

15 January 2016
For Discussion

Legislative Council Panel on Education

2016 Policy Address Education Bureau's Policy Initiatives

The Chief Executive delivered his 2016 Policy Address on 13 January 2016. This paper sets out the major education-related initiatives in the Policy Address.

2. Nurturing of talent starts with education. The vision and mission of our education policies is to offer all-round and balanced learning opportunities for our students, so as to tap their potential for whole person development and lay the foundation for lifelong learning, so that they can learn successfully and apply what they have learnt, and contribute to Hong Kong and our country.

3. Starting from the 2017/18 school year, we will implement the free quality kindergarten (KG) education policy and provide KGs with direct subsidy with a view to greatly enhancing the quality of KG education and laying a solid foundation for children's balanced development and lifelong learning. Primary and secondary education is an important stage for students to accumulate knowledge, develop personal character and equip themselves for challenges ahead. We will enhance the support for secondary schools to provide life planning education and career guidance services to help young people better understand themselves and plan for their future. At the same time, we will provide flexible and diversified study and articulation pathways with multiple entry and exit points and promote continuing learning. These will help young people equip themselves to pursue their dreams and will strengthen their confidence in the future. We will continue to provide opportunities for young people to enrol in quality post-secondary programmes, and further develop and promote vocational and professional education and training (VPET) to cater for their diversified interests.

4. Education is an effective means to facilitate upward social movement. We will ensure that children and young people enjoy opportunities to quality education and training irrespective of their background. We will also strengthen the support for persons with special needs, including students with

special educational needs (SEN) and ethnic minority students. The aim is to remove the barriers that hold them back from realising their potential and integrating into the Hong Kong society.

New Initiatives

A. Kindergarten Education

5. The Committee on Free Kindergarten Education submitted its report to the Education Bureau (EDB) in May 2015 on how to practicably implement free KG education. Having regard to the recommendations of the report and views of stakeholders collected in public consultation, the Government has decided to implement the free quality KG education policy with effect from the 2017/18 school year. It is anticipated that the Government's investment in KG education will substantially increase. The annual recurrent expenditure is estimated to be about \$6.7 billion in the 2017/18 school year.

6. The new policy will replace the existing Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme (PEVS). The quality of KG education will be improved in various aspects through the following measures:

- (i) Providing eligible local non-profit-making KGs with a basic subsidy for the provision of three-year quality half-day service for all eligible children. It is estimated that about 70% to 80% of half-day KG places will be free. The estimation is based on a number of assumptions, for example, KGs employ teachers in accordance with the recommended teacher-pupil ratio of 1:11 and flexibly deploy Government funding other than those teacher salary-related and designated grants; the rentals of KGs remain stable at the present level, etc. The Government will also provide an additional subsidy for eligible whole-day and long whole-day KGs, with the additional subsidy for each whole-day place set at 30% of the half-day unit subsidy, and that for each long whole-day place at 60% of the half-day unit subsidy. Besides, the Government will revise the planning standards with a view to providing more whole-day KG places progressively;
- (ii) further improving the teacher-pupil ratio to 1:11 so as to strengthen the support for students with diverse needs. We will encourage KGs to establish a career ladder and provide competitive remuneration to retain and attract quality teachers. In this connection, we will provide salary range for KG teachers and other supporting staff for reference of KGs;

- (iii) reviewing the Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum, taking into consideration the experience of learning and teaching in KGs, the changes of society and future needs;
- (iv) refining the Quality Assurance Framework; enhancing the governance and transparency of KGs, and the Government will step up monitoring;
- (v) strengthening the support for students from needy families, non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students, and students with diverse learning needs;
- (vi) enhancing parent engagement and parent education; and
- (vii) improving school premises and facilities, and exploring feasible measures to increase the provision of KG premises in the long run.

Details of the key features of the new policy and funding arrangements are set out at Annex.

7. Under the new free quality KG education policy, apart from continuing to provide fee remission under the Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme (KCFRS), the Government will also provide a school-related expenses grant for needy families to defray expenditure incurred from learning or education of their children. Before the implementation of the new policy in the 2017/18 school year, the Government will invite the Community Care Fund (CCF) to consider implementing a programme to provide a one-off grant for KG students from needy families in the 2016/17 school year to cover their school-related expenses. It is anticipated that 50 000 students will benefit. The Commission on Poverty and its CCF Task Force will consider and deliberate on details of the proposal.

B. Primary and Secondary Education

(i) Establishment of the Gifted Education Fund

8. A Gifted Education (GE) Fund of \$800 million will be set up by the Government to cultivate more students with diverse talents in an effort to enrich the talent pool of Hong Kong. The GE Fund will support the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education (HKAGE) to nurture exceptionally gifted students aged between 10 to 18 in primary and secondary schools through structured and continuous learning opportunities in various academic and non-academic domains, deepening their knowledge base and broadening their

horizon, and encouraging them to realise their goals and contribute to the wellbeing of the community.

9. The work of HKAGE include: facilitating the early identification of gifted students by schools at primary and secondary levels; providing systematic training in various academic and non-academic domains; providing affective education programmes and related services to gifted students, their parents and related workers in gifted education; with a view to fully stretching the potential of gifted students' interrelating cognitive and personality traits. HKAGE will also strengthen their collaboration with universities, professional organisations and individuals, as well as non-government organisations to provide such services. At the same time, HKAGE will conduct researches on the characteristics and needs of gifted students in order to enhance its services. HKAGE will continue to develop itself into a regional hub for gifted education and design appropriate programmes with reference to the characteristics of gifted students. HKAGE will collaborate and exchange with local and overseas stakeholders so as to create a conducive environment for further development in gifted education.

10. EDB will also strengthen the development of school-based gifted education e.g. to provide school heads, curriculum leaders and teachers with training in gifted curriculum planning and classroom-based pedagogy; organising school networks in gifted education to enable schools to adopt teaching strategies that cater for the diverse talents of the gifted in both everyday classroom as well as pull-out programmes. This will enable schools to cater for higher ability students as well as to nominate appropriate students to participate in programmes and activities offered by HKAGE.

(ii) Turning the Senior Secondary Curriculum Support Grant and Career and Life Planning Grant into regular teaching posts

11. We understand that in the initial stage of the implementation of the senior secondary curriculum under the New Academic Structure and other new measures, it takes time for schools to know about students' learning interests and abilities, as well as to explore the subject combinations and related services/activities that meet students' needs. Hence we provide schools with cash grants for flexible deployment of the manpower they need. The New Academic Structure Medium-term Review at senior secondary level has been completed, and we have announced the recommendations in stages. Schools have consolidated the experience in the delivery of the curriculum and assessment. To enhance the implementation of the senior secondary curriculum and to strengthen life planning education and related guidance services, starting from the 2016/17 school year, schools may turn the Senior

Secondary Curriculum Support Grant and the Career and Life Planning Grant into regular teaching posts. This is expected to provide about 1 000 additional teaching posts at the Graduate Master/Mistress rank. We will review the measure in the next two school years.

(iii) Extending the retention period of surplus teachers

12. To address the temporary decline in secondary school student population and stabilise the teaching force, the Government has introduced a basket of targeted relief measures aiming at preserving the stability and strengths of the schools as well as the teaching force in the transient period, including the launching of “Extension of the Retention Period of Surplus Teachers” in the 2013/14 school year. The retention period of surplus teachers arising from the reduction of Secondary One (S1) classes in aided secondary schools in the three school years from 2013/14 to 2015/16 was extended from the original one year to three years.

13. To enable stable development of secondary schools before steady rebound of the secondary school student population, the Government will continue with the provision of the relief measures. For schools with reduced S1 classes in the 2013/14 and 2014/15 school years, the retention period of the surplus teachers will expire by the end of 2015/16 and 2016/17 school years respectively. To further stabilise the teaching force, aided secondary schools in need may apply to extend the retention period for these surplus teachers up to the 2017/18 school year. This measure involves 30 schools and about 130 teachers.

(iv) Supporting the “Belt and Road” Initiative

14. Hong Kong is a place with cross-exchange of Eastern and Western characteristics, as well as a mix of cultures, religions and ethnic groups existing side by side in a harmonious way. The “Belt and Road” initiative is an important transnational and multidisciplinary strategy. Hong Kong can contribute to it in various ways through education. Apart from developing proficiency in biliterate and trilingual communication at secondary level, students can choose to study Hindi or Urdu as one of the senior secondary elective subjects, which are relevant to the “Belt and Road” initiative. In addition, students are encouraged to study other related languages and take international language proficiency tests organised by Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, such as the Arabic Language Proficiency Test, and to have more cultural exchanges with local ethnic minorities, so that they can be equipped to communicate and collaborate with people in “Belt and Road” countries and regions in their local languages.

15. Schools are encouraged to incorporate contents about the “Belt and Road” countries and regions in relevant subject curricula and student activities to facilitate “people-to-people bond”. The current primary and secondary school curricula (e.g., General Studies at primary level; Chinese History, History, Life and Society, Geography, Economics and Liberal Studies at secondary level) have offered learning opportunities for students to understand the histories, cultures, religions and arts of “Belt and Road” countries and regions, as well as the background leading to the proposal of the “Belt and Road” initiative and the main focuses and mechanisms of its development. These learning opportunities will further help students understand the implications of the “Belt and Road” initiative for the present day, its importance for the future development of Hong Kong as well as the opportunities it will bring. The ongoing renewal of school curriculum has placed emphasis on the promotion of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education and the development of various literacies in students (such as entrepreneurial spirit and information literacy) which will help enhance the qualities and competitiveness of students and prepare them for participation in the implementation of the “Belt and Road” initiative. EDB will also organise learning activities and Mainland exchange programmes for students as well as professional development activities for teachers to promote the understanding and active participation of local schools and students in the “Belt and Road” initiative.

16. At the same time, we propose to support the initiative through the priority themes under the Quality Education Fund. Schools, school sponsoring bodies and professional bodies could, taking into account their respective missions and students’ learning needs, engage students in project learning or arrange visits to cities along the “Maritime Silk Road” in the Mainland and other countries, encourage students to understand more about the “Belt and Road” countries and regions and have exchanges; and introduce the potential contributions of Hong Kong as an international city to the development of the “Belt and Road” initiative.

(v) Enhancing Support for Students with Special Educational Needs

17. We have been extending progressively the School-based Educational Psychology Service as planned, aiming to cover all public sector secondary and primary schools by the 2016/17 school year. To further enhance the School-based Educational Psychology Service, EDB will, starting from the 2016/17 school year, improve the ratio of educational psychologist to schools to 1:4 progressively for public sector secondary and primary schools with a large number of students with SEN, so as to enable them to provide more

comprehensive and regular follow-up and intervention services for the students with SEN, as well as to strengthen preventive and developmental work.

C. Post-secondary Education

(i) Advancing the Review of the Mainland University Study Subsidy Scheme

18. The Mainland University Study Subsidy Scheme (MUSSS) was launched in July 2014 to support needy Hong Kong students pursuing undergraduate study in the Mainland under the Scheme for Admission of Hong Kong Students to Mainland Higher Education Institutions (Admission Scheme). Under MUSSS, students who pass a means test will receive either a full-rate subsidy of \$15,000 or half-rate subsidy of \$7,500 per student per year, depending on their needs. MUSSS will benefit three cohorts of students starting from the 2014/15 academic year.

19. In the 2014/15 academic year, subsidy was provided to 263 students under MUSSS and the total amount of subsidy granted was over \$3 million. As for the 2015/16 academic year, 336 applications were received. Of them, as at end 2015, 216 applicants have been vetted to be eligible to receive the subsidy under MUSSS. The total amount of subsidy to be granted in the 2015/16 academic year (including subsidy renewal and newly approved applications) is estimated to be about \$6 million.

20. According to our understanding, over 3 000 Hong Kong students are admitted to the first year of undergraduate study in the Mainland every year. To provide Hong Kong students with more opportunity to articulate into undergraduate study and ensure that they will not be denied access to higher education due to a lack of means, we will advance the review of MUSSS as to how to expand its scope to benefit more students studying in the Mainland, including those who are pursuing undergraduate study in those Mainland institutions participating in the Admission Scheme.

(ii) Supporting the “Belt and Road” Initiative

21. To attract more students from countries and regions along the “Belt and Road” to pursue university studies in Hong Kong, we propose to, starting from the 2016/17 academic year, introduce the Hong Kong Scholarship for “Belt and Road” Students by expanding the Targeted Scholarship Scheme under the HKSAR Government Scholarship Fund from 10 offers per year at present to cover 100 additional offers per year by phases.

22. To this end, we announced the launch of the Hong Kong Scholarship for “Belt and Road” Students (Indonesia) in December 2015. Starting from the 2016/17 academic year, up to 10 scholarships will be offered each year to first-year Indonesian students who are enrolled in publicly-funded full-time undergraduate programmes in Hong Kong. All awardees will receive a scholarship up to \$120,000 per annum to cover their tuition fees. In addition, a bursary of \$50,000 per student per annum will be provided from private donation to financially needy awardees. We propose to expand the Hong Kong Scholarship for “Belt and Road” Students by phases to cover other countries and regions along the “Belt and Road”.

23. Besides, we will strengthen the connection with and support for students from countries and regions along the “Belt and Road” and invite them to participate in activities organised by the Government and other related organisations. We will also encourage post-secondary institutions in Hong Kong to arrange Hong Kong students to conduct visits to and exchange activities in those regions.

D. Vocational and Professional Education and Training

24. VPET plays a pivotal role in the education system by providing multiple and flexible pathways for young people with diverse aspirations and abilities. In June 2014, the Government set up the Task Force on Promotion of Vocational Education (Task Force) with a view to mapping out various promotion strategies to raise the public awareness of VPET. The Task Force submitted its report to the Government in July 2015 recommending a three-pronged strategy with a total of 27 recommendations. One of the strategies and recommendations is to rebrand “vocational education and training” as “VPET”. After examining the report, the Government is ready to accept all recommendations made by the Task Force and will actively consider how the recommendations can be implemented. The recommendations include not only a series of promotion and publicity campaign, but also subsidising fully the provision of Applied Learning courses by secondary schools, extending the Pilot Training and Support Scheme to benefit two more cohorts of 2 000 students in total, and supporting major VPET providers in organising large-scale skills competitions to select representatives of Hong Kong to take part in world skills competitions, etc.

25. In addition, the Government has earlier invited the Vocational Training Council (VTC) to draw up a strategic campus development plan to foster synergy and provide state-of-the-art facilities pivotal to enhance the image and quality of VPET. Having considered the recommendations of the Task Force and the strategic campus development plan submitted by VTC in August 2015,

the Government plans to first earmark a site in the urban district for developing a VTC campus with adequate capacity and state-of-the-art facilities.

On-going Initiatives

A. Kindergarten Education

26. In the 2014/15 and 2015/16 school years, the voucher subsidy under PEVS has been increased (by a total amount of \$5,000) and the fee remission ceilings under KCFRS has been lifted to 75th percentile of the school fees of the KGs concerned. In the 2015/16 school year, the voucher subsidy is \$22,510 per student per annum (pspa); the fee remission ceilings for half-day and whole-day KG classes are \$29,300 pspa and \$44,700 pspa respectively. In the 2016/17 school year, we will continue to implement PEVS. The voucher subsidy will be adjusted on the basis of \$22,510 pspa and according to the year-on-year rate of change in the Composite Consumer Price Index (CCPI). The fee remission ceilings will also be maintained at the 75th percentile of the school fees of the KGs concerned.

B. Primary and Secondary Education

(i) Information Technology in Education

27. After obtaining funding approval from the Legislative Council in May 2015, we launched the Fourth Strategy on Information Technology in Education (ITE4) at the commencement of 2015/16 school year. The main initiative is to establish Wifi campus for about 1 000 public sector schools to facilitate the use of mobile computing devices for e-learning. About half of the schools have completed the related installation work during the first term of 2015/16 school year. The remaining 500 schools will commence the installation work in the coming two school years as planned. Furthermore, we have also rolled out other initiatives such as setting up “Centre of Excellence’ schools for sharing of successful e-learning experiences, curriculum renewal, professional development of school leaders and teachers, and increasing the supply of quality e-learning resources. We will continue to maintain close communication with the education sector and other stakeholders with a view to constantly fine-tuning various measures to address the needs of the stakeholders.

(ii) Science, Technology and Mathematics Education

28. In promoting STEM education, the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) has proposed six strategies: renew the curricula of Science, Technology and Mathematics Education Key Learning Areas (KLAs); enrich learning

activities for students; provide learning and teaching resources; enhance professional development of schools and teachers; strengthen partnerships with community key stakeholders; and conduct review and disseminate good practices.

29. Promoting STEM education is a continuous and dynamic improvement process. Regarding the recommendations and strategies for promoting STEM education and renewal of the curricula of Science, Technology and Mathematics Education KLAs, we have collected views from stakeholders through the STEM forum and consultation seminars of the relevant KLAs, and during the two-month consultation period. The overall feedback collected is positive.

30. EDB will organise the Student Education Fair in January 2016 in collaboration with the Hong Kong Science & Technology Parks Corporation to showcase a wide range of student achievements on Science, Technology and Mathematics, and to enhance students' creativity and interest in learning. The Education Fair will include a variety of talks and hands-on workshops of different themes for students to join. We will also continue to organise professional development programmes for teachers in the coming three school years to recommend appropriate learning and teaching strategies for enhancing students' ability of cross-disciplinary integration and application of knowledge and skills.

(iii) Chinese History and World History Curricula

31. In line with the latest development in history education and learning and teaching strategies, CDC set up an Ad Hoc Committee to conduct a comprehensive review on the curricula of junior secondary Chinese History and History (World History) in May 2014. It proposed the rationale and principles of revising the two history curricula and initial directions in November 2015 with a view to enhancing students' interest and learning effectiveness in studying Chinese History and History. EDB will adopt a multi-stage strategy to collect frontline teachers' views towards the revised curricula of the two history subjects progressively so as to further refine the revised curricula.

32. While the Ad Hoc Committee is proposing the new directions and topics on the revised curricula of the two history subjects, EDB will enhance its support services to teachers, subject panels and students in order to provide quality history education. EDB, with the engagement of the experts and academics from tertiary institutions, will provide various kinds of teaching materials, such as e-learning resources and visual resources. Moreover, in order to enrich teachers' subject knowledge and enhance their pedagogical skills of using newly designed teaching materials, EDB will provide teachers with

different seminars and workshops, organise teachers' learning communities and arrange school-based support services to schools. Besides, EDB will continue to organise Mainland exchange programmes on different themes for students to understand and explore the meaning and importance of Chinese history and culture through personal experience. Meanwhile, EDB will review the implementation of the two history curricula in schools through various channels like school inspection, curriculum development school visits, etc., so as to make recommendation to further refine the learning and teaching of the two history subjects. It is expected that students will not only understand our national history better, but will also be equipped with global perspective and knowledge.

(iv) Increasing the Ratio of Graduate Teacher Posts in Public Sector Primary Schools

33. Primary education is an important stage of basic education. Quality primary education helps students lay a solid foundation for knowledge building, extend their various generic skills and develop positive values. To attract more talent to join the teaching force of primary education so as to enhance the quality of teaching, we have increased the ratio of graduate teacher posts in public sector primary schools from 50% to 55% in the 2015/16 school year and the ratio will be further enhanced to 60% and 65% in the 2016/17 and 2017/18 school years respectively.

(v) Enhancing the Implementation of Students' Mainland Exchange Programmes

34. In line with the policy target of subsidising students to join at least one Mainland exchange programme each in the primary and secondary stages, EDB will continue to adopt a variety of strategies to further enhance the quality and quantity of students' Mainland exchange programmes, including increasing the quotas to organise more programmes of different types, themes and places of visit, as well as strengthening the liaison and coordination work to improve their implementation. Apart from consolidating and deepening students' classroom learning, joining the programmes enable students to gain first-hand experience of our country's development in aspects of history, culture and economics from multiple perspectives, and to think about the roles and responsibilities of individuals and Hong Kong in terms of our country's development, as well as the opportunities to be grasped and the challenges to be encountered. Over 50 000 students were subsidized to participate in Mainland exchange programmes in the 2014/15 school year. With the number of subsidised quotas increased to about 75 000 in the 2015/16 school year, we believe that more students will be able to join the Mainland exchange activities

(vi) Promoting Interflows between Sister Schools in Hong Kong and the Mainland

35. The Chief Executive proposed in the 2015 Policy Address to launch a three-year pilot scheme with effect from the 2015/16 school year through which financial and professional support would be provided to local public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools, including special schools, that have formed sister schools with their counterparts in the Mainland to support the multifaceted development of sister school activities. We propose to provide an annual grant of \$120,000 and have consulted major school councils and school heads associations on the proposed pilot scheme. The representatives have expressed support to the pilot scheme. Besides, we solicited support of the Legislative Council Panel on Education on 11 May 2015 for submission of the \$200 million funding proposal of the pilot scheme to the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council for approval. Furthermore, for better planning of the implementation of the pilot scheme, schools were invited to indicate their intention of participating in the pilot scheme in July 2015. As at the end of December 2015, over 340 schools have indicated their intention of participating in the pilot scheme and the feedback was positive. We have made all necessary preparation and will implement the pilot scheme once funding approval is granted.

(vii) Strengthening Life Planning and Enhancing Business and School Partnership

36. The Chief Executive announced in his Policy Address 2014 and 2015 to strengthen support to young people for life planning and encourage more business organisations to participate in the Business-School Partnership Programme (BSPP). From the 2014/15 school year, EDB has provided each public sector school (including special school) and Direct Subsidy Scheme school operating classes at senior secondary levels with a recurrent Career and Life Planning Grant at about \$0.5 million. Besides, EDB has enhanced the professional support for teachers, vigorously forged partnership between schools and the business sector and actively engaged parents to recognise the importance of Life Planning Education (LPE), with a view to nurturing the culture of supporting the young generation in life planning in different sectors of the community. We will continue to review the implementation of LPE to plan for future development. To strengthen support to students with Specific Learning Difficulties and NCS students in respect of LPE, EDB has commissioned two non-governmental organisations, on a pilot basis, to organise work experience programmes over a three-year period as from the 2015/16 school year.

37. Since 2005, EDB has launched BSPP to promote partnership with business and community organisations to organise various kinds of career exploration programmes for students. Through these programmes, students could explore different careers and develop positive work attitudes and values to prepare for life planning. Upon the implementation of LPE in the 2014/15 school year, EDB has progressively enhanced BSPP by fostering more business and community organisations for closer collaboration with schools. EDB will further engage the business partners to provide more diversified programmes, such as job shadowing programmes, induction programmes and mentorship programmes. We will also encourage schools to form partnership with business organisations to organise activities to cater for the needs of their students. In the 2014/15 school year, more than 120 BSPP partners collaborated with us in organising over 750 BSPP activities benefitting some 250 000 students. Through different means and channels, EDB will collect views and continuously review the effectiveness of BSPP activities. We will conduct experience sharing sessions and upload relevant information to the EDB website for reference of business partners and schools.

C. Post-secondary Education

(i) Increasing the Number of Subsidised Senior Year Undergraduate Intake Places

38. From the 2015/16 academic year and in the triennium that follows, the intake of senior year undergraduate places in University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions will progressively increase by a total of 1 000 places, i.e. from 4 000 to 5 000 per annum. In other words, 5 000 meritorious sub-degree graduates will be able to articulate to subsidised degree programmes each year by the 2018/19 academic year. The Government has accepted the UGC's recommendation to increase the number of intake places by 265 in the 2015/16 academic year. As regards the remaining 735 intake places, they will be suitably allocated during the 2016-19 triennium.

(ii) Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors

39. The Government has launched the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors (SSSDP) since the 2015/16 academic year to subsidise around 1 000 students per cohort to pursue designated full-time locally-accredited self-financing undergraduate programmes to nurture talents to meet Hong Kong's social and economic needs. The Scheme is on a pilot basis to subsidise three cohorts of students. In consultation with other policy bureaux and departments, selected disciplines for students admitted in the 2015/16 academic year and to be admitted in the 2016/17 academic year include

health care, architecture and engineering, testing and certification, creative industry, logistics, and tourism and hospitality. For the 2016/17 academic year, SSSDP will subsidise a total of 1 030 places under 15 programmes offered by six post-secondary institutions.

(iii) Hong Kong Scholarship for Excellence Scheme

40. The Government launched the Hong Kong Scholarship for Excellence Scheme (HKSES) in November 2014 to support three cohorts of students, with up to 100 outstanding local students per cohort, starting from the 2015/16 academic year to pursue studies in world renowned universities outside Hong Kong. All awardees will receive a scholarship to cover their tuition fees, subject to a ceiling of \$250,000 per student per annum. Students who are in financial need may apply for means-tested bursary, subject to a ceiling of \$200,000 per student per annum.

41. A total of 658 applications were received under the first cohort of HKSES for the 2015/16 academic year. As at end December 2015, scholarship has been offered to 92 outstanding students. With the closing of the application period for the 2016/17 cohort of HKSES on 31 December 2015, a total of 681 applications have been received. Preliminary screening will be conducted from January to February 2016, followed by shortlisting from February to March 2016 and interview from April 2016 onwards.

D. Vocational and professional education and training

42. VPET broadens the learning opportunities for school leavers and in-service personnel, nurturing the requisite human capital in support of Hong Kong's development. In the 2014 Policy Address, the Chief Executive announced a series of measures to strengthen VPET.

(i) Pilot Training and Support Scheme

43. VTC has implemented the Pilot Scheme since the 2014/15 academic year to attract and retain talent for specific industries with a keen demand for labour, by integrating structured apprenticeship training programmes and clear career progression pathways. Targeting Secondary 3 to Secondary 6 school leavers and eligible adult learners, the Pilot Scheme will benefit a total of 2 000 students. Under the Pilot Scheme, apprenticeship training for targeted industries will be provided to students alongside a guaranteed level of salary and incentive allowance. The electrical and mechanical services trades of the construction industry, printing industry, clock and watch industry, automobile industry and testing and certification industry have joined the Pilot Scheme so

far. As at September 2015, about 930 trainees were participating under the Pilot Scheme. Since the Pilot Scheme is well received by the employers and students, the Government plans to extend the Pilot Scheme for two more cohorts to benefit an addition of 2 000 students¹.

(ii) Industrial Attachment

44. Starting from the 2014/15 academic year, the Government has allocated recurrent funding of about \$18 million to VTC to provide industrial attachment opportunities for about 9 000 students mainly studying Higher Diploma programmes and certain Diploma of Vocational Education programmes. Industrial attachment, which provides a real-life organisational context for students to develop specific or generic skills, could effectively enhance students' employability and allow them to better adapt to work environment after graduation.

E. Enhancing Support for Ethnic Minority Students in Learning Chinese Language

45. EDB is closely monitoring the implementation of the series of measures, which have been put in place since the 2014/15 school year, to step up support for NCS students (notably ethnic minority students) to learn the Chinese language. Major support measures include, among others, the implementation of the "Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework" ("Learning Framework") in primary and secondary schools, which is developed from the perspective of second language learners, to help NCS students overcome the difficulties of learning Chinese as a second language with a view to enabling them to bridge over to mainstream Chinese Language classes; the introduction of Applied Learning Chinese (for NCS students) courses by phases at senior secondary levels to provide NCS students with an additional channel to acquire an alternative recognised qualification to enhance their further studies and career pursuits; and the allocation of about \$200 million per year for the provision of enhanced funding support for schools to facilitate their implementation of the "Learning Framework" and creation of an inclusive learning environment in school (all schools admitting 10 or more NCS students are provided with an additional funding ranging from \$0.8 million to \$1.5 million, while schools admitting less than 10 NCS students may also have an additional funding on a need basis for organising diversified modes of after-school support for learning Chinese to consolidate their NCS students' learning of the language in an immersed Chinese language environment).

¹ In case there are unexpended funds after implementing the extended Pilot Scheme for these two cohorts, the Pilot Scheme may be further extended to use up the funding.

46. EDB has set up a dedicated team to step up the monitoring of the enhanced funding support for schools and will analyse, based on the established research framework, data collected so far to evaluate the effectiveness of and optimise various support measures for NCS students. To further support Chinese Language teachers, EDB has been developing related learning and teaching resources. Take for instance, the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) has launched the “Project for Developing Chinese Learning and Teaching Materials for Non-Chinese Speakers in Hong Kong”. Besides, Chinese Language teachers are encouraged to join professional development programmes through, among others, the “Professional Enhancement Grant Scheme for Chinese Teachers (Teaching Chinese as a Second Language)” under the Language Fund. Moreover, SCOLAR will launch in early 2016 the “Vocational Chinese Language Courses for NCS School Leavers” pegged at Level 1 or 2 of the Qualifications Framework with a view to enhancing the employability of NCS school leavers.

47. With the development of the “Belt and Road” initiative, we envisage that NCS students (notably ethnic minority students) having mastery of the Chinese language complemented by their native languages would constitute a pool of talents to the Hong Kong society.

F. Continuing Support for Financially Needy Students

48. The Government will continue to implement various student financial assistance programmes to ensure that no student in Hong Kong will be denied access to education due to a lack of means.

49. For secondary and primary students, in order to enhance timely support to low-income families, the Commission on Poverty approved the provision of a one-off special subsidy of \$3,600 for over 120 000 students on full grant under the School Textbook Assistance Scheme in the 2015/16 school year before the launch of the Low-income Working Family Allowance Scheme.

50. In addition, CCF launched two three-year pilot programmes starting from the 2014/15 school year. The first one is the provision of a hostel subsidy for needy undergraduate students (up to \$8,450 in the 2015/16 academic year). The other is to increase the academic expenses grant for students pursuing eligible self-financing post-secondary programmes (up to \$7,330 in the 2015/16 academic year; with a separate tuition fees grant up to \$75,590).

51. EDB has also incorporated the Extra Travel Subsidy for Needy Special School Students into Government’s regular assistance programme starting from

the 2015/16 school year. In view of the challenges faced by post-secondary students with SEN in their studies, and their need to purchase equipment to assist in their learning, CCF launched a three-year pilot programme starting from the 2015/16 school year to enhance the academic expenses grant for eligible post-secondary students with SEN. Each eligible student will receive an additional academic expenses grant up to \$8,000 per year.

52. We will continue to support students in need in participating in after-school activities including after-school support on learning through schools and NGOs. In addition, starting from the 2014/15 academic year, we have provided a subsidy of up to \$15,000 for needy students pursuing full-time locally-accredited undergraduate degree or sub-degree programmes and receiving student financial assistance as an incentive for them to participate in exchange programmes outside Hong Kong.

G. Enhancing Support for Students with Special Educational Needs

53. EDB has been providing schools with additional resources, professional support and teacher training to help them cater for students with SEN. EDB raised the ceiling of the Learning Support Grant to \$1.5 million per school per annum in the 2013/14 school year, and increased the grant rates by 30% from the 2014/15 school year. In subsequent school years, the grant rates and the ceiling will be adjusted annually according to the change in the CCPI. We have also been extending progressively the School-based Educational Psychology Service as planned, aiming to cover all public sector secondary and primary schools by the 2016/17 school year.

54. In respect of special schools, EDB has implemented a number of improvement measures in the 2014/15 school year to provide aided special schools with additional resources and manpower in order to better cater for their students with severe or multiple disabilities.

55. In addition, starting from the 2015/16 school year, CCF has funded a three-year pilot project, under which a cash grant equivalent to the mid-point salary of a Graduate Master/Mistress or an Assistant Primary School Master/Mistress is provided for ordinary schools with relatively more students with SEN and financial needs so that the schools could strengthen the teaching team and arrange a dedicated teacher to coordinate matters relating to SEN support. A total of 124 schools (65 secondary schools and 59 primary schools) participated in the pilot project, benefitting about 9 000 students with SEN each year. EDB has appointed consultants to evaluate the effectiveness of the project and to provide training for the coordinators. We will consider the way forward having regard to the outcome of the project.

56. We will keep in view the implementation of integrated education and special education and seek views from different stakeholders on an on-going basis with a view to ameliorating the implementation of various measures and making improvements where necessary and feasible.

Education Bureau
13 January 2016

Free Quality Kindergarten (KG) Education Key Features of the Policy and Funding Arrangements

1. Scope of free quality KG education

The Government subsidy will cover half-day (HD) service in local non-profit-making (NPM) KGs as the basic provision for all eligible children aged three to six. Besides, additional resources will be provided for KGs offering whole-day (WD) and long WD (LWD) services to unleash the potential of the local labour force under the population policy.

2. Measures to enhance the quality of KG education

(a) Quality Assurance and Curriculum Review

We will review the Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum and enhance the existing quality assurance framework (including updating the Performance Indicators for school self-evaluation and external review)

(b) Staffing, remuneration and career ladder

(i) Teaching staff

The overall teacher-pupil (TP) ratio for eligible KGs will be substantially enhanced to 1:11 so as to create more capacity for teachers for lesson preparation, development of school-based curriculum, professional development, communication with parents and catering for the diverse needs of the students (including those with special needs or at risk of developmental delay), etc. The principal will be excluded from the TP ratio so that they can devote their time fully to the administration and management as well as supervision of the day-to-day operation of the KG.

We encourage KGs to provide a career ladder and competitive remuneration for teachers with a view to retaining and attracting quality teachers as well as maintaining a stable teaching force. In this regard, a three-level teaching staff structure with principal, senior teachers and class teachers is considered appropriate for a KG. For large-scale KGs, a vice-principal may be needed to assist the principal in overseeing the school administration, curriculum development and operation matters.

(ii) Supporting staff

KGs should employ sufficient supporting staff, including clerk and janitor staff, to maintain a desirable learning environment for children and provide necessary administrative support. For LWD and WD KGs with a kitchen that complies with all the Government requirements, a cook will be required.

(iii) Proposed salary range

A salary range for each position will be provided for reference of KGs. The recommended reference salary ranges for KG teaching and supporting staff positions are set out below:

Teaching Staff	Recommended Salary Range (2013/14 price level)
Class Teacher	\$18,000 – \$32,000
Senior Teacher	\$24,000 – \$38,000
Vice Principal	\$30,000 – \$42,000
Principal II	\$34,000 – \$47,000
Principal I	\$40,000 – \$53,000
Supporting Staff	Recommended Salary Range (2013/14 price level)
Clerk	\$10,000 – \$18,000
Janitor	\$10,000 – \$13,000
Cook	\$12,000 – \$14,000

* For very small scale KGs, the rank of Principal will be comparable to Vice Principal.

(c) Teacher professional development

Teachers should upgrade their professional capacity through continuous professional development (CPD). In this respect, EDB will formulate a Teacher Competencies Framework and a Principal Competencies Framework to set forth the skills and knowledge specifically suggested for KG teachers and principals; and develop a CPD policy with appropriate targets to facilitate teachers to pursue professional development. In addition, the Certification Course for KG principals will be revised to further enhance the professional effectiveness of school leadership. As a long-term goal, the qualification requirement of KG teachers will be raised to degree level.

(d) Accommodation and facilities

In order to provide a more conducive environment for children's learning and development, the requirements of KG premises in the Operation Manual for Pre-primary Institutions will be reviewed with a view to enhancing the physical accommodation and facilities of new Government-owned KG premises (including increasing the indoor floor area for each student by 20% subject to practicability). In addition, the feasibility of setting up resource centres in medium-/long-term will be explored to provide a variety of experiential learning activities for KG students, teacher training as well as parent education activities.

(e) Governance and monitoring

With the substantial increase in Government funding under the future KG education policy, KGs should enhance their administration, management and accountability under an effective governance framework with transparency and with well-defined roles and responsibilities of the school personnel. In the medium or long-term, each KG should have a Management Committee comprising representatives from different KG stakeholders. To ensure that KGs have a well-established mechanism in handling various administrative matters, comprehensive administrative guidelines and operation manuals will be drawn up for compliance by KGs. Government's monitoring will also be stepped up to ensure KGs' compliance with the rules and regulations.

3. Funding arrangement

(a) Mode of funding

The subvention will go direct to individual KGs eligible for receiving subsidy under the new policy. Funding will be provided basically on a per student basis for supporting students' HD schooling in the form of a basic unit subsidy ("basic HD unit subsidy"). Some grants on a school-specific basis will be provided to cater for the special circumstances of the KGs or the students.

(b) "Basic HD unit subsidy"

The "basic HD unit subsidy" will be calculated on a per student unit cost basis, including teaching staff salary, supporting staff salary and other operating expenses. According to the present estimation, the "basic HD unit subsidy" in the 2017/18 school year will be about \$32,900¹.

(c) School-specific grants (on top of "basic HD unit subsidy")

(i) Additional resources for WD and LWD KGs

An additional grant will be provided for KGs offering WD places. In accordance with the principle of mutual contribution from the Government and the parents, the additional subsidy for each WD place is set at 30% of the HD unit subsidy. For LWD KGs which operate longer hours, further additional resources will be provided. The additional subsidy for each LWD place (on top of the HD subsidy and WD subsidy) is set at 30% of the HD unit subsidy, which means that the additional subsidy for each LWD place will be set at 60% of HD unit subsidy.

¹ The amount of subsidy for 2017/18 is estimated based on the subsidy calculated at 2013/14 price level as well as the movement of actual annual average of CCPI in 2014 and projected CCPI up to 2017/18. When the new subsidy scheme is rolled out, the actual amount of subsidy for 2017/18 will be adjusted based on the movements of actual CCPI figures from 2014 to 2017.

(ii) Premises-related subsidy for KGs

Rental subsidy will be provided for KGs joining the new subsidy scheme. Details are set out below:

- For KGs in housing estates operated in premises allocated under the EDB-administered school allocation or nomination mechanisms which are paying rental at concessionary rate (about 50% of open market rental) as assessed by the Hong Kong Housing Authority and stipulated in the tenancy agreements, they will be eligible for full rental subsidy subject to the fill-up rate.
- For the LWD KGs which are former aided child care centres under Social Welfare Department (SWD) (mainly situated in premises of public housing estates paying less than 50% of market rent and in receipt of rental reimbursement), they will continue to be eligible for full rental subsidy following the long-standing established practice.
- For other eligible KGs, the rental subsidy will be subject to a ceiling which caps at 50% of open market rental, or 15% of the “basic HD unit subsidy”, whichever is lower.

A premises maintenance grant will be provided for eligible KGs operating in self-owned school premises or premises owned by their school sponsoring bodies with zero or nominal rent, so as to alleviate the financial burden arising from major repair. The existing arrangement for claiming refund of rates and Government rent by NPM KGs will continue.

(iii) Cook for KGs with a kitchen

A grant comparable to the recommended salary of one cook will be provided for LWD and WD KGs with a kitchen that complies with all the Government requirements.

(iv) Non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students² in KGs

A grant comparable to the salary of one teacher will be provided for KGs admitting eight or more NCS students. With the additional resources, KGs could provide teachers with more manpower support and professional training to develop effective strategies to help NCS students learn through the Chinese medium so as to lay a foundation for their study in local primary schools. These KGs should also enhance the communication with the parents of NCS students and strengthen home-school cooperation.

² For the planning of educational support measures, students whose spoken language at home is not Chinese are broadly categorised as NCS students.

4. Catering for student diversity

(a) KG students from needy families

Fee remission (at different levels of 100%, 75% or 50%) will continue to be provided for students from needy families under the existing Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme. In addition, a grant will be provided for KG students from needy families who pass the means test and meet the same eligibility criteria under the fee remission scheme, to help the parents pay for the expenditure incurred from KG education for their children. The amount of the grant will be pegged at the level of the grant for school-related expenses for pre-primary students under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (which is \$3,600 in the 2015/16 school year).

(b) NCS students in KGs

Apart from providing a grant for KGs admitting eight or more NCS students to strengthen the support for their NCS students, for these KGs and other KGs admitting fewer NCS students, school-based professional support will continue to be provided and further enhanced to help the KGs build up the expertise in facilitating NCS students' learning of the Chinese language for a smooth transition to primary education. Teacher training programmes on the teaching and learning of the Chinese language for NCS students in KGs will also be enhanced.

(c) KG students with special needs or at risk of developmental delay

Labour and Welfare Bureau has launched a two-year pilot scheme with funding support from the Lotteries Fund under which operators of subvented pre-school rehabilitation services will provide on-site rehabilitation services by inter-disciplinary teams for children with disabilities who are studying in KGs or kindergarten-cum-child care centres (KG-cum-CCCs). The services will also cover parents of those children and the teaching staff in the KGs and KG-cum-CCCs. The enhancement of the TP ratio to 1:11 will create more space for KG teachers to collaborate among themselves to take care of the diverse needs of students (including those at risk of developmental delay), and to enable better professional collaboration with the inter-disciplinary teams in the above pilot project to support the students with special needs.

EDB will offer more structured in-service training programme(s) for KG teachers to enhance their capacity to cater for students' diverse learning needs and to facilitate early identification of children with special needs. The Government will also set up a cross-Bureau/Department platform to give advice on the development of initiatives to cater for KG children with special needs.

5. Provision of more KG places and KG premises

As a long-term measure, the planning standards for provision of KG places will be reviewed and revised as necessary from the present 250 WD and 730 HD to 500 WD and 500 HD places respectively for every 1 000 children aged between three and six. Feasible policy measures will be devised with a view to increasing the supply of Government-owned KG premises which are up to the standard as stipulated by the Government in the long run.

6. Parents' involvement and parent education

Parents play a very important role in their child's early life and so it is important to step up parent education to help them understand the development needs of their children. EDB will also encourage KGs to set up Parent-Teacher Associations, and promote parents' involvement in the learning of their children.

7. Local research on KG education

More researches on the latest trends in child development and to examine the impact of the new policy on the quality of KG education will be encouraged.

8. Other implementation issues

To maintain the flexibility and diversity of the KG sector and free choice for parents, KG student admission will remain a school-based matter. We will issue guidelines to KGs to ensure a proper and transparent student admission mechanism is in place.