

Suspension of face-to-face classes of secondary schools until Chinese New Year

The Education Bureau (EDB) announced today (January 20) that all secondary schools (including schools offering non-local curriculum) should suspend face-to-face classes and all on-campus activities on or before next Monday (January 24) until schools' Chinese New Year holidays, similar to the current arrangements for primary schools, kindergartens and kindergarten-cum-child care centres. Private schools offering non-formal curriculum (commonly known as "tutorial schools") should suspend face-to-face classes at all class levels until February 7.

A spokesman for the EDB said, "The epidemic situation in Hong Kong is getting severe recently with a number of confirmed cases of unknown sources. There have been invisible chains of transmission in the community. There have also been confirmed cases or preliminary confirmed cases identified in schools, resulting in compulsory testing and even quarantine of teachers and students. The EDB, after taking various factors into consideration, has made the above decision.

"As preparations for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination are now at a key stage, secondary schools may, with stringent anti-epidemic measures put in place, arrange Secondary Six students to return to schools for essential learning and assessment activities for no more than half a day. This arrangement also applies to the level of students of schools offering non-local curriculum and sitting for public examinations this year. For other class levels, schools should cancel or postpone on-campus examinations or other activities held in school premises.

"During the period of face-to-face class suspension, schools will flexibly deploy various teaching modes to sustain students' learning at home. Schools should remain open to look after students who lack carers to take care of them at home. Schools will arrange for staff to be on duty to handle school affairs and answer parents' enquiries."

The spokesman continued, "Schools should remind parents to follow anti-epidemic measures and pay close attention to the health conditions of their children. Parents should avoid taking their children to crowded places with poor ventilation. During the period of face-to-face class suspension, schools should continue to maintain communication with parents and students to show care for the learning and emotional needs of the students, and render appropriate assistance to parents. Schools should also keep the school campuses clean and hygienic all the time. Schools are required to continue to strictly observe the health measures as stipulated in the 'Health Protection Measures for Schools' issued by the EDB and the 'Health Advice to Schools for the Prevention of COVID-19' issued by the Centre for Health Protection."

The spokesman added, "The EDB will issue a letter to schools with details later today. We urge unvaccinated teachers and school staff, parents and students to get vaccinated as soon as possible to protect themselves and their family members, and to construct a more effective protective barrier for both schools and the community."

The EDB will closely monitor the situation and move in step with the development of the overall anti-epidemic measures in Hong Kong. The bureau will further deliberate on the schooling arrangements for the period after schools' Chinese New Year holidays, and plans to make the relevant announcement by the end of this month.