



## 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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20 January 2022

To: Supervisors / Principals of all Secondary Schools, Primary Schools, Special Schools, Schools offering Non-Local Curriculum, Kindergartens and Kindergarten cum-Child Care Centres and Private Schools offering Non-Formal Curriculum

Dear Supervisor / Principal,

### **Arrangements on “Vaccine Bubble”**

The Government announced on 4 January 2022 that the implementation of “vaccine bubble” arrangement would be expanded to cover more venues from 24 February 2022 and schools would be covered in the “vaccine bubble” arrangement. The Education Bureau (EDB) mentioned in our letter of 11 January 2022 that we would inform schools of the details of the “vaccine bubble” arrangement. This letter provides further details on the same.

### **Implementation Details**

Starting from 24 February 2022, save for those exempted<sup>1</sup>, all teaching and non-teaching staff, persons providing on-campus services and visitors<sup>2</sup> of

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<sup>1</sup> Exemption from the requirement will be granted to (a) those who are medically unfit for COVID-19 vaccination as supported by a valid medical certificate; and (b) pregnant staff with prior exemption granted by schools on a case-by-case basis.

<sup>2</sup> Teaching staff include principals, teachers and teaching assistants. Non-teaching staff include but are not limited to school executive and clerical staff, janitors, cooks, school bus, school light bus drivers and escorts (commonly known as nannies), laboratory technicians, braille staff, teacher assistants, workshop attendants, artisans, social workers, educational psychologists, speech therapists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants, nurses, wardens, the related grades of boarding section staff such as social work officers, social work assistants and welfare workers. Persons providing on-campus services include, for example, interest class instructors, contractors and maintenance workers. Visitors to school campuses include,

kindergartens, primary and secondary schools (including special schools and the boarding sections and schools offering non-local curriculum), and private schools offering non-formal curriculum (commonly known as “tutorial schools”) will be required to present vaccination records of at least the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine prior to their entry into school premises. Teachers or school staff directly employed by schools who have received only one dose of vaccination should receive the second dose of vaccination during the period within eight weeks after 24 February 2022 (i.e. have received the second dose before 21 April 2022). Schools should clearly record and keep a register of related vaccination properly, inform all related stakeholders (including teachers and school staff, school bus operators, tuck shop operators, parents, nannies and volunteers, etc.) of the related arrangements before the implementation of the “vaccine bubble” arrangement. The aforesaid “vaccine bubble” arrangement does not apply to students.

For those exempted personnel who have not received COVID-19 vaccine, they are still required to conduct COVID-19 tests once every three days. The specimens must be obtained from combined nasal and throat swabs, and not collected through self-testing kits. Results from deep throat saliva tests or rapid antigen tests are not accepted. If individual teaching and non-teaching staff or persons providing on-campus services with medical certificates<sup>3</sup> certifying that their health conditions are unfit for vaccination and would like to take the virus testing at the Community Testing Centres (CTCs), the fees of the testing services will be waived. Such persons shall retain and present the relevant Short Message Service (SMS) messages, laboratory testing reports or related proofs containing the test results to the schools for record. Schools should keep the records of these negative test results of such persons concerned.

Upon implementation of the above-mentioned arrangement, all teaching and non-teaching staff, persons providing on-campus services and other visitors to a school must comply with all the requirements under the related arrangement (also covering exempted personnel who have to undergo regular testing and provide proofs), or else they will not be allowed entry to the school premises.

### **Unvaccinated Staff**

In principle, an unvaccinated teaching or non-teaching staff directly employed by the school or those not exempted from vaccination, their situation will be no different from an employee who is absent from his or her place of work without reasonable excuse, and such periods of absence will be deemed as unauthorised. In general, given that leave is only granted subject to not affecting students’ service and after consideration of exigencies of situation, school management has no obligation to grant leave to individual staff to cover for any periods of absence due to failure to

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for example, volunteers, parents and caregivers.

<sup>3</sup> Schools should remind such teaching and non-teaching staff or persons providing on-campus services to have their medical certificates ready. Schools can refer to [https://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/cap599FG\\_forms.html](https://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/cap599FG_forms.html) for the template of a medical certificate.

comply with the “vaccine bubble” arrangement. Any leave for 24 February 2022 or any day / period afterwards should not normally be granted for such periods of absence to unvaccinated staff who claim that they could not arrange for vaccination before the implementation date, have concerns on the safety or efficacy of the vaccines, or have alleged medical conditions unsupported by medical certificates.

In view of the aforesaid considerations, school management should strongly urge unvaccinated staff to receive vaccination as soon as possible. School management should ensure that unvaccinated staff without any exemption are aware that they will not be permitted to enter the school premises and being treated as unauthorised entry from 24 February 2022 onwards and may be liable to disciplinary action and, depending on the circumstances, legal action, if they insist on returning to their work places unvaccinated. Individual schools having the management and control of the premises concerned should handle such cases by following standard protocol as with any other unauthorised entry. Unvaccinated staff may only return to their work places upon presentation of proof of vaccination or having been formally exempted.

School management should be responsible for ensuring that their schools are managed satisfactorily to fulfill the afore-mentioned requirements. Schools should operate in compliance with the rules and regulations under the Education Ordinance, Education Regulations, Codes of Aid, other related Ordinances, instructions and circulars issued by the EDB from time to time. Regarding publicly-funded schools and kindergartens under the Kindergarten Education Scheme, starting from 24 February 2022, under no circumstances should any unvaccinated staff (apart from those exempted) employed by the schools be allowed to perform teaching or other duties online and off-campus during the period when face-to-face classes are not suspended and no salaries paid by public money should be granted to the staff concerned. School management has the responsibility to take action in respect of staff disciplinary matters. Subject to the provisions of the Employment Ordinance and the Codes of Aid, school management committees should take appropriate disciplinary/dismissal action in managing staff performance. The conditions and procedures for disciplinary/dismissal matters should be made known to all staff. Private schools and kindergartens not joining the Kindergarten Education Scheme should in principle follow the same arrangements. School management should take action to ensure that students’ learning and interest are not compromised.

### **Other Administrative Arrangements**

The Government is introducing enhancements to the “LeaveHomeSafe” and the QR Code Verification Scanner applications to facilitate premises to ascertain the vaccination status of visitors. Details on how the concerned venues, including schools, can use the applications will be announced shortly. For the time being, we request schools to promptly set up QR codes for “LeaveHomeSafe” (<https://www.leavehomesafe.gov.hk/en/registration/>). All teaching and non-teaching staff, persons providing on-campus services and other visitors to a school should use

the mobile application each time they enter school premises by 24 February and thereafter (except for exempted personnel to use “LeaveHomeSafe”). Students entering school premises can be exempted.

The implementation of the arrangement should not affect the work of law enforcement agencies and emergency services as necessary to exercise duties at schools. School management should allow entry by concerned government employees required for law enforcement and under emergency circumstances into school premises under their purview forthwith without checking compliance under the “vaccine bubble” arrangement.

For enquiries, please contact the respective Senior School Development Officers / Senior Services Officers (Joint Office for Kindergartens and Child Care Centres).

Yours sincerely,

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

(Dr Verena LAU)  
for Secretary for Education