

LCQ9: Opening up School Facilities for Promotion of Sports Development Scheme

Following is a question by the Hon Ma Fung-kwok and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Caspar Tsui, in the Legislative Council today (June 2):

Question:

The Home Affairs Bureau and the Education Bureau have, since the 2017-2018 school year, jointly implemented the Opening up School Facilities for Promotion of Sports Development Scheme (the Scheme). To encourage schools to participate in the Scheme, schools which open up their school facilities for sports organisations to hold sports programmes will be provided an additional subsidy. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the details of the sports programmes held under the Scheme in (i) the last school year and (ii) the current school year (up to the 31st of last month) (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) of the measures in place to encourage more schools and sports organisations to participate in the Scheme;

(3) given that schools which have hired out their facilities to sports organisations under the Scheme may apply for grants catering for (i) Capital Works Project and (ii) Special Project under the Sir David Trench Fund for Recreation (Main Fund), of the respective numbers of schools whose applications for the two grants were approved in the past two school years, and the amount of the grant approved for each school;

(4) of the respective numbers of sports programmes scheduled for the last and current school years under the Scheme which were cancelled due to the epidemic; whether such programmes have been allowed to be postponed to other time slots or the following school year, and whether the schools concerned have been required to return to the authorities part or all of the additional subsidies provided for them under the Scheme;

(5) whether the authorities allow the sports programmes under the Scheme to be held during the partial resumption of face-to-face classes of schools; if not, of the circumstances or conditions under which the authorities will allow such programmes to be held;

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

(7) 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 sports programmes to be held by them in schools, whether the authorities will consider afresh collectively purchasing the required insurance or providing an insurance subsidy for such sports organisations so as to increase the incentives for sports organisations to participate in the Scheme; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Education Bureau (EDB) and Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) launched the Opening up School Facilities for Promotion of Sports Development Scheme (Scheme) in 2017/18 school year to encourage schools to open up their facilities, with a view to enhancing the sporting culture in school. Under the Scheme, sports organisations are encouraged to hold sports activities in schools to provide students with more opportunities to participate in sports and develop a healthy habit of exercising.

The Scheme provides financial incentives to encourage schools to open up their facilities. Apart from levying hire charges, schools that hire out their facilities to sports organisations under the Scheme will receive an extra subsidy up to a maximum amount of \$130,000 from the EDB and the HAB to cover relevant expenses incurred.

To facilitate the cultivation of a strong sporting culture in schools and increase students' participation in sports activities, sports organisations using school facilities under the Scheme are required to reserve one-fourth of the places in each programme for priority enrollment of the students, teachers and/or parents of the school concerned, subject to their fulfilment of the qualification(s) of that activity, if any.

The Scheme has been well received by the sports sector and schools since its launch.

In consultation with the 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 2019/20 and 2020/21 school years are at Annex.

(2) Since the launch of the Scheme, the EDB and the HAB have been collecting feedback from the participating schools and sports organisations of the Scheme at the end of every school year to facilitate the review of the Scheme and implementation of corresponding enhancement measures, with a view to attracting greater participation from schools and sports organisations. The enhancement measures implemented include:

- In the 2018/19 school year, we extended the Scheme from public sector schools to schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme; increased the upper limit of subsidy for each participating school from \$80,000 to \$130,000 a year; and expanded the list of eligible sports organisations;
- In the 2019/20 school year, we allowed non-profit-making organisations with ability, experience and a track record of organising sports programmes in schools and the community to join the Scheme on a pilot basis; at the same time, participating schools were made eligible to apply for the grant under the "Special Project" category of the Sir David Trench Fund for Recreation (Fund) for constructing or improving their sports facilities, or purchasing sports equipment;
- Starting from the 2020/21 school year, we allowed participating schools of the Scheme to apply for grant under the "Capital Works Project" category of the Fund to construct new sports facilities; and we gave schools more flexibility in the use of subsidies to replace or acquire equipment/appliances needed, in addition to the permitted use for hiring extra manpower, strengthening security measures, defraying additional utility costs, and carrying out urgent minor repair works in relation to the approved programmes.

(3) In the past two years, a total of 12 participating schools of the Scheme have submitted funding applications for the "Special Project" or "Capital Works Project" categories of the Fund. Applications from seven schools were approved. These schools were given an average grant of \$2.32 million.

(4) In the 2019/20 school year, a total of 143 sports programmes was cancelled due to various reasons including the social unrest and COVID-19 pandemic. As for the 2020/21 school year (as at April 30, 2021), 23 sports programmes were cancelled due to the pandemic. The rest of the affected programmes will be postponed to the remaining part of the school year or the summer holidays.

If an approved programme was cancelled due to the pandemic or other reasons, the sports organisation may liaise with the relevant school to reschedule the programme to another time slot within the school year concerned. If some of the affected programmes could not be rearranged within the same school year, the schools concerned should return the unspent balance of the subsidies as at August 31 every year (i.e. the last day of the school

year) to the EDB.

(5) As the pandemic gradually subsides, sports organisations may hold the sports programmes under the Scheme, while abiding by the infection control and social distancing measures imposed by law.

(6) Currently, the Scheme is 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, sports organisations subvented by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, and other non-profit-making organisations with ability, experience and a track record of organising sports programmes in schools and the community.

As mentioned in part (3) of the reply, we have extended the eligibility criteria in 2019/20 school year to include non-profit-making organisations with ability, experience and a track record of organising sports programmes in schools and the community. We do not have any plans to further expand the scope of eligible organisations at the moment.

(7) 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 numbers 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.