

LCQ13: Opening up School Facilities for Promotion of Sports Development Scheme

Following is a question by Hon Ma Fung-kwok and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, in the Legislative Council today (January 9):

Question:

Since the last school year, the Education Bureau and the Home Affairs Bureau have jointly launched the Opening up School Facilities for Promotion of Sports Development Scheme (the Scheme). Through providing financial incentives, the Scheme encourages schools to hire out their facilities to sports organisations. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the details, as set out in the table below, of the programmes which were held/have been confirmed to be held under the Scheme (i) in the last school year and (ii) in the current school year (set out separately in tables of the same format as the table below);

School year: _____

Name of sports organisation	Name of school (District)	Number of programmes	Type of sports	School facilities hired	Number of participants
Total:	Total:	Total:	Total:	Total:	Total:

(2) as the authorities indicated that they would collect views on the Scheme from the schools and sports organisations concerned after the end of the last school year, of the views so collected; the enhancement measures taken by the authorities in the light of such views; whether these measures include (i) further encouraging sports organisations and schools to participate in the Scheme, and (ii) enhancing the matching between sports organisations and schools; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) as some sports organisations have relayed that the levels of the hire charges for school facilities levied by some schools are higher than the relevant levels of charges for the facilities under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, whether the authorities will (i) encourage such schools to lower their hire charges and (ii) provide subsidies to sports organisations for hiring school facilities; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) whether the authorities will expand the lists of sports organisations eligible for participating in the Scheme; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(5) given that sports organisations participating in the Scheme are required to take out, on their own, insurance with adequate coverage (including third party risks insurance) for the programmes to be held by them in schools, whether the authorities will consider collectively purchasing the required insurance for such sports organisations so as to boost the incentives for sports organisations to participate in the Scheme; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Since its launch in the 2017/18 school year, the Opening up School Facilities for Promotion of Sports Development Scheme (the Scheme) has been well received by the sports sector and schools. In consultation with the Education Bureau (EDB), the consolidated reply to the questions raised by the Hon Ma Fung-kwok is as follows:

(1) The details of the programmes organised under the Scheme in the 2017/18 and 2018/19 school years are at Annex.

(2) According to the respective questionnaire surveys conducted by EDB and the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB), the feedback of participating schools and eligible sports organisations of the Scheme in its first year of operation was positive.

Participating schools were of the view that the Scheme could strengthen their community connection, enable the community to make effective use of schools' facilities and collaborate in the development of sports, provide more opportunities for students to participate in physical activities, and enhance the sporting culture on campus. On the other hand, they also suggest that the Government should step up promotion of the Scheme and increase the number of eligible sports organisations so that more students and sports organisations could be benefited.

Sports organisations generally considered that the Scheme could provide a wider range of sports venues, facilitate promotion of their respective sports and reaching out to target participants, help build partnerships with schools, as well as contribute to the promotion of sports in the community.

Having regard to the feedback collected, we have implemented a number of improvement measures in the 2018/19 school year, which include:

- increasing the amount of subsidy for schools from \$20,000 to \$30,000 for the first programme, and from \$15,000 to \$20,000 for each subsequent programme. The cap of the subsidy is also raised from \$80,000 to \$130,000 for each school per school year;
- extending the Scheme to the 72 schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme;
- increasing the number of eligible sports organisations from 81 to 117;

- encouraging participating schools to charge sports organisations at the reduced rates specified in the guidelines issued by EDB; and
- arranging briefing sessions for school representatives and sports organisations.

For the 2018/19 school year, among some 130 schools which indicated willingness to open up their facilities under the Scheme, 31 schools have confirmed opening up their facilities to 25 sports organisations for around 180 squad and young athletes training and district sports activities. In the 2017/18 school year, 12 schools opened up their facilities to 15 sports organisations for running 38 sports programmes in total, which demonstrates a significantly higher participation of the Scheme in its second year.

(3) The daily operational expenses of public sector schools are mainly subsidised by the Government. EDB has through the years been issuing guidelines to public sector schools to set out the recommended charges for the hiring of accommodations in schools. Generally speaking, schools should charge hirers on a full-cost recovery basis. Since the operation, target groups, management policies and funding sources of schools and leisure facilities under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) are entirely different, their levels of charges are not directly comparable.

Nonetheless, to encourage more sports organisations to join the Scheme, EDB has in September 2018 updated the "Guidelines for Levying Charges for Hire of Accommodation in Schools" for public sector schools, and incorporated eligible sports organisations under the Scheme into the category of organisations eligible for reduced rates. The discount rates range from 48 per cent to 86 per cent depending on the types of facilities hired. According to the information provided by schools participating in the Scheme in the 2018/19 school year, around 90 per cent of them have adopted the reduced rates or even lower fees when charging sports organisations. Some schools even took the initiatives to waive the charges altogether.

Currently, most of the eligible sports organisations are receiving subvention from LCSD or the Home Affairs Department, which covers expenses associated with training, purchase of equipment and rental of sports venues. We consider the present reduced rates adopted by schools under the Scheme are at an affordable level for these eligible sports organisations. Therefore, we have no plan to provide additional subsidy for them.

(4) Given some schools and parents concern that opening up school facilities may bring security and operational issues, and that some places of the sports programmes are also reserved for students, the Scheme is currently opened for "national sports associations" recognised by the Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China and their affiliated club members, district sports associations and sports organisations subvented by LCSD. These organisations are experienced with proven track record in organising sports programmes, so that the participating schools, students and parents could have more confidence in them. If other organisations are interested in hiring school facilities to organise sports programmes, they may collaborate with eligible sports organisations to join the Scheme.

EDB and HAB will continue to enhance the Scheme and take into account schools' feedback in considering whether to further expand the list of sports organisations so that more school facilities can be used for sports activities.

(5) To provide schools with appropriate coverage, EDB has taken out Block Insurance Policy (BIP) for aided schools and caput schools, which currently covers their public liability as the occupier and/or landlord and/or property owner. If a school hires out school premises/facilities to outside organisations for holding activities and a user gets injured due to the use of facilities during the hiring period, it is covered by the Public Liability Insurance section of the BIP provided that the injury is caused by the negligence of the school. However, the legal liability of outside organisations for accidents caused by their oversight when holding activities in schools falls outside the scope of the BIP.

Participating sports organisations of the Scheme are required to take out adequate insurance policy for the use of school facilities, including third party liability insurance, and include the school as the insured as appropriate to ensure adequate protection for staff, property and facilities in the school premises. Given the scale, type of sports, risks involved and number of participants of the programmes vary, and that the facilities hired are also different, it is more prudent and practical for sports organisations to procure suitable insurance separately having regard to the nature of the programmes organised.