



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部教育局

Education Bureau

Government Secretariat, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

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31 March 2020

To: Supervisors / Principals of All Schools

Dear Supervisor / Principal,

**Deferral of Class Resumption for All Schools
Together, We Fight the Virus**

In view that the confirmed cases of COVID-19 are rapidly increasing recently, the Government announced on 21 March that classes of all schools (including kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools, special schools and private schools offering non-formal curriculum) will continue to be suspended until further notice. The Education Bureau (EDB) will continue to take into account the professional advice from health experts, and follow up on the readiness of schools as well as the supply of epidemic preventive equipment in the community in deciding the exact date of class resumption. We will announce the class resumption date and related arrangements at least 3 weeks prior to class resumption, so that stakeholders could make better preparation.

Easter Holiday Arrangement

In principle, teachers are to have the Easter Holiday as usual based on the original schedule of their schools. If schools have operational needs during the period, they can also arrange staff to go back to schools on duty as usual. In consideration of the latest development of the pandemic, the Government announced on 17 March 2020 that the Red Outbound Travel Alert (OTA) had been issued for all overseas countries/territories. The Department of Health (DH) has also extended health quarantine arrangements on inbound travellers arriving from all countries/ territories and demand them to undergo compulsory quarantine. As the pandemic is escalated around the world, the situation in different countries/ regions may change rapidly within

a short period of time. Apart from the risk of infection, this may also affect the outbound travel and immigration control of the countries/regions concerned. The EDB strongly advises teachers and students to take their personal and family health as the top priority, do not travel abroad during the Easter Holiday, and join hands in minimising the risk of spreading the disease in the community. After the Easter Holiday, schools and teachers should continue the use of diversified modes to conduct learning and teaching to achieve “suspending classes but not suspending learning”. In case teachers are unfortunately confirmed to have infected COVID-19, they should apply for sick leave with medical certificates. For those who are required to undergo compulsory quarantine due to special circumstances, in light that it may involve different circumstances, we will consider the related arrangements case by case. Schools may contact their respective Regional Education Offices for enquiry.

Diversified modes of learning to achieve "suspending classes without suspending learning"

The EDB encourages schools to continue to adopt diversified modes of learning, in accordance with their school-based situations and the needs at different learning stages, to support students to learn at home during the period of class suspension to achieve “suspending classes without suspending learning”. Apart from real-time teaching, teachers may make use of commonly used learning management system, e-mails and school webpages to provide students with learning materials, homework, extra-curricular readings, to collect their exercises and provide feedback. Besides, students can be encouraged to do extensive reading and inquiry-based project learning with a view to building up their self-learning ability, and meeting the aims of learning at home. For the principles of adopting e-learning to support students’ learning at home, they will be uploaded to the EDB’s website (website: <https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/primary-secondary/applicable-to-primary-secondary/it-in-edu/flipped.html>) for schools’ reference.

We are thankful to schools in providing active support to individual students who have difficulties with e-learning, for example by lending mobile computer devices to students and helping them apply for relevant assistance, including “Bring Your Own Device” scheme under the Community Care Fund. We also appreciate the dedicated support of various sectors in the society to our needy students, such as helping them engage in e-learning at home during the class suspension period. We also noted that in the past two months, schools, building on their experiences, are further promoting different modes of learning (including e-learning); some schools and teachers attempting various new practices; and some schools striving to find out solutions for difficulties encountered. The experience gained can serve as reference for future development while some good practices or new attempts can be disseminated. We will invite schools to consolidate their relevant experience and outcomes. Details and

templates will be provided later.

Together, we fight the virus and join hands in difficult times

Various industries in the society have been severely affected by this pandemic. During the class suspension period, services of the tuck shops/canteens, lunch box suppliers, school buses etc. have all been suspended for a long period. We strongly appeal to schools to take special consideration to cope with the difficult times with their contractors, for example, by providing rental concession to tuck shops/canteens (if any) during the class suspension period. If their contracts with the lunch box suppliers are going to expire by the end of the school year, they may consider extending it for one more year to relieve them from the work of re-tendering. In this regard, schools should obtain approval from the IMC/SMC, and keep the records properly. For government schools, they should serve as role-models in these practices. As the procedures and financial arrangements are slightly different from aided schools, details will be announced separately.

Besides, we appeal again to schools to discuss with the tutors of interest classes or support groups on the arrangement of their services, and consider the use of other modes to help students continue their learning, such as the use of e-learning during class suspension, enhanced training upon class resumption, arranging relevant sharing sessions / performances / competitions. Schools may charge the expenditure to relevant grants as far as practicable.

In view of the recent surging number in confirmed infected cases, the pandemic has escalated into a serious stage. The Government has put in place various anti-epidemic measures to reduce the risk of massive community outbreak. One of the key strategies is to further minimise social contacts and avoid mass gathering. In this regard, the EDB would like to remind schools that if they are to convene a meeting, online conference/teleconference should be adopted to replace face-to-face meeting. During the class suspension period, schools should remain open to take care of students who have to go back to school due to lack of carer at home, handle school basic and essential affairs and parents' enquiries. We noted that parents of students with special educational needs would also need to bring their children back to schools occasionally during this period so as to release themselves for some life chores work. We hope that schools can provide assistance as far as possible. Regarding manpower arrangement, schools should uphold the principles of adequacy and appropriateness. Teaching staff going back to schools should maintain social distancing and put in place all the preventive measures. If more than one student is back to school, appropriate social distance should be maintained. In this connection, schools can make reference to the epidemic preventive guidelines for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education

Examination (HKDSE), issued by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA).

(Website:

http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/DocLibrary/MainNews/Instructions_to_Candidates_Precautionary_Measures_at_Exam_Centre_Eng_.pdf)

Amid the challenges posed by the pandemic, let's fight against the virus together and continue to achieve "suspending classes without suspending learning". The exact date of class resumption is still subject to further assessment. The EDB will continue to liaise with government departments concerned, including the Centre for Health Protection, and disseminate to schools the latest information and health advice regarding the infectious diseases. For any enquiries, please contact the respective Senior School Development Officer or Senior Services Officers.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Verena LAU', with a large, sweeping flourish above the name.

(Dr Verena LAU)
for Secretary for Education