

Continuation of suspension of face-to-face classes for schools in Hong Kong until March 6

The Education Bureau (EDB) announced today (February 14) that since the epidemic situation is still very severe, all kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools (including schools offering non-local curriculum) and private schools offering non-formal curriculum (commonly known as "tutorial schools") in Hong Kong will continue the suspension of face-to-face classes and on-campus activities until March 6.

A spokesman for the EDB said, "During the suspension period, schools, in principle, should not arrange students to return to schools for any activities. Schools should remain open during school days to look after those students who need to return to schools because of a lack of carers to take care of them at home. Nonetheless, in view that many districts are affected by the epidemic and operations under restriction-testing declarations and compulsory testing notices, and that the manpower of the schools concerned may be affected and it is not suitable for their students to go out and return to schools, we appeal to parents to pay attention to the situation of respective districts and keep close communication with schools.

"If schools, after careful deliberation, consider that there are genuine needs to arrange the class level of students sitting for public examinations this year (e.g. Secondary Six students) to return to schools for essential learning or assessment activities for no more than half a day, schools should put in place various strict anti-epidemic 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."

He continued, "During the period of suspension of face-to-face classes, schools will flexibly deploy various teaching modes to sustain students' learning at home. When arranging online learning and related activities, schools should pay attention to the length of the lessons and remind students to refrain from prolonged use of digital screen gadgets and give appropriate rest for their eyes for around every 20 to 30 minutes. Students should also do sufficient physical exercises at home in order to maintain good mental and physical health."

The spokesman added, "In view of the implementation of the 'vaccine pass' at schools starting from February 24, save for those who are granted exemptions, all school staff, persons providing on-campus services and visitors have to be vaccinated or otherwise they will not be allowed to enter the school premises. The above measures will still be enforced during suspension of face-to-face classes."

Vaccination is the most effective way to protect against COVID-19 and

reduce the risk of falling seriously ill, and death, should one get infected. The minimum age for receiving the CoronaVac vaccine (Sinovac vaccine) will be lowered to 3 years old starting from February 15. The Government will discuss with the sector to facilitate the implementation of vaccination arrangements for young children. In view of the severe epidemic situation in the community, the spokesman strongly urged parents and schools to arrange eligible students to get vaccinated as early as possible to protect themselves. A high vaccination rate will help construct a more effective protective barrier in schools and create favourable conditions for early resumption of face-to-face classes.

In view of the volatile development of the epidemic, the EDB announced today the suspension of the Territory-wide System Assessment 2022. The EDB will discuss with the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority on how to assist the school sector to understand the overall learning situation and will communicate with the schools in a timely manner.

In view of the extension of the suspension of face-to-face classes and on-campus activities in primary schools, schools will not be able to arrange the Primary Six (P6) second term Internal Assessment (IA) shortly. Such assessment could not be deferred for long so as not to affect school choice-making and related work of the Central Allocation under Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA). The EDB has decided upon careful consideration that schools do not need to conduct the P6 second term IA for SSPA 2022. Following the same arrangement in SSPA 2020 for which the P6 second term IA was cancelled due to the epidemic situation, the allocation band of P6 students for this cycle will be determined by their IA scores obtained at the end of Primary Five and the mid-year of P6.

The EDB will continue to monitor the situation and take into account the advice from the health experts in order to review the class arrangements and make further announcements in a timely manner.