

EDB continues to follow up on class resumption arrangements for cross-boundary students

A spokesman for the Education Bureau (EDB) said today (May 20) that following the EDB's announcement on May 5 that schools in Hong Kong could resume classes by phases in a gradual and orderly manner, an initial implementation plan has been formulated after discussions between the HKSAR Government and various departments of the Shenzhen Municipal People's Government on the feasibility of class resumption for cross-boundary students (CBS).

The spokesman said, "Though there are signs of easing of the situation of COVID-19 in Hong Kong, the Government will remain vigilant and prudent in our preventive and control measures. There is a considerable number of CBS, totaling 27 000 this school year. When considering whether and how CBS could resume schooling in Hong Kong, while giving due regard to their learning needs, we must take into account health risks posed to the residents of Hong Kong and Shenzhen. A range of issues related to immigration control, epidemic prevention and control policies and transportation arrangement are also involved."

He stressed that exemption from the 14-day compulsory quarantine requirement and class resumption arrangement on a controlled basis should be granted for CBS with the over-riding principle of safety and health of students, teachers and the public in mind. Relevant measures should be stringent not be relaxed, especially at the initial stage of class resumption, to minimise any risks.

"In view of the above considerations, we will explore the feasibility of class resumption by phases, with a pilot run involving about 2 500 CBS enrolled in S3 to S5 in the first phase of class resumption. This batch of CBS is relatively more mature and have better self-care ability. Since they can take care of themselves when travelling across the border and using transport without the escort by accompanying persons, we trust that class resumption for these students should be smoother," he said.

"As class resumption arrangements involve various areas including immigration control of the two places, epidemic prevention and control policies and transportation arrangements, we will continue to coordinate with different parties to enable the first batch of CBS (S3 to S5) to attend schools in Hong Kong as early as possible. That said, as a number of the fine implementation details have yet to be finalised, it is expected that the new arrangement will not come into effect on May 27. Before the new measures are in place, we appeal to schools and teachers to sustain their support for students to learn at home by helping CBS and their parents through diversified modes of learning (including e-learning)."

"According to the initial implementation plan, S3 to S5 CBS can travel via Shenzhen Bay Port or Futian / Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Port from Monday to Friday for attending school and returning home. The limited opening of Futian / Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Port is only for immigration clearance of CBS. Such an arrangement is not applicable to other travelers. To avoid unnecessary social contact, CBS will take school buses to travel between schools and boundary control points upon arrival in Hong Kong. Students will be subject to health protection measures of the two places when they travel across the border every day, including temperature checking, submission of health declaration forms to the staff of the Department of Health, subjecting to health and precautionary surveillance to be implemented by schools during school time, and presenting a negative nucleic acid test result with a validity of seven days to the Shenzhen authority."

The EDB today issued a letter to all secondary schools and some special schools with secondary section requesting them to ask parents for the relevant information so that the departments concerned can consider as soon as possible the feasibility of the initial implementation plan on exemption from compulsory quarantine, border control point clearance, school bus arrangements and quarantine arrangements as well as the timetable for implementation.

The spokesman said that the EDB will continue to follow up with the relevant departments on the arrangements of class resumption for CBS and will announce the other details as soon as possible.