

## LCQ7: Supply of places in aided primary schools

Following is a question by the Hon Chu Kwok-keung and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (May 22):

Question:

Some members of the education sector have pointed out that the existing mechanism for operation of Primary One (P1) classes in aided primary schools has not given sufficient consideration to the demand for school places from (i) minor dependants of talents admitted to Hong Kong under various talent admission schemes such as the Top Talent Pass Scheme (TTPS), (ii) minors arriving in Hong Kong with their newly issued Permits for Proceeding to Hong Kong and Macao, and (iii) local students (including non-Chinese speaking students) applying for late admission (including but not limited to P1) in the middle of a school term, leading to the continuous "class reduction and school closure" by the Government under the mechanism despite the shortage of places in aided primary schools. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will compile statistics on/estimate the total number of minor dependants of talents admitted to Hong Kong under TTPS who attended aided primary schools in the 2022-2023 school year and this school year; if so, of the details, together with a breakdown by level; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) if it will review the existing mechanism, for instance, whether it will include the number of students admitted in the middle of a school term at various levels of aided primary schools in the past school year as the basis for deciding the actual number of P1 classes to be operated by the relevant primary schools; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as there are views pointing out that with the gradual completion of various new development areas (NDAs), the medium and long-term demand for primary school places in such NDAs will increase, how the Government plans for the supply of the relevant school places to avoid reinstating the previous arrangement of temporarily allocating more students per P1 class?

Reply:

President,

Our reply to the question raised by the Hon Chu Kwok-keung is as follows:

(1) The Education Bureau (EDB) makes reference to the latest population

projections released by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) when planning the provision of public sector primary school places. The latest population projections released by C&SD in August 2023 have taken into account the impact of various talent admission schemes (including Top Talent Pass Scheme (TTPS)) and initiatives on the future population. According to the information available, the provision of public sector Primary One (P1) places in the current school year is sufficient to meet the demand of eligible children in Hong Kong.

According to the information from the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Immigration Department, as at end December last year, nearly 21 000 unmarried dependent children under the age of 18 arrived in Hong Kong under TTPS. Talent coming to Hong Kong can choose to arrange their school-age children to study in private schools or publicly-funded schools. They are not required to obtain prior permission from Director of Immigration for receiving education in Hong Kong. On the part of primary and secondary schools, they do not need to report to the EDB upon admitting such dependants. Hence, the Government does not have statistics on the number of the relevant dependants studying in Hong Kong.

(2) The actual number of P1 classes that a school may operate depends on a number of factors, including parental choices and the number of classrooms available. Based on the number of children already admitted by a school during the Discretionary Places Admission stage and the result of computer analysis of the actual choices made by parents during the Central Allocation stage, the EDB would work out the total number of children to be allocated to each primary school. This will form the basis for deciding the number of P1 classes that a school may operate.

The current Primary One Admission (POA) mechanism has been working effectively. On the whole, the current mechanism has strived to strike a balance between the expectations of various stakeholders and has been generally accepted by the public over the years. The EDB has no plan to conduct a comprehensive review on POA mechanism. We shall continue to closely monitor the implementation of POA System.

At present, schools have to comply with the requirement of enrolment cap when admitting students in the middle of a school term. Normally, schools admit students in the middle of a school term only by using the vacancies at different class levels. In most cases, meeting such demand for school places by means of operating additional classes is not necessary. Even if there are students admitted in the middle of a school term at other class levels, it bears no relation to the demand for P1 places. Therefore, it is not appropriate to use the number of students admitted in the middle of a school term at various class levels in the previous school year as a basis for determining the actual number of P1 classes to be operated in the following school year.

(3) The provision of public sector primary school places is planned on a district basis. For new development areas, under the established mechanism, the Government would reserve sites for school development when formulating

town plans and planning large-scale residential developments, having regard to the planned population intake and the needs for community services in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines. Before launching a school building project, the Government would take into account various factors including the development plan of the area concerned, the school-age population projections which are compiled and updated based on the latest information provided by C&SD and the Planning Department, the actual number of existing students and the number of school places available at different grade levels, the prevailing education policies, other factors which may affect the demand and supply of school places, etc.

The Government has already made it clear that school allocation in the future would mainly focus on reprovisioning schools. Since the number of school-age children in a district would change with population movement, the demand and supply of school places would change accordingly. If construction of new school premises is necessary to meet the demand for school places arising from large-scale new housing developments in the districts, the EDB would give priority to cross-district reprovisioning, viz. reprovisioning schools in districts with a surplus of school places to districts with a greater demand for school places, so as to rationalise the demand and supply of school places among districts.

The demand for P1 places in a school net in each school year may vary due to different unforeseen factors. In view of this, the EDB has been adopting flexible measures to cope with the transient changes in demand for school places in individual school nets. These measures include borrowing school places from other school nets, making good use of vacant classrooms to operate additional P1 classes, and temporarily allocating more students to each P1 class for the schools in the school nets concerned in individual school years when necessary. Given that the school-age population of P1 students has been declining in recent years, arrangements for temporarily allocating more students to each P1 class are not required for any school in the 2023/24 school year.