

Government announces class arrangements after Chinese New Year holidays

The Education Bureau (EDB) today (February 3) announced the arrangements of face-to-face classes for all kindergartens, primary and secondary schools after the schools' Chinese New Year holidays.

The Government announced earlier the continuous suspension of face-to-face classes and school activities for all kindergartens, primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong until the beginning of schools' Chinese New Year holidays. At the same time, primary and secondary schools were allowed to arrange a small number of students to return to campuses according to school-based needs, with the number of students capped at one-sixth of the total number of students.

A spokesman for the EDB said, "We understand that schools and parents very much hope that students can have more time for face-to-face classes so that their learning opportunities will not be deprived of and their social, physical and mental developments will not be hindered due to the prolonged fight against the epidemic. Hence, the EDB, after taking into account the latest development of the epidemic, advice of health experts and the preparedness of schools, decided that all kindergartens, primary and secondary schools (including special schools and schools offering non-local curriculum) as well as schools offering non-formal curriculum (commonly known as 'tutorial schools') will be allowed to arrange more students to return to campuses on a half-day basis in accordance with school-based arrangements after the schools' Chinese New Year's holidays, with the number of students capped at one-third of the total number of students.

He added, "According to the views of health experts, apart from the prevailing anti-epidemic measures implemented by schools, virus testing is also a key to epidemic prevention and control. Comprehensive and regular testing by school staff can strengthen the prevention of virus infection, provide protection to all teachers and students, and reduce the risk of virus transmission, which is conducive to creating a safer environment for students to learn. The EDB has earlier arranged the COVID-19 Targeted Group Testing Scheme for all school staff and staff of boarding sections of special schools. Some schools have participated actively in the scheme. Based on this experience, we are of the view that if schools can arrange all teachers and staff to undergo regular virus testing once every two weeks, they will have the condition to fully resume half-day face-to-face classes. They need to conduct and complete the tests within 14 days before the resumption of face-to-face classes and submit applications to the EDB. The above arrangements are also applicable to 'tutorial schools'. The EDB will issue a letter to inform schools of the detailed arrangements within days."

The EDB reminds schools of the related arrangements and measures that schools should implement before the full resumption of face-to-face classes and school activities to sustain students' learning at home through flexible use of various teaching modes. During such period, schools should remain open to take care of those students who have to go back to schools because of the lack of carers at home. They should arrange staff to be on duty to handle school affairs, answer parents' enquiries and take care of those students who have returned to schools. Schools should also ensure that the campus environment is clean and hygienic.

Parents should take precautionary measures for COVID-19 and pay close attention to the health conditions of their children. They should avoid bringing their children to crowded places with poor ventilation. Students should maintain a balanced diet, exercise regularly and take adequate rest in order to strengthen their immunity. If students are feeling unwell (even if the symptoms are very mild), they must not return to schools and should seek medical advice promptly to receive appropriate diagnoses and treatments.