

Education Bureau announces latest anti-epidemic measures for schools

In view of the latest developments of the epidemic and the recent further relaxation of social distancing measures by the Government, the Education Bureau (EDB) announced today (May 19) the updated arrangements of anti-epidemic measures in schools, including the relaxation arrangements for school activities.

A spokesman for the EDB said, "The EDB attaches great importance to the health of students and reviews various anti-epidemic measures in schools from time to time. In response to the announcement made by the Government earlier that the second stage of the relaxation in social distancing measures will be implemented today as scheduled, we will relax the conditions for students to participate in mask-wearing activities on a half-day basis, such as speech days, parents' days, open days and campus visits. However, students attending the events are still required to meet the relevant anti-epidemic prevention measures of the venue.

"In addition, secondary schools, primary schools and kindergartens can also arrange for students to participate in non-academic mask-wearing extracurricular activities (such as music or sports activities, school team training) on a half-day basis on Saturdays.

"We believe that the above measures will help students better adjust to normal school life, and at the same time allow schools to arrange more diversified activities for students so as to enhance their physical and mental development."

The EDB has updated the guidelines on "Health Protection Measures for Schools" and uploaded them onto the EDB's website (www.edb.gov.hk/en/sch-admin/admin/about-sch/diseases-prevention/guidelines-covid19.html). Schools should continue to observe the various anti-epidemic measures stipulated in the "Health Protection Measures for Schools" issued and from time to time updated by the EDB and the "Health Advice to Schools for the Prevention of COVID-19" issued by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP).

The spokesman added, "As for the daily rapid antigen test (RAT) arrangement, taking into account the implementation of relevant arrangements in schools since the resumption of face-to-face classes and the number of cases reported by schools to the CHP, we have observed that the RAT at this stage can help gatekeeping in schools. After listening to views of the CHP, it is considered necessary for schools to maintain the daily RAT arrangement until late June. The EDB will continue to distribute RAT kits to students with financial needs through schools. The Government will review the development of the epidemic in a timely manner and consider later whether to adjust the daily RAT arrangement."

Vaccination is the most effective way to protect against COVID-19 and it can prevent severe cases and reduce the risk of death. In view of the fact that the vaccination rate of younger students, especially those aged 3 to 11, still needs to be improved, the EDB strongly urges parents and schools to arrange for school-age students, especially younger students, to be vaccinated as soon as possible to protect their lives. Vigorously increasing the vaccination rate will also help the campus to build a more effective protective barrier so that students can study with peace of mind.