

SED's opening remarks at media session (with video)

Following is the transcript of opening remarks by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, at a media session at the Central Government Offices today (February 13):

Now I would like to recap the key messages in English.

In view of the latest situation of the novel coronavirus epidemic, the Education Bureau decided today that schools will not resume classes before March 16. We will continue to take into account the professional advice from health experts, readiness of schools as well as the supply of epidemic preventive materials in the community in making further assessment and deciding on the exact date of class resumption.

Social distancing and avoiding mass movement of people are key strategies for preventing and controlling the epidemic. There is no urgency for students now staying in the Mainland or other countries to return to Hong Kong, but they are advised to strictly comply with the preventive measures suggested by the local authorities. Students currently in Hong Kong should avoid travelling abroad, so as to reduce the risk of being infected during the journey. Students should stay home as far as possible, and avoid crowded places and group activities.

Schools are making use of different modes of learning, including e-learning, to achieve the goal of "suspending classes without suspending learning". The arrangements are premised on the principle of maintaining students' motivation and interest in learning, without exerting undue pressure on students and parents. I sincerely thank all school principals and teachers for their efforts and the Education Bureau will render full support to them by means of online resources and hotline services, etc.

For kindergartens, we understand the financial difficulties encountered particularly by the sector, and will implement the following measures as soon as practicable:

- First, for those under the kindergarten education scheme, the calculation of monthly subsidies to each kindergarten during the class suspension period will be based on the student headcount in January this year, ensuring that there will be no reduction of government subsidies due to withdrawal of individual students during the period.
- If individual kindergartens wish to adjust their tuition fees during the class suspension period or provide fee remission, the Education Bureau will expedite the processing of the applications to cater for the

needs of the kindergartens and parents.

- Besides, the Education Bureau will provide a one-off subsidy to all kindergartens for stepping up cleansing work at schools.

We will continue to communicate with the sector on details of the measures and other issues of concern to the stakeholders.

Amid the difficult time of the current epidemic, I sincerely hope that the Government, school personnel and parents could join hands to fight the disease together for the well-being of our students and get prepared for class resumption in due course. Thank you.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)