



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

本局檔號 Our Ref.: EDB(QA/KS)/KE/39/1

電話 Telephone:

23 June 2009

To: Supervisors/Principals of all Kindergartens and Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres

Dear Supervisor/Principal,

**Arrangements for Kindergartens and Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres
Under the Latest Development of Human Swine Influenza (HSI)**

The Education Bureau (EDB) announced on 11 June class suspension for 14 days in all kindergartens, kindergarten-cum-child care centres, primary schools (including private independent schools, international and ESF schools) and special schools (except those Schools for Social Development with secondary section only) from 12 June (Friday) to 25 June 2009 (Thursday). In view of the recent development of HSI in Hong Kong and the significant increase in confirmed local cases, it is evident that the virus turns active in the community. The assembly of a large number of young students in the school setting for extended periods of time would increase the risk of HSI outbreak and the chance of severe cases among young children. Having carefully assessed the situation with the Department of Health (DH), we decide that classes of the afore-mentioned schools will not be resumed for the current school year.

During the class suspension period and summer holiday, kindergartens and kindergarten-cum-child care centres (kindergartens) should pay attention to the following special arrangements:

Class Resumption in the New School Year

- As the new school year of some kindergartens will begin in August, we will maintain liaison with DH and make further announcement in late July on resumption of classes in these kindergartens in the new school year.

School or Out-of school Activities

- During the class suspension period and summer holiday, kindergartens may arrange school activities with due consideration to the less capacity of young children in taking care of their own personal hygiene and that they tend to have a greater intensity of direct physical contact with other children. Schools should refer to the “HSI Pandemic Mitigation Phase Guideline on School Functions and Extra-Curricular Activities” issued by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of DH (**Annex 1**) to take proper precautionary measures for conducting relevant activities; adjust the size of group activities such that adequate adult supervision can be given so as to minimize the chance of HSI infection among students. Schools should also inform parents in advance of all the arrangements that would be made in this regard.

Keeping School Premises Open

- During the class suspension period and summer holiday, schools should further cleanse the school premises and remind parents to maintain good household hygiene. Schools should keep the school premises open before the commencement of summer holidays originally scheduled and arrange staff to be on duty to take care of those students who would have to come back to school for being unattended at home or for any other reasons.

Disbursement of Subsidy under the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme

- As a special measure for the class suspension, the last instalment of subsidy in the 2008/09 school year will be calculated in accordance with the number of eligible students as of 11 June (i.e. the day before class suspension).

Kindergarten Fee Remission Subsidy

- Parents who are receiving kindergarten fee remission subsidy will continue to receive the subsidy during the class suspension period.

To facilitate schools in issuing a letter informing parents of the above and making corresponding administrative arrangements, a sample letter to parents is at **Annex 2** for schools’ reference.

Kindergartens should continue to act in accordance with the guidelines set out in the letter of 11 June 2009 and paragraphs 3 and 4 of the “Handbook on Prevention of Human Swine Influenza in Schools” compiled by EDB. Meanwhile, kindergartens are advised to refer to the “Guidelines on the Prevention and Management of Human Swine Influenza in Schools” issued by CHP of DH (the guidelines have also been uploaded to the EDB website) to duly implement various hygienic and preventive measures.

We will release the latest information on HSI from time to time. Kindergartens are advised to pay attention to the EDB website. For enquiries, schools may contact the respective sections as follows:

on voucher redemption:

Voucher Redemption Team (Tel. no.: 3107 2076);

on Kindergarten Fee Remission:

Student Financial Assistance Agency (Tel. no.: 2154 2130);

on operation and support: respective Senior School Development Officer / Pre-primary Services Officer.

Yours sincerely,



(Y F LEE)

for Secretary for Education

HSI Pandemic Mitigation Phase

Guideline on School Functions and Extra-Curricular Activities

1 Background

- Human Swine Influenza (HSI) is causing local transmission in Hong Kong and its activity may rise during summer. Although HSI causes a relatively mild illness in most persons, it is efficiently spread, given the lack of antibodies in the population, especially among children and adolescents.
- This guidance note provides guidance for schools and children in organizing and participating in summer activities. While preventing individual infection with HSI is no longer an appropriate population health objective, it is important to reduce transmission and avoid large-scale outbreaks. Generally normal societal functions and activities can and should continue without disruption.

2 General principles to reduce risk of HSI transmission

- **Segregation of persons with influenza like illness (ILI) from public:** persons with ILI should preferably rest at home till symptoms subside except for essential activities, e.g. to seek medical attention. They should wear face masks and duly observe personal hygiene to protect themselves and others around them.
- **Heightened public awareness on personal hygiene:** the most important elements are frequent and proper hand hygiene, cough etiquette and avoid touching of eyes, nose or mouth as well as the wearing of face masks when ill.
- **Enhanced protective measures for groups at risk of influenza related complications:** this entails individual risk assessment based on personal medical conditions and nature of activities. In general, very young children and those with chronic medical conditions should avoid visiting crowded and poorly ventilated places.
- **Social distancing:** this is achieved by modulating the nature of social activities and the number of participants involved.

3 General advice for schools and activity organizers

- Pay attention to announcements from the government on the latest public health policy and advice on public functions.

- Make alcohol handrub readily available at all times and ensure that hand soap is provided for in toilet facilities.
- Ensure adequate ventilation and environmental hygiene.
- Make arrangements to reduce overcrowding, taking into account the nature of the venue and activity. e.g. crowd control.
- Facilitate the implementation of personal hygiene measures, including provision of face masks.
- Plan for ways to assist people who have ILI.
- Also refer to CHP '**Guidelines for Prevention of Respiratory Infection for Organizers of Public Function**' accessible at http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/Guidelines%20for%20Organizers_20090522_e.pdf

4 General advice for activity participants

- Those who are sick with ILI should refrain from attending gatherings.
- At risk groups should avoid visiting overcrowded or poorly ventilated places.
- Strict adherence to personal hygienic practice. Wash hands with soap and/or use alcohol handrub frequently.
- Also refer to CHP '**Guidelines on Prevention of Respiratory Infection for Participants of Public Function**' accessible at http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/Guidelines_on_Prevention_of_Respiratory_Infections_en.pdf

5 Special advice for schools, including distribution of examination results, registration procedures, and summer tutorial classes

- Preparation of facilities:
 - Ensure easily accessible hand hygiene facilities (e.g., soap and water, alcohol handrub).
 - Clean and disinfect areas and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact regularly and also immediately when visibly soiled. For details on disinfection, please refer to CHP '**Advice on School Disinfection at the Height of Influenza Season**' accessible at http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/Advice_on_School_Disinfection_Eng.pdf

- Maintain room well-ventilated; if air-conditioned, ensure adequate fresh air exchange and cleaning of filters. Choose spacious settings in organizing gatherings to avoid overcrowding.
- Use of face mask is optional as an added precaution especially for those who are ill. Proper usage of masks should be emphasized. Students or staff members may choose to wear face mask unless there are contraindications e.g. breathing difficulties. Guidance on proper usage of face masks is accessible at http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/recommendations_on_use_of_face_masks_en.pdf.
- Administrative control
 - Train staff regarding infection control measures, how to recognize ILI, and how to handle sick children/ students.
 - Ask participants to measure body temperature at home before attending school activities.
 - Avoid activities that involve overcrowding especially in indoor venues.
 - Notify guardians that their children should not attend school activities if they have symptoms of ILI or fever. Advise participants to stay home if sick and seek medical care.
 - Arrange for equipments to check body temperature of participants upon entry to school when there is a need.
 - For participants with underlying medical conditions, guardians should inform staff about the student's medical needs, and seek medical advice on need of additional measures as appropriate.
 - Designate staff to care for ill persons and limit their interaction with other participants. The designated staff should put on face mask and pay special attention to personal hygiene when caring for ill persons. Persons with a medical condition that increases their risk of severe illness from influenza, including pregnant women, should NOT be designated as caregivers of ill persons.
 - Plan in advance with guardians regarding how illness among children attending the class will be handled.
 - For the taking of examinations, refer to the CHP '**Health Advice to School for Conducting P5 Second-term Examinations during Class Suspension Period**' (Annex 1).

6 Special advice on extracurricular activities, including graduation ceremonies, outings and camping

- Follow the same advice on promotion of personal hygiene, preparation of facilities and administrative control as listed under “Special consideration for schools”.
- Participants with ILI should refrain from attending such activities.
- In addition, organizers are advised to observe the following:
 - Outdoor/ semi-outdoor setting is preferred.
 - Control the number of participants to avoid overcrowding, especially for indoor activities. The appropriate number of participants varies according to the size, ventilation and hygienic condition of the venue. Having fewer participants per venue reduces the chance of HSI and other respiratory infections. Organizers are advised to limit the group size as far as practicable. Outdoor activities in well ventilated environment may allow for larger groups. Crowd control and avoidance of aggregation of people are important irrespective of group size.
 - Graduation ceremonies should be well planned to avoid overrunning of the programme. It is preferable to avoid performance involving close body contact. Proper ventilation should be ensured in the venue where the ceremony takes place.
 - Extra vigilance on personal hygiene for participants engaging activities with close body contact e.g. ball games.
 - Ensure adequate rest time and hydration for participants with intense physical activities to avoid exhaustion.
 - Avoid sharing of personal items among participants (e.g. towels, water bottles, etc.).

7 Special advice for summer study tours

- Monitor HSI situation in the place of destination.
- People with underlying chronic medical conditions should consult their doctors regarding their suitability for travel.
- Arrange for medical care at the place of destination before travel, including purchasing travel/medical insurance as required.
- For other pre-travel and post-travel advice, please refer to ‘**Advice for Travellers Planning to Visit Human Swine Influenza Affected Areas**’ accessible at

http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/Advice%20to%20travellers%20planning%20to%20affected%20areas_20090522_v.pdf and ‘**Advice for Inbound Travellers/Returnees on Prevention of Human Swine Influenza**’ accessible at http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/advice_for_Returnees_eng_20090515_f.pdf

8 **Special advice for activities involving young children under 6 years old**

- Young children have less capacity taking care of their own personal hygiene and they tend to have a greater intensity of direct physical contact with other children and persons.
- It is advisable to adjust the size of group activities for young children such that adequate adult supervision can be given to individual child to ensure good hygiene at all times.
- There should be adequate adult and preferably parent’s supervision to ensure personal hygiene of children.
- Ball pools and other activities involving lots of simultaneous sharing of toys among many young children should be suspended.
- Toys and other objects shared by young children should be cleansed and disinfected frequently, and immediately if soiled.
- The venue should be thoroughly cleansed between each session of activities before another group of children comes in.
- For details on recommendations on infection control for recommendations for Kindergartens /Kindergartens-cum-Child Care Centres / Child Care Centres, please refer to the CHP ‘**Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Schools / Kindergartens /Kindergartens-cum-Child Care Centres / Child Care Centres**’ accessible at http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/School_full_eng_20090115.pdf

9 **Special advice for children with chronic medical conditions which may prone them to complications of influenza infection**

- Crowded and poorly ventilated environment should be avoided.
- If it is unavoidable, face mask are recommended for older children and these should be worn properly.
- Pay special attention to personal hygiene.

- Seek medical advice early when there are symptoms suggestive of respiratory infection.
- Seek medical advice on need for additional measures.

Centre for Health Protection
June 2009

**Sample Letter to All Parents on
Arrangements for Kindergartens and Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres
Under the Latest Development of Human Swine Influenza (HSI)**

(Schools may revise the content according to their specific situation)

<Date>

Dear Parents,

The Education Bureau (EDB) announced on 11 June class suspension for 14 days in all kindergartens, kindergarten-cum-child care centres, primary schools (including private independent schools, international and ESF schools) and special schools (except those Schools for Social Development with secondary section only) from 12 June (Friday) to 25 June 2009 (Thursday). In view of the recent development of HSI in Hong Kong and the significant increase in confirmed local cases, it is evident that the virus turns active in the community. The assembly of a large number of young students in the school premises for a long time would increase the risk of HSI outbreak and the consequence when young children getting infected would be more severe. After prudent deliberation with the Department of Health (DH), EDB has announced that classes will not be resumed within the current school year among the above-mentioned schools.

In view of the above, we would not resume classes this school year but parents should pay attention to the following special arrangements:

- Class suspension is a mitigation measure aiming at reducing social contact to minimize the chance of HSI infection. Therefore, students should stay at home during the class suspension period. Parents should avoid letting their children go to crowded places, children playgrounds etc, or visiting places being affected by HSI with their children.
- We will refer to the guidelines issued by EDB and DH for conducting school activities during the class suspension period and summer holiday under permissible situation. Details will be announced in due course.
- As our new school year will begin in August, we will maintain liaison with EDB and make further announcement on resumption of classes in the new school year in due course.

For the period before the commencement of summer holiday originally scheduled, to meet practical needs, we will arrange for an appropriate number of staff to be on duty to handle school affairs and answer parents' enquiries, clean and disinfect the school premises. If necessary, the school premises will remain open to take care of those students who would be unattended at home and have to come back to school. If you are unable to arrange for your relatives or friends to take

care of your children, please contact our teacher Mr/Ms XXX (Tel. No.) for the arrangement of sending your children back to school. As the school bus service and lunch provision have been suspended, you will have to escort your children to and from school and make lunch arrangements for them.

If any of the following occurs, please inform our teacher Mr/Ms XXX (Tel. No.) immediately to facilitate our school to decide on the contingency measures and notify the DH and the EDB accordingly:

- (i) your child is confirmed/suspected of having contracted HSI; and
- (ii) any person in close contact* with your child is confirmed/suspected of having contracted HSI.

* *“Close contact” means having cared for, having lived with, or having had direct contact with respiratory secretions and body fluids of a person with HSI.*

To safeguard your children and family members from HSI infection, please take appropriate preventive measures at home according to the guidelines in the attached leaflet on “Human Swine Influenza” prepared by the DH.

We enclose herewith the telephone list of our school and relevant government departments for your reference. If you have any enquiries, please feel free to contact us.

Yours sincerely,

<Signature>

School
Principal/Supervisor,

<Name of school>

[Word file of this letter can be downloaded from the following path : <http://www.edb.gov.hk>> School Administration>Administration>Prevention of Influenza (including Human Swine Influenza / Avian Flu) and Other Communication Diseases (including SARS) in Schools > Prevention of Human Swine Influenza – Useful materials]