

LCQ22: Newly established schools

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hak-kan and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (March 24):

Question:

It has been reported that Queen's Hill Estate and Shan Lai Court, which are located at Queen's Hill in Fanling, will be completed for intake within this year, and two primary schools (namely TWGHs Tseng Hin Pei Primary School and The Salvation Army Queen's Hill School) in the vicinity are under construction. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

1. whether it knows if the aforesaid two schools will commence classes in September this year as scheduled, and the latest progress of their teacher recruitment, student admission, etc.;
2. of the approved class structures, numbers of classes, numbers of students at each grade, numbers of teachers, and amounts of regular subventions in respect of the two schools;
3. whether the Education Bureau (EDB) has formulated a contingency plan which specifies the arrangements for the teachers employed and students admitted in the event that the two schools cannot commence classes as scheduled;
4. given that the two schools have not been included in the Choice of Schools List for Central Allocation (Primary One Admission 2021) for selection by parents, how the EDB assists the schools in admitting students, particularly the admission of those primary students who will soon move into Queen's Hill Estate and Shan Lai Court;
5. whether the EDB has formulated plans to assist those students who are studying in other primary schools in transferring to the two schools after they have moved into Queen's Hill Estate and Shan Lai Court; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and
6. as some members of the education sector have pointed out that the regular subvention received by an aided school is calculated on the basis of the number of students, but the student intakes of newly established schools at the initial stage are often lower than the target numbers, and such a situation is not conducive to the development of these schools, whether the EDB has plans to improve the method for calculating the subventions received by newly established schools; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Our reply to the Hon Chan Hak-kan's question is as follows:

(1), (2) and (3) The school building works of the two primary schools at Queen's Hill, Fanling are on schedule. It is expected that the new schools will be completed in the third quarter of 2021 for operation in the 2021/22 school year. The main buildings of the two school premises have been completed and the internal fitting-out works are underway. It is hoped that the two school premises can be handed over to the school sponsoring bodies as soon as possible. The Education Bureau (EDB) will continue to maintain close communication with the school sponsoring bodies on the preparatory work (including matters related to class arrangement, staffing and student admission) of the two new schools, so as to offer advice and support as appropriate to facilitate the school sponsoring bodies in preparing for the operation of the new schools. The EDB will, based on the Code of Aid and the principles set out in the relevant circulars, compute the staff establishment and recurrent cash grants according to the number of approved classes of the schools. In addition, the EDB will also provide the schools with additional teaching and professional support staff as well as recurrent and non-recurrent cash grants in accordance with the specific measures in various aspects.

(4) and (5) The EDB will provide placement assistance services for prospective residents of Queen's Hill Estate and Shan Lai Court. Regarding prospective Primary One (P1) students in the coming school year, residents who will move into Queen's Hill Estate and Shan Lai Court may approach the School Places Allocation (SPA) Section of the EDB to apply for net transfer or P1 places for their children on or before August 31, 2021. Under the prevailing mechanism, if parents need to apply for transfer to another school net for their children after participating in the Primary One Admission (POA) System because of allocation of public rental housing (PRH) flats, they may bring along the flat offer letters of the related estates or other relevant documentary proofs to the SPA Section of the EDB to apply for the net transfer. The EDB will allocate school places for these children in the school net at which the estates are located (i.e. School Net 81 of the North District) according to the established procedures. For parents who wish to apply for joining the POA 2021 for their children (for admission to P1 in September 2021) but have not yet submitted applications, they may bring along relevant documents to the SPA Section of the EDB for application on or before August 31, 2021. As for students currently attending primary schools in other districts who wish to transfer to a school in the district after moving into Queen's Hill Estate or Shan Lai Court, they may make applications to the EDB and we will make referrals.

To facilitate prospective residents' understanding of the details of the services, the EDB will provide school transfer information, a list of schools in the district and application forms of the aforesaid placement assistance services for distribution by the Housing Department to residents allocated with PRH flats. Parents who wish to transfer their children to the above two schools may also contact the schools concerned directly to apply for admission.

(6) Generally speaking, the staffing and resources required of a school depend on the number of classes it operates. Regarding the funding provision for aided schools, irrespective of whether they are newly established or existing aided schools, the EDB will, based on the Code of Aid and the principles set out in the relevant circulars, compute the staff establishment and recurrent cash grants according to the number of approved classes of the schools. Among the grants, the annual Expanded Operating Expenses Block Grant will normally be released on a quarterly basis. For example, in respect of the two new schools mentioned in the question, the EDB will, with regard to the progress of intake of residents of Queen's Hill Estate and Shan Lai Court, consider approving the operation of additional classes at the relevant grades as necessary in the middle of the school year to meet the demand for school places. The EDB will adjust the staff establishment and the amount of relevant funding accordingly to ensure that the new schools have sufficient resources in providing quality education services to the residents.

In addition, the EDB will continue to provide each aided school (including newly established schools) with additional teaching and professional support staff, such as special educational needs coordinator, executive officer, social worker, educational psychologist and speech therapist in accordance with specific measures in various aspects. Besides, recurrent and non-recurrent cash grants for specific policy objectives will also be disbursed, enabling schools to deploy resources flexibly in view of their school-based needs. Schools can hire additional contract teachers and ancillary staff on top of the approved establishment or procure outside services to provide necessary support for students.

To conclude, the EDB will provide sufficient resources to meet the operational needs of all newly established and existing aided schools.