate the sustainable development of schools in the coming few years, both parties agreed to implement further measures. The aided primary schools concerned can apply on a yearly basis for retaining up to a maximum of three years the redundant teachers arising from class reduction due to the decrease of P1 population who fail to secure a teaching post or be absorbed through the prevailing mechanism for handling redundant teachers. EDB will keep in view the implementation and review timely. Besides, starting from P1 in the 2019/20 school year, the basis for calculating the number of approved classes will be reduced from 25 to 23 students per class if there are redundant teachers arising from class reduction after the student headcount in mid-September. The basis will be extended progressively to Primary 6 together with that cohort of students. The sector generally support the above measures and agree that they could help stabilize the teaching force.

**Panel on Education
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Agenda item “Planning for the provision of primary and
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related stabilization measures”**

Response to the motion by Dr Hon CHEUNG Chiu-hung

Wording of the Motion

Small class teaching (“SCT”) can foster interaction between teachers and students, enhance students’ concentration and effectively cater for student diversity. This Panel urges the authorities to as soon as possible fully implement the SCT policy in primary schools and commence promoting SCT in secondary schools so as to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Response

SCT has been implemented in public sector primary schools since the 2009/10 school year. The Education Bureau (“EDB”) has all along been adopting a pragmatic and flexible approach in implementing SCT, taking into consideration the expectations of schools, parents and students concerned, availability of classrooms to meet the demand for school places in individual districts as well as the development needs of schools. At present, 343 public sector primary schools (around 80%) have implemented SCT.

According to the current projections of Primary One (“P1”) school-age population, the overall demand for P1 places in public sector schools is expected to reach the peak in the 2018/19 school year, drop in the 2019/20 school year and then progress to a stable level. Both EDB

and the sector consider that this will provide a condition for more schools to implement SCT. As such, EDB has issued letters to invite all primary schools which have not yet implemented SCT to plan ahead and make early preparation so that they can implement SCT as soon as practicable when the demand and supply of school places allow. EDB will keep in view the demand and supply of school places in individual districts, and timely liaise with the schools concerned.

Conceptually, SCT is more of a teaching strategy. International studies have suggested that SCT is more effective when students are of younger age and its effectiveness tends to wane as students' age increases. When considering whether SCT should be implemented in secondary schools, we have to assess if it would be feasible and sustainable for secondary schools, same as in primary schools, to reduce the class size across the board. Moreover, with the adoption of subject streaming and small group teaching according to elective subjects at senior secondary levels, the actual number of students in each teaching class/group is rather small. Therefore, we have no plan to implement SCT in secondary schools at present having regard to the aforementioned considerations.

**Panel on Education
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related stabilization measures”**

Response to the motion by Hon AU Nok-hin

Wording of the Motion

Given that population varies by district, the Government should not align the number of students per class in the districts. This Panel urges the Government not to fully implement “place reinstating” (allocating one more student per class) in a hasty manner upon a slight rebound of Secondary One (“S1”) school-age population as such practice will increase the difficulty of student admission for quite a number of school districts with a low population. The Government should adopt a district-based approach by maintaining the original number of students per class in districts where there is a surplus of S1 places. If the number of classes operated in individual districts after implementing “place reinstating” needs to be reduced, the number of classes should be frozen at the original level.

Response

The provision of public sector secondary school places is planned on a territory-wide basis at present. Since student population and schools are not evenly distributed in different districts, it is not possible to achieve a complete balance of demand and supply of S1 places in each district in each Secondary School Places Allocation (“SSPA”) cycle. Even the overall S1 student population is gradually increasing, individual schools may still be affected because of the demand for

school places in individual districts and parental choices. Under the SSPA System, netting of school places from neighbouring areas will be arranged as and when necessary to meet the demand of individual districts with insufficient school places, and to provide more choices to students in districts with a smaller number of schools.

According to the information available, the population of S1 students has started to rebound from the 2017/18 school year. It is anticipated that the overall S1 student population will gradually rise and reach the peak in the 2024/25 school year. To address the projected increase in the demand for S1 school places, the Education Bureau (“EDB”) and the sector (including the representatives of Hong Kong Subsidised Secondary Schools Council and the secondary school heads from 18 districts) discussed and reached a consensus in October 2017 on the framework of direction and strategies for tackling the issue, which include adopting the established netting arrangements under SSPA, progressively reverting the allocation class size to 34 upon the rebound of the S1 student population (hereafter referred to as “place reinstating”) as pledged by the sector prior to the implementation of the targeted relief measures, and according to the relevant criteria, increasing the number of S1 classes in the districts with a shortfall in school places after adopting the netting arrangements and “place reinstating” to meet the demand of each SSPA cycle.

As regards “place reinstating”, allowing schools in certain districts to suspend “place reinstating” will affect the established netting arrangements. Besides, schools in different districts or in the same district may have different concerns over the number of students allocated to each S1 class, the netting arrangements and operating additional S1 classes. There are practical difficulties in reaching a consensus on setting objective and impartial criteria to decide the pace of “place reinstating” for individual districts. All along, the number of students allocated to each S1 class in central allocation has been standardised and the provision of recurrent subvention by the Government to public sector schools is mainly based on the number of classes. It would be unfair to allow different schools to opt for different numbers of students allocated to each S1 class under SSPA.

Such an arrangement would also be confusing to parents.

As regards the proposal of freezing the number of classes at the original level, EDB has been closely monitoring the demand and supply of public sector school places. In fact, our estimation on the decline of S1 student population was not very different from the situation when we discussed the targeted relief measures with the sector. The targeted relief measures previously implemented will still continue, including reducing the basis for calculating the number of approved S1 classes to 25 students per class, allowing schools with S1 classes reduced to one or two to participate in the next SSPA with a cap of three S1 classes, and relaxing the “not less than three S1 classes” requirement under which schools with two approved S1 classes are accepted not necessary to apply for any school development option. The above measures will continue to take effect in the coming few years.

Education Bureau
April 2019