

## **Special service arrangements for child care centres and special child care centres**

In light of the latest situation of the COVID-19 epidemic as well as the related arrangements for kindergartens, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) announced today (January 11) that all child care centres and special child care centres are required to implement special service arrangements on or before Friday (January 14) until the Chinese New Year holidays.

To minimise the chance of infection, the SWD advises members of the public not to take their children to child care centres or special child care centres during the period. However, these centres will remain open to serve service users who have difficulty in taking care of their children. Service users in need may contact the centres or service units concerned in advance.

In addition, operators of pre-school rehabilitation services (including special child care centres) may arrange appropriate modes of individual training, such as centre-based training, e-learning and home training, for service users having regard to the epidemic situation, service users' circumstances and their parents' preference during the period.

For enquiries, please call the SWD hotline on 2343 2255.

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## **Suspension of face-to-face classes of primary schools, kindergartens and kindergarten-cum-child care centres until Chinese New Year**

The Education Bureau (EDB) announced today (January 11) that all primary schools, kindergartens and kindergarten-cum-child care centres in Hong Kong (including schools offering non-local curriculum) should suspend face-to-face classes and all on-campus activities (including the cancellation or postponement of examinations and other activities within school premises) on or before Friday (January 14) until schools' Chinese New Year holidays. Private schools offering non-formal curriculum (commonly known as "tutorial schools") should suspend face-to-face classes of related class levels until February 7. The current arrangements for face-to-face classes for secondary schools will continue.

A spokesman for the EDB said, "The COVID-19 Omicron variant has high infectivity and is posing a serious threat. Currently, there is still an invisible chain of transmission within the community, and there have been confirmed cases of young children infected by family members in these few days. Teachers and peers who have had close contact with the infected children have to be put under quarantine. There have also been outbreaks of upper respiratory tract infection in kindergartens and primary schools in recent months, with symptoms similar to those of COVID-19. Kindergarten and primary school students are young and their self-care capability is relatively lower. In addition, most of them are not yet eligible for vaccination because of the age restriction. We care about students' learning and healthy development, and are at the same time concerned that they have a higher risk of infection.

"During the period of face-to-face class suspension, schools should remain open to look after students who do not have carers to take care of them at home. Schools will arrange for staff to be on duty to handle school affairs and answer parents' enquiries.

"In addition, schools will flexibly deploy various learning modes to sustain students' learning at home. As children should avoid prolonged use of digital screen devices, kindergartens should deploy other modes and encourage children to read at home, design learning activities that suit children's abilities and interests, and provide parents with guidance and learning materials as needed to help children maintain their curiosity and motivation to learn."

The spokesman continued, "Schools should remind parents to follow anti-epidemic precautionary measures and pay close attention to the health conditions of their children. Parents should avoid taking their children to crowded places with poor ventilation. Students should also maintain a balanced diet, exercise regularly and take adequate rest in order to strengthen their immunity. During the period of face-to-face class suspension, schools should continue to maintain communication with parents and students to show care for the learning and emotional needs of the students. Schools should also keep the school campuses clean and hygienic all the time. Schools are required to continue to strictly observe the health measures as stipulated in the 'Health Protection Measures for Schools' issued by the EDB and the 'Health Advice to Schools for the Prevention of COVID-19' issued by the Centre for Health Protection."

The spokesman added, "The EDB will issue a letter to schools with details later today. We are confident that schools will continue to remain flexible and support students to learn at home through various modes of learning and teaching. Suspension of face-to-face classes is a difficult decision. We hope that we can effectively control the epidemic with decisive measures at this critical moment, and that students can return to school with peace of mind as soon as possible."

The spokesman urged unvaccinated teachers and school staff, parents and students to get vaccinated as soon as possible to protect themselves and their family members, and to construct a more effective protective barrier

for both schools and the community.

The epidemic situation may evolve rapidly in the future. The EDB will closely monitor the situation and move in step with the development of the overall anti-epidemic measures in Hong Kong, and endeavour to inform schools of the corresponding arrangements as early as possible.

In addition, regarding a report today alleging "after dispelling rumours yesterday but announcing class suspension today, parents agree but are puzzled", the spokesman pointed out that the bureau noted a rumour on suspension of all classes last Saturday (January 8) and issued a press release on the same day to clarify and stop the rumour so that parents would not be misled. As a matter of fact, since last week, the Omicron variant has been spreading fast in Hong Kong and the situation has been evolving rapidly. After thorough consideration, the Government acted decisively and in a timely manner announced today that kindergartens and primary schools will suspend face-to-face classes while secondary schools will maintain the current class arrangements. The spokesperson reminded members of the public to refer to the EDB's official announcements and not to be misled by rumours.

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## **Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases**

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at 9am today (January 11), eight patients who had tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus (case numbers: 12520, 12543, 12553, 12555, 12557, 12570, 12578 and 12602) were discharged from hospital in the last 24 hours. So far, a total of 12 304 patients have been discharged.

A total of 406 patients who had tested positive are currently hospitalised in the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre, the Hospital Authority (HA) Infectious Disease Centre, the Community Treatment Facility at AsiaWorld-Expo and a public hospital. All of them are in stable condition.

The HA will maintain close contact with the Centre for Health Protection to monitor the latest developments and to inform the public and healthcare workers on the latest information in a timely manner.

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## CHP investigates 17 confirmed and four asymptomatic additional SARS-CoV-2 virus cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (January 11) announced the latest epidemic situation of COVID-19. As of 0.00am, January 11, the CHP was investigating 17 additional confirmed cases and four additional asymptomatic cases in the past 24 hours (i.e. there were 21 additional cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus confirmed by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch in those 24 hours). This brings the total number of confirmed cases to 12 809 so far and starting from January 1 recorded with 171 asymptomatic cases. Hong Kong has recorded a total of 12 980 cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus so far.

The newly reported cases consist of 13 imported cases and eight cases epidemiologically linked with imported cases. Twenty of the cases involved mutant strains while the mutation test result of the remaining case is pending. The patients comprise nine males and 12 females, aged 16 to 63. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex or the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" ([www.coronavirus.gov.hk](http://www.coronavirus.gov.hk)).

The eight cases epidemiologically linked with imported cases are 12966 (47-year-old male who is a family member living together with case 12945), 12967 (38-year-old male who is a family member of case 12821), 12977 (36-year-old female who is a family member of case 12821 and was a household contact of case 12967), 12969 (32-year-old female who is a household contact of case 12903), 12970 (31-year-old male who is a family member of cases 12825 and 12841), 12979 (52-year-old male who is co-worker of case 12825), 12985 (48-year-old male who is a co-worker of case 12825) and 12982 (16-year-old female who is a family member living together with case 12913).

For case 12985, the 48-year-old male patient lives in Maple Gardens Phase III, 51 Kin Wah Street, North Point. He worked at CITIC Securities Company Limited in North Point and last went to work on January 5. He is the colleague of cases 12825, 12880 and 12979. He was classified as a close contact of case 12825 and was arranged to undergo quarantine at the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre on January 8. He is asymptomatic and tested positive yesterday (January 10). The Government has made a "restriction-testing declaration" (RTD) tonight for the building where the patient resided and persons who resided or worked at the building will be subject to increased compulsory testing frequency.

A total of 360 cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus have been reported in the past 14 days (December 28, 2021, to January 10, 2022). Forty-one of them are epidemiologically linked with imported cases/possibly import-related cases, one is a local case, while the rest are imported cases.

According to the testing and quarantine arrangements for cases with

mutant strains, persons who resided or worked within the same building as the residence of relevant cases will be subject to compulsory testing on specified dates in accordance with the announcement by the DH. They will also be required to undergo self-monitoring until the 21st day (see the details of the buildings and dates of testing at [www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/CTN\\_Specified\\_premises\\_and\\_Dates\\_of\\_Testing.pdf](http://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/CTN_Specified_premises_and_Dates_of_Testing.pdf)).

The CHP strongly reminded members of the public to strictly follow the compulsory testing requirements and undergo the multiple tests on time as required. The compulsory testing requirement applies to those who have completed a COVID-19 vaccination course as well. The Government will seriously verify whether they had complied with the testing notices. Any person who fails to comply with the testing notices commits an offence and may be fined a fixed penalty of \$5,000. The person would also be issued with a compulsory testing order requiring him or her to undergo testing within a specified time frame. Failure to comply with the order is an offence and the offender would be liable to a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months. Relevant officers of different government departments are empowered to perform certain functions under the relevant Regulations under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599), including requesting individuals to provide information and assistance when necessary. Any person who fails to comply with the relevant request commits an offence and would be liable to a fine at level 3 (\$10,000). The Government reiterates that the aim of issuing a compulsory testing notice is to stop the spread of COVID-19 in the community as soon as possible to protect overall public health and safety.

With the higher transmissibility and risk of infection of the Omicron mutant strain, the CHP strongly appeals to the community to comply with the recently tightened social distancing measures in the next two weeks, and to refrain from participating in unnecessary or crowded activities or gatherings (particularly religious or cross-family activities and gatherings). This would lower the risk of infection and prevent the virus from spreading in the community.

â€‹The spokesman for the CHP stressed, "The global situation of COVID-19 infection remains severe and there is a continuous increase in the number of cases involving mutant strains that carry higher transmissibility, and there are also reports of breakthrough infections in some vaccinated individuals. The CHP strongly urges members of the public to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong, in particular to specified places with high risk under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H)."

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## Missing girl in Tuen Mun located

A girl who went missing in Tuen Mun has been located.

Lin Sihan, aged 16, went missing after she was last seen at Tuen Mun Hospital in the small hours on January 9. Staff of her hostel made a report to Police on the same day.

Police located the girl in Tsim Sha Tsui this afternoon (January 11). She sustained no injuries and no suspicious circumstances were detected.