

## LCQ12: Measures to support non-Chinese speaking students

Following is a question by the Hon Mrs Regina Ip and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (May 28):

Question:

It is learnt that the lack of Chinese language proficiency of non-Chinese speakers has always been the biggest obstacle for them in pursuing further studies, seeking employment and integrating into the community. Although the Government has been providing non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students with all-encompassing learning support through diverse strategies to help them master the Chinese language and integrate into the community, some members of the education sector have reflected that some primary schools still have reservations about admitting NCS students. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the respective numbers of (a) primary schools admitting NCS students and (b) NCS primary school students, together with a breakdown by school type (i.e. (i) public sector primary school, (ii) Direct Subsidy Scheme primary school, and (iii) private primary school), in each of the past five years;
- (2) of the measures currently put in place by the Government to support the pre-primary education of NCS students, so as to assist them in learning Chinese and enhancing their language proficiency, thereby enabling them to articulate more smoothly to the primary school curriculum;
- (3) of the measures currently put in place by the Government to encourage primary schools to admit NCS students (e.g. reserving some school places for NCS students), so as to enable their early integration into the community; and
- (4) whether the Government has reviewed the effectiveness of the existing measures to support NCS students; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that, and whether it will conduct such a review in the future?

Reply:

President,

The Government is committed to encouraging and supporting the integration of non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students into the community, including facilitating their early adaptation to the local education system and mastery of the Chinese language. The Education Bureau (EDB) has been providing NCS students with all-encompassing learning support from pre-primary to secondary levels through diverse strategies to help them master

the Chinese language and integrate into the community.

Our reply to the question raised by the Hon Mrs Regina Ip is as follows:

(1) and (3) All eligible children (including NCS students) enjoy equal opportunities in admission to public sector schools. To encourage parents of NCS students to arrange for their children to study in schools which provide an immersive Chinese language environment, the EDB abolished the so-called "designated schools" support system back in the 2013/14 school year. With the implementation of various enhanced support measures, the number of schools admitting NCS students has gradually increased and the school choices for parents of NCS students have also been widened. At present, most of the publicly-funded schools in Hong Kong have admitted NCS students, which account for about 70 per cent of the kindergartens (KGs) joining the Kindergarten Education Scheme (Scheme-KGs) and over 70 per cent of the primary and secondary schools. The number of public sector, Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) and private sector primary schools admitting NCS students and the respective number of NCS students from the 2019/20 to 2023/24 school years are tabulated below:

School year	Public sector primary schools		DSS primary schools		Private sector primary schools	
	Number of schools	Number of NCS students	Number of schools	Number of NCS students	Number of schools	Number of NCS students
2019/20	317	9 044	14	1 007	46	2 271
2020/21	328	9 271	15	991	44	2 127
2021/22	341	9 230	14	970	45	1 981
2022/23	352	9 334	15	914	44	1 997
2023/24	356	9 554	16	932	49	2 019

Notes:

(1) Figures for the 2020/21 school year refer to the position as at mid-October, and others refer to the position as at mid-September of the respective school years.

(2) Figures include students whose ethnicity is Chinese but are categorised as NCS students based on the spoken language at home.

(3) Figures exclude international schools, private independent schools and special schools.

(2) The EDB encourages parents of NCS students to arrange for their children to study in local KGs for early adaptation to the local education system as well as early exposure to and learning of Chinese. Starting from the 2019/20 school year, the EDB has further enhanced the relevant measures for NCS students by providing a five-tier grant for Scheme-KGs according to the number of NCS students admitted. A KG admitting one NCS student can also receive the grant, and the grant rate for the highest tier is a double of the previous level. All the KGs receiving the additional grant have each assigned

a teacher to co-ordinate the support measures for NCS students. The KGs concerned mainly deploy the resources for appointing additional teaching staff, procuring professional services, e.g. translation or interpretation services, organising cultural integration activities, etc. to enhance the support for NCS students in diversified modes.

(4) The Government encourages and supports the learning of Chinese of NCS students (including ethnic minorities students) and the creation of an inclusive learning environment in schools through diverse strategies, including providing additional funding to schools, optimising the curriculum, enriching the teaching resources, enhancing teacher training and professional support and facilitating home-school co-operation.

Regarding the provision of the additional funding, all public sector and DSS schools offering the local curriculum and admitting NCS students can be provided with an additional subsidy according to the number of NCS students admitted. The amount of the additional funding currently ranges from about \$0.16 million to about \$1.6 million per year for each school. Schools usually use the additional funding to employ additional teaching staff members to teach in diversified and intensive modes, including pull-out learning, split-class/small-group learning, after-school support, increasing the number of Chinese Language lessons, learning Chinese across the curriculum, deploying additional teachers for co-teaching and arranging teaching assistants to provide in-class support.

In respect to curriculum and teaching, the EDB has continually been providing teachers with guidance and support in curriculum planning, learning and teaching and assessment. The Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework, which was complemented by learning and teaching materials, has been implemented in primary and secondary schools since the 2014/15 school year to help NCS students learn Chinese. The EDB has been developing learning and teaching resources for NCS students. These resources have been uploaded to the EDB webpage and dispatched to schools. The Online Chinese Language Self-learning Resources launched in the 2023/24 school year provides diversified learning resources which help NCS students extend their learning; after-school Chinese language courses for lower primary NCS students are offered on a trial basis using adapted learning materials for the Youth Chinese Test; and the Summer Bridging Programme has been extended to cover NCS students to be promoted to Primary Five and Primary Six. In addition, apart from studying Chinese Language for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination, NCS students meeting specified circumstances (Note 1) may, taking into account their needs and aspirations, obtain other recognised alternative Chinese Language qualifications through additional channels, including taking Applied Learning Chinese (for NCS students) pegged at the Qualifications Framework Level 1 to Level 3 and other internationally recognised alternative Chinese language examinations supported with Government subsidies (Note 2), for multiple articulation pathways for further studies and future careers.

Regarding teacher training, all Chinese Language teachers teaching NCS students are provided with training opportunities. The EDB continues to

organise teacher professional development programmes, provide diversified school-based support services and establish professional learning communities to help teachers enhance their teaching effectiveness.

For parent education, starting from the 2020/21 school year, the EDB has commissioned non-governmental organisations and a post-secondary institution to provide diversified parent education programmes for parents of NCS students, with a view to helping them support their children's learning, encourage their children to master the Chinese language and have a more comprehensive understanding of the multiple pathways available for their children. The number of schools receiving Life Planning Education support services for NCS students has also increased in recent years.

Generally speaking, the aforementioned arrangements can help NCS students learn Chinese effectively and integrate into the community. The EDB has been monitoring schools through different means to ensure the prudent and proper use of the additional funding, including requiring schools to submit plans and reports on the use of the additional funding and providing schools with professional advice and support through supervisory visits and day-to-day communication to ensure public funds are put to good use.

In recent years, the number of schools admitting NCS students has increased from about 590 in the 2013/14 school year to about 710 in the 2024/25 school year, accounting for over 70 per cent of the primary and secondary schools in the territory. All schools admitting NCS students are provided with the additional funding and have used the funding effectively to implement various school-based measures for providing appropriate support for NCS students. In addition, more than 30 per cent of the NCS school candidates entering for the HKDSE Examination met the general entrance requirements of University Grants Committee-funded undergraduate programmes, which is comparable to the territory-wide rate of about 40 per cent for day school candidates. This demonstrates that the Government's policy intent of encouraging and supporting the integration of NCS students into the community, including facilitating their early adaptation to the local education system, is being attained progressively. The EDB will continue to collect and take into account of stakeholders' views in reviewing the implementation of various support measures and enhance the measures as necessary with educational professionalism and having regard to the needs of students.

Note 1: Specifically, these NCS students are those who have learnt Chinese Language for either –

(a) less than six years while receiving primary and secondary education; or  
(b) six years or more in schools, but have been taught an adapted and simpler Chinese Language curriculum not normally applicable to the majority of students in local schools.

Note 2: These examinations include the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Subsidiary (AS)-Level and Advanced (A)-Level.