

LCQ18: Cross-boundary students

Following is a question by the Hon Alice Mak and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (June 23):

Question:

As the authorities of Hong Kong and the Mainland have both implemented immigration quarantine measures, cross-boundary students (CBS) have been unable to cross the boundary daily from the Mainland to attend schools in Hong Kong as they used to do. Some of the students are temporarily living at their relatives' or friends' homes in Hong Kong, while some others are staying on the Mainland. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the respective numbers of CBS and schools attended by them in this school year, with a breakdown by District Council district;
- (2) whether it knows, since the whole-school resumption of half-day face-to-face classes on the 24th of last month, the respective numbers of cross-boundary (i) primary and (ii) secondary school students who are currently living in Hong Kong and have attended face-to-face classes, and the respective percentages of such numbers in the relevant totals;
- (3) whether it knows the learning support currently provided by schools to those CBS who have been unable to return to Hong Kong to attend face-to-face classes, and the number of schools providing real-time online classes for such students;
- (4) of the new measures put in place by the Education Bureau (EDB) amid the epidemic to provide CBS with appropriate support for their learning and personal growth, as well as to render assistance to those CBS with special educational needs; the expected time when the arrangements for crossing the boundary to attend schools may resume;
- (5) whether it has compiled statistics on the number of CBS who intend to continue to attend schools in Hong Kong in the next school year; in respect of those CBS who are unable to come to Hong Kong to complete in person the application and registration procedures for Primary One (P1) and Secondary One (S1) admission, whether the EDB will make arrangements for their online application and registration; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (6) given that the number of CBS in the next school year may decrease due to the epidemic, whether the EDB will roll out mitigation measures (e.g. temporarily reducing the allocation class sizes for P1 and S1), so that there will not be surplus teachers arising from class reduction in the schools concerned?

Reply:

President,

The reply of the Education Bureau (EDB) to the question raised by the Member is as follows:

(1) and (2) In the 2020/21 school year, because of the development of the COVID-19 epidemic and the epidemic prevention and control measures in Hong Kong and the Mainland, some cross-boundary students (CBS) are temporarily staying in Hong Kong to attend face-to-face classes at schools, while some CBS are unable to come to Hong Kong for schooling. As such, the EDB could not gather data on the number of CBS travelling daily across the boundary in the school year. In October 2020, the EDB collected information via schools on the number of students residing in the Mainland at that time. The number of students studying in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong by district but residing in the Mainland and the number of schools involved in the 2020/21 school year are tabulated in the Annex. The EDB has not collected information concerning CBS who are currently staying in Hong Kong and have attended classes at schools.

(3) and (4) Under the circumstances when CBS have been unable to attend face-to-face classes in Hong Kong, schools have flexibly utilised different learning and teaching modes to support students' continuous learning at home, having regard to schools' circumstances and students' needs at different learning stages. Examples of these modes include real-time online classes, dissemination of teaching videos, sharing of diversified learning resources, online submission of assignments and individual online guidance sessions or online learning support groups, as well as provision of learning materials by post. On supporting students with special educational needs (SEN), the EDB has specially launched the "Catering for Students with Special Educational Needs – Joyful Online Learning at Home" series for reference and use by parents during the epidemic, enabling them to help their children with SEN achieve effective learning at home. Furthermore, schools are specifically reminded to keep track of the performance of students with SEN in learning and emotion and communicate with parents on a regular basis so as to review and adjust the support strategies and details at different stages.

In addition, to strengthen the learning and emotional support for CBS, the EDB has commissioned a service provider to offer programmes on "Psychosocial Support" and "Learning Support" in Luohu, Futian and Nanshan districts in Shenzhen from May to July in 2021 for primary and secondary CBS residing in Shenzhen. The programmes support CBS through face-to-face session in small groups beyond learning at home. In tandem, service providers have also been commissioned to set up general service points in the above-mentioned districts in Shenzhen from June to August in 2021, with a view to providing CBS and their parents with useful information, learning and emotional support materials, as well as free-of-charge services for borrowing of books, recreation equipment and facilities. Besides, networking activities and sharing sessions will be organised to facilitate their communication with

one another.

The EDB has been maintaining liaison with the Mainland authorities on the arrangements of class resumption for CBS. Regarding the arrangements for the next school year, we will continue to closely monitor the development of the epidemic situation, the progress of vaccination in Hong Kong and the Mainland, as well as the readiness of schools. We will take into account the advice of health experts, explore the feasibility of attending classes in Hong Kong for CBS with the Mainland authorities in a timely manner, and collaborate with schools to work out appropriate learning arrangements for CBS.

(5) Regarding the arrangements of the Primary One Admission (POA) System for 2021, in view of the fact that parents/guardians of some CBS may not be able to register with their allocated schools in person, the EDB has arranged to deliver a separate Registration Document to parents by post. Parents/guardians may send the documents to the schools for registration by fax, email or post, or authorise a representative to register with the schools on their behalf within the registration period in June. The Discretionary Places Admission (DP) stage of POA 2022 will commence in September this year. If the parents concerned are unable to apply in person or authorise a representative in writing to do so on their behalf, they may submit the relevant application forms and documents to schools by post. Details of the arrangements will be announced in due course.

Regarding the arrangements of the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System for 2021, the EDB has reminded all primary schools to contact the parents/guardians of CBS prior to the release of the allocation results. If they are unable to collect the allocation results and complete the procedure in person, the primary schools concerned will inform them of the allocation results by phone or other electronic means on the day of results release, so that they can approach the allocated secondary schools. Primary schools are also required to return the Admission Slips of the students concerned to the EDB for collection by the allocated secondary schools. The DP stage of SSPA 2022 will commence in January next year. The EDB will closely monitor the development of the epidemic situation and make special arrangements as necessary.

With the implementation of the "zero-quota" policy for doubly non-permanent resident pregnant women in 2013, the number of CBS participating in the POA System has decreased significantly since 2019. The number of CBS participating in the POA System in 2021 is 472. The EDB has not gathered any statistics on the number of CBS participating in the SSPA System and those who continue their studies in Hong Kong.

(6) The EDB appreciates the concerns of the sector and is aware that the future planning of schools might be affected by the situation that CBS have been unable to attend schools in Hong Kong at the moment due to the epidemic. The EDB will continue to keep in view the changes in student population, the epidemic prevention and control measures as well as immigration control of Hong Kong and Shenzhen. The EDB will also maintain close communication with

the sector and encourage the sector to plan ahead, with a view to ensuring sustainable overall development of the school sector and prudent use of resources while maintaining the quality of education.