

LCQ13: After-school care and support services for students

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (February 26):

Question:

In order to enable students in need to stay at school outside school hours for care and learning support and allow their parents to take up jobs, the Government has proposed in the 2024 Policy Address to extend the School-based After-School Care Service Scheme to cover over 110 primary schools in the 18 districts across the territory. In parallel, the Education Bureau has set up the School-based After-school Learning and Support Programmes to support schools in providing after-school learning activities for needy students. Alongside in the community, after-school care services run by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) provide homework guidance, skill development and social activities for primary school children. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of (i) Primary One to Primary Six students and (ii) primary schools in various districts, as well as (I) participating schools/centres (with the number of their service places) and (II) beneficiaries (with the utilisation rates) of (a) the School-based After-School Care Service Scheme, (b) the School-based After-school Learning and Support Programmes and (c) the after-school care services run by NGOs over the past two years (set out by District Council district in the following table);

District Council district	(i)	(ii)	(a)		(b)		(c)	
			(I)	(II)	(I)	(II)	(I)	(II)
.....								
Total								

(2) in respect of the three types of after-school care and support service/scheme/programme mentioned in (1)(a) to (c), of the following information for each of them over the past two years: (i) the overall expenditure, (ii) the average amount of government funding received by each school/centre in respect of the relevant service/scheme/programme and (iii) the amount of subsidy per student;

(3) in respect of the three types of after-school care and support service/scheme/programme mentioned in (1)(a) to (c), of the respective numbers of beneficiaries under each of them over the past two years who were from (i) single-parent families, (ii) families receiving Comprehensive Social

Security Assistance and (iii) families receiving full grant under the Student Financial Assistance Schemes for primary and secondary school students, as well as the respective percentages of students with special educational needs under each type of service/scheme/programme;

(4) of the current number of after-school care service units mentioned in (1)(c) which offer pick-up and drop-off arrangements for students so that students can be sent to such units after school for care services; whether the authorities have provided resources to assist these service units in offering pick-up and drop-off arrangements; if not, of the reasons for that;

(5) given that many dual working parents have indicated that one of the difficulties they encounter is bringing their children to and from schools, whether the authorities will, in the long run, consider developing student escort platforms or services in the community using different modes such as innovative technology and neighbourhood support, so as to facilitate dual working parents in picking up and dropping off their children; and

(6) as there are views pointing out that while the three types of after-school care and support service/scheme/programme mentioned in (1)(a) to (c) are mainly targeted at underprivileged families at present, dual working families in general have a need for such services too, whether the authorities will conduct a comprehensive review and consolidate such service/scheme/programme, so that they can be extended to cover dual working families; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Labour and Welfare Bureau, the Education Bureau (EDB) and the Social Welfare Department (SWD) have implemented the School-based After School Care Service Scheme since the 2023/24 school year. Under the Scheme, participating schools will provide venues, and the Community Care Fund will provide funding for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide services for students in need (particularly those from single-parent families) to stay at school after-school hours for care and learning support in a safe and familiar environment, thereby allowing their parents to take up jobs. In addition, the EDB implements the School-based After-school Learning and Support Programmes (SALSP) to support needy students to participate in after-school learning activities with a view to facilitating their whole-person and all-round development. The SWD provides the Fee-waiving Subsidy Scheme (FWSS) under After School Care Programme (ASCP) to support primary students from low-income families to receive the ASCP service operated by NGOs.

After consulting the EDB, our consolidated reply to the Hon Kenneth Leung's question is as follows:

(1) SALSP and ASCP, implemented by the EDB and the SWD respectively, are existing programmes, while the School-based After School Care Service Scheme is a new scheme implemented by the Government in the 2023/24 school year. The

information on the utilisation of the aforementioned three types of scheme/programme is set out in Annex 1. The School-based After School Care Service Scheme was implemented at 59 primary schools located at seven districts offering some 3 000 service places in the 2023/24 school year, and expanded to cover more than 120 primary schools in all 18 districts across the territory offering about 6 000 service places in the 2024/25 school year. Subject to actual utilisation and outcome of the Scheme, the Government plans to encourage more schools to participate in the Scheme, without capping the number of places, in the 2025/26 school year.

As regards SALSP, which has been implemented since the 2005/06 school year, its aim is to support needy students to participate in after-school learning activities with a view to facilitating their whole-person and all-round development. All public sector schools (including special schools) and schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme can make application and there is no school quota. The main target beneficiaries of SALSP are Primary 1 to Secondary 6 students in receipt of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) or full grant under the Student Financial Assistance Schemes (SFAS). Participating schools could exercise discretion to benefit those students who are not in receipt of CSSA or full grant of SFAS but identified by schools as needy. The discretionary quota is capped at 25 per cent of the number of eligible students of the respective schools. Also under SALSP is the Community-based Projects, activities of which are organised in the respective districts by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and collaborating schools. Eligible students may participate in various activities under the School-based Grant and Community-based Projects at the same time. As such, the actual number of beneficiaries and utilisation rate are not applicable to the School-based After-school Learning and Support Programmes. The EDB encourages schools to flexibly deploy the School-based Grant and other related funding to enhance synergy, thereby organising diversified after-school learning activities for needy students.

(2) In respect of the School-based After School Care Service Scheme and ASCP, (i) the overall expenditure, (ii) the average amount of funding allocated to each school/centre under the scheme/programme and (iii) the amount of subsidy for each student, over the past two years (2022-23 and 2023-24) are set out in Annex 2.

As for SALSP, the amount of School-based Grant that a school receives is calculated based on its number of students in receipt of CSSA or full grant under the SFAS as at the end of March of the respective school year, as well as its number of approved classes in the following school year. When calculating the amount of the grant, the rate for each of the above student is \$400. Should schools have an 80 per cent or above utilisation rate of the School-based Grant in the previous school year, the rate of \$600 per eligible student will be adopted as an incentive. As for the Community-based Projects, the applications submitted by NGOs are assessed on the basis of the content and nature of the activities, as well as the number of students and sessions involved, etc, and therefore the amount of funding for each activity differs. Eligible students may participate in various activities based on their needs and interests. In the 2022/23 and 2023/24 school year, \$140 million and \$137

million were provided to primary schools and NGOs respectively.

(3) In respect of the aforementioned three types of scheme/programme, the respective numbers of beneficiaries that were (i) from single-parent families, (ii) receiving CSSA and (iii) receiving full level of assistance under the Student Financial Assistance Schemes, and the respective percentages of students with special educational needs (SEN) over the past two years (2022-23 and 2023-24) are set out in Annex 3.

(4) ASCP aims at providing care services for children whose parents are unable to give proper care to them during after-school hours because of work or other reasons. It is operated by NGOs on a self-financing and fee-charging basis, providing care and support services for primary school children, including homework guidance, parental guidance and education, skill learning and social activities. The SWD provides financial assistance for the low-income families in need through the Fee-waiving Subsidy Scheme. The SWD does not maintain information of the service unit providing escort service for children attending ASCP.

(5) and (6) The Government will complete the evaluation of the School-based After School Care Service Scheme in the 2025/26 school year to decide on the way forward.