

## **National Flag, National Emblem, National Anthem and Regional Flag**

### **Frequently Asked Questions and Answers**

#### **Matters relating to the display of the national flag/regional flag, conduct of a national flag raising ceremony, and playing and singing of the national anthem**

**Q1: The Education Bureau (EDB) issued Circular No. 11/2021 “National Flag, National Emblem, National Anthem and Regional Flag” on 11 October 2021 specifying that schools must display the national flag on each school day and conduct a national flag raising ceremony weekly. Will the EDB provide guidelines on the display of the national flag and conduct of a national flag raising ceremony for schools?**

**A1:** The EDB has established a thematic webpage on “Getting to Know the National Flag, the National Emblem, the National Anthem and the Regional Flag” (<https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/nationalsymbols>), providing primary and secondary schools offering local curriculum with learning and teaching resources, including brief descriptions of the national flag, national emblem, national anthem and regional flag, points to note when displaying the national flag and regional flag in schools, an introduction to the flag raising ceremony, demonstration of flag raising ceremonies in schools, as well as relevant materials and useful links for schools’ reference. For details on the regulation governing the display and use of the national flag and the etiquette to be followed during a national flag raising ceremony and when the national anthem is being played and sung, schools should refer to the relevant provisions of the amended National Flag and National Emblem Ordinance (NFNEO) and the National Anthem Ordinance (NAO), as well as the webpage of the Protocol Division of the Government Secretariat (<https://www.protocol.gov.hk/en/flags.html>).

**Q2: Since the New Year’s Day (1 January), the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Establishment Day (1 July) and the National Day (1 October) are all general holidays, is it a must that schools should display the national flag, conduct a national flag raising ceremony and play and sing the national anthem on these days?**

A2: It is stipulated in the EDB Circular No. 11/2021 that schools must display the national flag on each school day. On the important days of the New Year's Day, the HKSAR Establishment Day and the National Day, schools must arrange their staff to return to schools to display the national flag on these days. As for the national flag raising ceremony and the playing and singing of the national anthem, schools may arrange them to be held either on these days or on the preceding/following school day having regard to their own circumstances.

**Q3: What requirements or standards should be observed when participating in a national flag raising ceremony? Can the school song be followed immediately after the national anthem?**

A3: All participants in a national flag raising ceremony must stand solemnly facing the national flag, look at the national flag with respectful attention, and sing the national anthem. To avoid the singing voice being masked by the music of the national anthem, schools are recommended to adopt the version of the national anthem with both vocal music and instrumental accompaniment (Audio track – Choir). Moreover, to embody the solemnity of the national anthem, any other songs (such as school song) should not be played or sung right after the national anthem to avoid being misunderstood that they are the same song. Therefore, after singing the national anthem, there should be a pause before another song is played in order to show a clear distinction between the two.

**Q4: If primary and secondary schools do not have standing flagpoles due to constraints of environment or facilities in campus, can they use other means to display the national flag on each school day and conduct a national flag raising ceremony weekly? What requirements or standards should be observed when conducting a national flag raising ceremony through other means?**

A4: Currently, most primary and secondary schools have installed standing flagpoles. Those which have not installed flagpoles should have standing flagpoles installed in suitable locations as far as possible. If it is not possible to install standing flagpoles due to constraints of environment or facilities in campus, schools should purchase movable flagpoles for displaying the national flag

on each school day and conducting a national flag raising ceremony weekly. When displaying the national flag or conducting a national flag raising ceremony, schools must ensure that the national flag is displayed with dignity and respect, and follow the regulation governing the display and use of the national flag. All participants of a national flag raising ceremony, including school staff and students, are required to observe the relevant etiquette in order to show their respect for the country and demonstrate their good quality as nationals. As such, schools should enable students to learn about the relevant regulation and etiquette through attending national flag raising ceremonies in person, and enhance the sense of belonging to the country and national identity among students through contextual influences. In normal circumstances, schools should not play video of a national flag raising ceremony in place of such on-spot experience.

**Q5: Which grant can schools use to cover the expenditure on procurement of movable flagpoles or national flags/regional flags?**

A5: For aided schools, the related expenditure can be covered by the Operating Expenses Block Grant/Expanded Operating Expenses Block Grant according to the respective principles on the use of grant and the relevant procedures with the endorsement of the school management committees/incorporated management committees. For Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools, the expenditure can be covered by the DSS subsidy according to the prevailing principles on the use of government funds. For caput schools, the expenditure arising from procurement of movable flagpoles or national flags/regional flags will be included in the EDB's calculation of schools' fee subsidy.

For kindergartens (KGs) joining the kindergarten education scheme, a one-off grant of \$3,000 has been provided for procurement of national flags and movable flagpoles. For details, please refer to EDB Circular Memorandum No. 114/2021.

The aforementioned schools should keep a record of their income and expenditure for audit purpose.

**Q6: If a school's timetable is cycle-based (such as six-day cycle), can the school adopt cycle as the basis and conduct a national flag raising ceremony once a cycle?**

A6: The significance of the flag raising ceremony is to enhance the sense of belonging to the country and national identity among students through contextual influences. Schools should make appropriate plans and arrangements on the premise that the requirements for conducting a national flag raising ceremony weekly can be met. Therefore, schools with a cycle-based timetable may conduct a national flag raising ceremony on any day within a week having regard to the actual circumstances.

**Q7: While schools must display the national flag on each school day, when all students or teachers have to participate in an activity outside campus (such as swimming gala/athletic meet) on particular school days, are schools still required to display the national flag on campus?**

A7: On school days when all students or teachers have to participate in an activity outside campus, schools may exercise discretion in making arrangements for displaying the national flag according to the actual circumstances. In general, if there are staff returning to school to perform duties, they should be arranged to display the national flag in the school as far as possible.

**Q8: Are there any specifications on the time at which the national flag should be displayed on each school day and a national flag raising ceremony should be held weekly in schools? How do schools ensure that the relevant requirements are met?**

A8: Schools should display the national flag and conduct national flag raising ceremonies according to the school timetable. In normal circumstances, the national flag should be raised before class in the morning and lowered in the evening, but should not be hoisted overnight. Schools should establish relevant procedures and manpower arrangements, as well as monitoring mechanism (such as arranging their staff to check the national flag and the flagpole components regularly, and whether the position of the national flag is proper after it is raised). The time for conducting a national flag raising ceremony should match with the schools' operations and the

arrangement of activities. In general, it should be conducted during the morning assembly. On important days or special occasions, such as graduation ceremony, swimming gala/athletic meet, schools may conduct the national flag raising ceremony before the start of the activity.

**Q9: In the event of inclement weather conditions, are schools still required to display the national flag or conduct a national flag raising ceremony as required?**

A9: In the event of inclement weather conditions (such as tropical cyclones and/or persistent heavy rainfall), schools with a standing flagpole installed in the outdoor area may not display the national flag to preserve the dignity of the national flag and for safety considerations. Schools are encouraged to procure a movable flagpole to conduct the national flag raising ceremony indoors under inclement weather conditions.

**Q10: If the school arranges for the conduct of a national flag raising ceremony on a specific day of the week (such as every Wednesday), and it happens that the national flag raising ceremony could not be held as scheduled due to school holidays, special situations (such as term examinations, schools as venues for public examinations) or inclement weather conditions, etc., is the school required to arrange the national flag raising ceremony on another day of the week?**

A10: Schools should consider predictable factors, including school holidays and other planned school activities (such as term examinations), when compiling the timetable for the whole school year, to ensure that a national flag raising ceremony can be conducted weekly. Schools should also formulate relevant mechanisms, including contingency arrangements for special circumstances on the days when the national flag raising ceremony is conducted, and as far as possible maintain the conduct of a national flag raising ceremony once a week.

**Q11: If schools need to suspend face-to-face classes under special circumstances (such as an outbreak of a communicable disease), are they still required to display the national flag on each school day and conduct a national flag raising ceremony every week?**

A11: In the event of special circumstances (such as an outbreak of a communicable disease) in which students of certain levels are still required to return to school for whole-day/half-day face-to-face classes, schools should display the national flag on each school day and conduct a national flag raising ceremony weekly as usual to show their respect for the country, enhance the sense of belonging towards the country and national identity among students. If face-to-face classes are suspended across all levels, while the school is still open and staff members return to school to perform their duties, the school should arrange to display the national flag. As for the national flag raising ceremony, schools may resume the arrangement of conducting a national flag raising ceremony every week after class resumption.

**Q12: If schools hold activities on non-school days (such as Saturdays, Teacher Development Days), should the national flag be displayed?**

A12: It is stipulated in the EDB Circular No. 11/2021 that schools must display the national flag on each school day, as well as the New Year's Day, the HKSAR Establishment Day and the National Day. As for non-school days on which school activities are held, schools may decide whether to display the national flag having regard to the actual circumstances.

**Q13: According to the Prevention of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Health Protection Measures for Schools (Health Protection Measures for Schools) and relevant letters issued by the EDB, schools should not organise any large-scale events amid the epidemic. In this connection, what should schools take note of when conducting a national flag raising ceremony weekly?**

A13: When conducting a national flag raising ceremony amid the epidemic, schools should observe the Health Protection Measures for Schools issued by the EDB and the Centre for Health Protection.

If the national flag raising ceremony is held indoors, special attention must be paid to maintaining good indoor ventilation, limiting the number of attendees according to the size of venue, and ensuring appropriate social distancing to safeguard the health of teachers and students.

**Q14: Is there any requirement on the number of students and teachers that should be present at a national flag raising ceremony?**

A14: As the campus size, availability of facilities, occasions for teachers and students to get together, as well as the arrangement for relevant learning activities vary among schools, it is inappropriate to prescribe a standard number of attendees for a national flag raising ceremony. Schools should make proper arrangements taking into account the actual circumstances. If conditions permit, schools are encouraged to arrange as far as practicable all staff and students to attend a national flag raising ceremony, with a view to enhancing their sense of belonging to the country and sense of national identity. Where necessary, schools may have their physical national flag raising ceremonies broadcast live at the same time, and give students of each level the opportunity to participate in a physical national flag raising ceremony. All participants in a national flag raising ceremony, whether it is participation in person or viewing of live broadcast, must observe the relevant etiquette.

**Q15: Are schools required to arrange delivery of speech under the national flag in each weekly national flag raising ceremony?**

A15: The significance of the flag raising ceremony is to enhance the sense of belonging to the country and national identity among students through contextual influences. In normal circumstances, a national flag raising ceremony includes the delivery of speech under the national flag, of which the theme could be about national achievements and development, as well as moral, civic and national education, etc. Schools may decide whether a speech should be given under the national flag every time when a national flag raising ceremony is conducted according to school-based needs.

**Q16: Are students of international schools required to participate in the national flag raising ceremony?**

A16: The provisions concerning school education under the NAO and the amended NFNEO apply to primary and secondary schools (including special schools), which also cover international schools.

Students studying in international schools around the world should have knowledge of the local culture and history. They should also show respect for the national flag, national emblem and national anthem as the symbols of the country where they are in. For the international schools in Hong Kong, as most of them have admitted local students, they are encouraged to refer to the requirements specified in EDB Circular No. 11/2021, and display the national flag on each school day and conduct a national flag raising ceremony weekly based on the actual school circumstances, so as to enhance local students' sense of national identity and deepen foreign students' understanding of the Chinese culture. Moreover, international schools are encouraged to conduct a national flag raising ceremony on the New Year's Day, the HKSAR Establishment Day and the National Day or on the preceding/following school day, as well as on important days (such as graduation ceremonies).

**Q17: If international schools wish to raise the national flag of another country at their national flag raising ceremonies, are they required to display the national flag of the People's Republic of China (PRC) at the same time? If an international school displays both the national flag of the PRC and that of another country, what etiquette should be observed?**

A17: The article on "Priority of national flag" in Schedule 3 of the amended NFNEO sets out the requirements for displaying the national flag of the PRC alongside other flags. International schools may display the national flags of other countries having regard to their needs and actual circumstances. In normal circumstances, when the national flag of another country is being displayed, a school should also display the national flag of the PRC, and give it a central, higher or more prominent position.

**Q18: How can special schools fulfill the instructions stipulated in EDB Circular No. 11/2021?**

A18: Helping students acquire knowledge of the national flag, national emblem, national anthem and regional flag is not completely new to schools. Local primary and secondary schools (including special schools) have long been teaching students of such knowledge, with the learning contents embedded in the primary and secondary school curriculum (such as General Studies at primary level, Chinese History, Music, Liberal Studies/Citizenship and Social Development at senior secondary level) as well as Moral, Civic and National Education and the related life-wide learning activities. Under the arrangement of “one curriculum framework for all”, students with special educational needs can also learn like other students.

Special schools basically display the national flag and conduct national flag raising ceremonies in accordance with the guidelines provided by the EDB. In making relevant arrangements, they will also take account of their students’ conditions. Individual schools may approach the EDB as necessary and we will offer advice and support in light of their circumstances.

**Q19: How can KGs (including KG-cum-child care centres) fulfill the instructions stipulated in EDB Circular No. 11/2021?**

A19: KGs should help young children recognise Hong Kong as a part of the country and their Chinese identity, and learn about the national flag and the etiquette to be observed in a national flag raising ceremony, so as to foster a sense of belonging to the country and a sense of national identity. KGs are encouraged to display the national flag and conduct a national flag raising ceremony regularly to show respect for the country and develop a sense of belonging to the country among students. The EDB has provided a one-off grant of \$3,000 for each KG joining the kindergarten education scheme to purchase the national flag and movable flagpole. KGs with national flags and flagpoles should conduct a national flag raising ceremony when holding celebration activities for the New Year’s Day, the HKSAR Establishment Day and the National Day. Besides, schools are strongly advised to conduct a national flag raising ceremony on important days and special occasions (such as the first day of a school year, open day, graduation ceremony, school anniversary events and Chinese Culture Day). For details, please refer to EDB Circular Memorandum No. 114/2021.

As the size of school premises, school environment and facilities vary greatly among KGs, KGs should, in light of their own condition, display the national flag and conduct national flag raising ceremonies with reference to the arrangements applicable to primary and secondary schools.

### **Education on National Flag, National Emblem, National Anthem and Regional Flag**

**Q20: With the inclusion of the national flag, national emblem and national anthem in primary and secondary education, will the EDB provide detailed guidelines in this regard?**

A20: It is schools' educational obligation to enable students to learn about and respect the national flag, national emblem and national anthem, and to enhance among students a sense of belonging to the country and a sense of national identity. The learning contents about the national flag, national emblem, national anthem and regional flag have been incorporated into the subjects' curricula (such as General Studies at primary level, Chinese History, Music, Liberal Studies/Citizenship and Social Development at senior secondary level), as well as life-wide learning activities related to Moral, Civic and National Education of primary and secondary schools offering the local curriculum.

The EDB will timely update the curriculum guide of the relevant subjects and enrich the learning and teaching resources of these subjects, with a view to supporting schools in imparting knowledge of the national flag, national emblem, national anthem and regional flag. We have uploaded the learning and teaching resources on the national flag, national emblem, national anthem and regional flag onto the webpage of "Getting to Know the National Flag, the National Emblem, the National Anthem and the Regional Flag" ([www.edb.gov.hk/en/nationalsymbols](http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/nationalsymbols)), which will be updated/enriched from time to time for the reference of primary and secondary schools offering the local curriculum. An English version is available for the reference of international schools and other private schools offering solely non-local curricula.

**Q21: What is the definition of "playing and singing" in the NAO?**

A21: To ensure that the public have a clear understanding of the meaning of “playing and singing the national anthem” in the NAO, Section 2(3) of the NAO has provided interpretations of “playing and singing the national anthem” (except for occasions mentioned in Section 5 of the NAO), which include (a) singing the national anthem; (b) playing the national anthem on musical instruments; and (c) playing a recording of the national anthem. The provisions are set out under Section 2(3) of the NAO.

**Q22: Regarding the occasions (including national flag raising ceremonies) on which the school plays and sings the national anthem, what are the requirements on the adoption of score and recording?**

A22: The NAO has clear specifications on the score and recording of the national anthem to be used. Regarding the occasions on which the school plays and sings the national anthem, the official recording provided on the website of the HKSAR Government should be played or the national anthem should be played on musical instruments in accordance with the standard score provided on the website of the HKSAR Government for singing the national anthem. Regarding the standard score and official recording for the playing and singing of the national anthem, please refer to the website of the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau ([www.cmab.gov.hk](http://www.cmab.gov.hk)): Homepage > Topical Issues > National Anthem.

**Q23: Are non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students required to acquire knowledge of the national flag, national emblem and national anthem? How should schools address the learning needs of NCS students in this regard?**

A23: As learning the national flag, national emblem and national anthem, as well as participating in a national flag raising ceremony are ordinary school activities, all students, including NCS students should be involved. If NCS students are unable to attain the same level of learning with their Chinese-speaking peers because they are less proficient in Chinese, schools should show understanding and offer support according to their abilities on the premise that students have to respect the national flag, national emblem and national

anthem. Timely support will be provided by the EDB to help schools take forward the related work through enriching existing online resources, organising teacher professional development programmes, etc.

### **Other related matters**

**Q24: If a teacher fails to follow or violates the EDB's instructions, what should the school do?**

A24: Teachers play a vital role in passing on knowledge and nurturing students' character and are important role models for students. It is therefore of utmost importance that their words and deeds must adhere to the standards of professional conduct and morality generally accepted by the community. Whether it is the national flag, national emblem, national anthem, regional flag or regional emblem, it is the symbol and sign of our country and the HKSAR, and paying due respect by any of the citizens is a must. If the behaviour of an individual teacher violates professional conduct, the school should stop it immediately and take appropriate follow-up actions in accordance with the relevant school-based procedures and mechanism, as well as the relevant provisions under the Education Ordinance, Education Regulations, Codes of Aid and employment contract, etc.

**Q25: If parents refuse to let their children participate in national flag raising ceremonies at schools, how should the school handle it? If individual students show disrespect for the national flag, national anthem or regional flag in a national flag raising ceremony, how should the school follow up?**

A25: If parents refuse to let their children participate in the national flag raising ceremonies at schools, schools should explain to the parents concerned that national flag raising ceremonies are ordinary learning activities at schools, and all students should take part in them.

Schools should educate students on the etiquette to be followed in a national flag raising ceremony, such as standing solemnly and deporting themselves with dignity, so as to enhance a sense of belonging to the country and the national identity among students. They should follow up immediately if students behave inappropriately and cause disruption to the national flag raising ceremony, including requesting the concerned students to stop such misbehaviour at once. Where necessary, schools may first remove the concerned students from the venue to allow the ceremony to continue in a solemn manner. In addition, schools should follow up on the students' misbehaviour according to the prevailing discipline and counselling strategies. These include understanding the cause of the students' misbehaviour and providing suitable counselling and follow-up support depending on their explanation and specific circumstances, with a view to helping them make improvement.

**Q26: If outsiders or parents do not conform with the proceedings of a national flag raising ceremony (such as not standing solemnly or not deporting themselves with dignity), how should the school handle it?**

A26: As far as possible, schools should brief participants on the procedures before a national flag raising ceremony and remind them of the proper etiquette to be observed during the proceedings. If individuals are found to be ignoring the prescribed arrangements during the proceedings, the school may remind them politely. Moreover, schools should maintain good communication with parents through day-to-day contact to enable them to understand the meaning of conducting a national flag raising ceremony during individual activities, promote home-school cooperation and enhance students' sense of national identity through concerted efforts.