

LCQ22: Student Guidance Officers in government primary schools

Following is a question by the Hon Luk Chung-hung and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (June 2):

Question:

It is learnt that the posts of Student Guidance Officers (SGO) in government primary schools, which belong to a non-graduate grade, are responsible for providing school-based student guidance service. Some SGOs have relayed to me that since the early 1990s, they have been trying to negotiate with the government departments concerned (including the then Education Department and the current Education Bureau (EDB)) over the issue of upgrading the SGO posts to the degree level. However, when the Government announced in 2019 the all-graduate teaching force policy for public sector schools across the territory, it did not upgrade the SGO posts to the degree level at the same time. They have pointed out that the EDB has undertaken to further study the issue of upgrading the SGO posts to the degree level (including permitting the staff affected to take part in the reform exercise) and to create Inspector grade posts to absorb those SGOs who are willing to change posts, but no progress has been heard of so far. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) why the Government did not upgrade the SGO posts to the degree level at the same time in 2019;

(2) of the progress of its work to create Inspector grade posts to absorb those SGOs who are willing to change posts; whether the measure of zero growth in the civil service establishment in this financial year as announced earlier by the Government has affected such work; if so, of the EDB's proposal to resolve the problem; and

(3) whether it will consider making use of the vacancies of graduate teacher posts in government schools to absorb those SGOs who are willing to change posts; if so, of the implementation details and timetable; if not, how the EDB will resolve the problem of different pay for the same work between SGOs and personnel of other guidance grades in schools (such as Student Guidance Teachers)?

Reply:

President,

Student Guidance Officer (SGO) is a non-graduate grade under the establishment of the Education Bureau (EDB). In the 1980s and early 1990s, SGOs offered on-site services to different primary schools for providing individual or group counselling services for students in need. Thereafter,

the Government had continued to enhance the student guidance service and created Student Guidance Teacher (SGT) posts starting from 1992 to provide school-based student guidance service in aided primary schools, with a view to strengthening the preventive guidance work and the participation of all school staff. Since then, the demand of schools for the services provided by SGOs has decreased and the Government has ceased recruiting new SGOs since 2000. Starting from the 2002/03 school year, the Government has further increased the resources for schools to hire SGTs or social work services according to their needs in order to implement the Comprehensive Student Guidance Service. The Government has also, starting from the 2018/19 school year, provided additional resources for public sector primary schools to implement the policy of "one school social worker for each school" according to school-based circumstances. With changes in the relevant policy, the duties and roles of SGOs have been adjusted with time. Currently, their main duties are to provide guidance and discipline services in the form of school-based support, ranging from one to five days per week for dozens of schools in need, and also assist the EDB handle and follow up students' non-attendance cases as well as enforce the Education Ordinance and administrative procedures.

Our reply to the questions raised by the Hon Luk Chung-hung is as follows:

(1) The SGO grade, which is under the EDB's establishment, is not under the staff establishment of any schools. The Chief Executive announced in the 2018 Policy Address that the all-graduate teaching force policy would be implemented in public sector primary and secondary schools in the 2019/20 school year. Schools might, taking into account their school-based circumstances, achieve full implementation by the 2020/21 school year. The arrangements for implementing the all-graduate teaching force policy have been made primarily according to the teacher establishment and operational needs of public sector schools. As SGOs have all along been outside the school establishment and their work arrangement and nature are different from that of SGTs, the SGO grade is therefore not covered by the all-graduate teaching force policy.

(2) and (3) The EDB has all along attached importance to the professional development and career prospects of staff of different grades, expecting them to unleash their potential in different posts and exploring new paths for staff in need. As mentioned above, the Government has ceased recruiting new SGOs since 2000. For years, most of the SGOs have retired, transferred to other grades or left the service. With the encouragement of the EDB, some of the SGOs have successfully transferred to the graduate posts in the EDB. At present, there are less than 40 serving SGOs in the EDB.

Since SGOs do not perform teaching duties in the EDB, it is inappropriate to deploy them to government schools directly for taking up teaching duties. Nevertheless, if there are vacancies in government schools, the EDB will recruit teaching staff to fill the vacancies in accordance with the existing procedures. Serving SGOs may apply for these teaching posts if they are interested and have obtained the relevant qualifications. In addition, recruitment exercises are conducted every year according to the

vacancy situation of various grades (including Inspector) in the EDB. All serving EDB staff, including SGOs, are welcome to apply for these posts. For SGOs who do not meet the entry requirements of the vacant graduate posts, they are encouraged to obtain the relevant qualifications through continuing education. The EDB will continue to communicate with SGO grade members to explain the relevant policies and offer advice according to their needs.

LCQ20: Product placement within TV programmes

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Chun-ying and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, in the Legislative Council today (June 2):

Question:

Since July 2018, the Communications Authority (CA) has relaxed the regulation of the inclusion of indirect advertising within television (TV) programmes by domestic free TV programme service licensees (licensees), including the permission for product placement on the conditions that the exposure or use of products or services concerned within a programme is presented in a natural and unobtrusive manner having regard to the programme context and genres and that there is no direct encouragement of purchase or use of the products or services concerned. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council if it knows:

- (1) whether the CA has drawn up clear guidelines on the meaning of natural and unobtrusive manner of presentation; if the CA has, of the details;
- (2) the number of complaints about product placement received by the CA since the relaxation of regulation and, among such complaints, the number of those found to be substantiated; and
- (3) whether the CA has grasped the data regarding the licensees' financial position having been improved due to the inclusion of product placement within their TV programmes; whether the CA has studied if the licensees have made use of the additional revenue generated from product placement to produce programmes of a higher quality to benefit their audiences; if the CA has studied, of the outcome?

Reply:

President,

The Communications Authority (CA) regulates domestic free television programme service licensees in accordance with relevant ordinances and codes

of practice. According to the Generic Code of Practice on Television Programme Standards issued by the CA, indirect advertising is defined as the mingling of programme and advertising material or the embedding of advertising material within programme content. The type of indirect advertising where licensees receive payment or other valuable consideration for exposure or use of products or services within a programme is referred to as "product or service sponsorship" (commonly known as "product placement").

The CA relaxed the regulation of indirect advertising in television programme services on July 27, 2018 to allow product placement by licensees. The general principles regulating product placement are that the latter must be presented in a natural and unobtrusive manner having regard to the programme context and genre, and that there must be no direct encouragement of purchase or use of the products or services.

Our reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Member is as follows:

(1) The CA will take into account a number of factors in considering whether a product placement is natural and unobtrusive, including whether the product placement is relevant to the context and genre of the programme, whether the integrity and natural flow of the programme is impacted, whether the product placement is naturally integrated into the programme, and whether there is excessive exposure or highlighting of the products or services. The CA will consider all relevant facts and context on a case by case basis.

A set of frequently asked questions on the regulation of indirect advertising has been uploaded to the CA's website for reference of the licensees and the public.

(2) Since the relaxation of the regulation of indirect advertising within TV programmes in July 2018, the CA has received a total of 178 cases (involving 340 complaints) on complaints about indirect advertising (including product placement), of which five cases (involving 21 complaints) were substantiated.

(3) The CA does not require the licensees to provide a breakdown of their advertising revenue. As free TV services have been facing fierce competition from other media in recent years, the CA considers that the relaxation of the restrictions would help TV stations diversify sources of advertising revenue. The measure can also remove some of the outdated regulatory requirements for the licensees, improve their long-term sustainability and facilitate their continuous production of high-quality programmes for TV viewers.

[LCQ19: Primary One places allocation](#)

system

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Han-pan and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (June 2):

Question:

Under the existing Primary One Admission System (POA System), Primary One (P1) places are allocated in two stages. At the "Discretionary Places Admission" (DP) stage, parents may apply to one government or aided primary school for the admission of their children to P1, and then the schools will allocate their places in accordance with the criteria set by the Education Bureau (EDB). Those parents whose applications are unsuccessful and those who have not submitted any application may, at the "Central Allocation" (CA) stage, complete a Choice of Schools Form (Form) and return it to the EDB, and then the EDB will allocate P1 places based on school nets, parents' choices and random numbers. Those parents who do not want their children to attend the schools allocated to them at the CA stage may "door-knock" their preferred schools. It is learnt that quite a number of the more popular schools have set a "1-1-1" screening condition for door-knocking applications, giving priority consideration to those applicants who have applied for admission to those schools at the DP stage and have entered those schools as their first choices in both Parts A and B of the Form (to be proved by the parents' submission to such schools a Parent's copy of the Form (Parent's copy) which has been stamped). Some parents have relayed that in January this year, the CA Centres in certain districts (e.g. Sham Shui Po) made special arrangements in the light of the severe epidemic situation, under which they only placed drop boxes for collecting the Forms, and did not stamp the Parent's copies as they did before. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as some parents are worried that when they door-knock their preferred schools, the schools will not accept the Parent's copies without a stamp, whether the EDB will, before announcing the places allocation results of the CA stage in June this year, (i) issue a circular memorandum to the schools covered by the POA System, requiring such schools to accept the Parent's copies without a stamp in considering P1 door-knocking applications, or (ii) arrange for the Parent's copies without a stamp to be stamped retrospectively; if so, of the details and the timetable; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) as some parents have relayed that, due to the epidemic, the EDB issued new Forms by mail to parents who had made mistakes when completing the Forms but did not get back the old Forms, and they are worried that some parents may use two Forms to increase their chance of success in door-knocking, of the measures the EDB has put in place, on the premise of not increasing school administrative work, to ensure that all parents will be given a fair chance when they door-knock; and

(3) as quite a number of parents have criticised that the existing P1 places allocation system is unfair, and door-knocking preferred schools has exhausted quite a number of parents and students, whether the EDB will review and improve the existing P1 places allocation system; if so, of the details and the timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Primary One Admission (POA) System is divided into two stages, namely, the Discretionary Places Admission (DP) stage and the Central Allocation (CA) stage. This allocation mechanism, which is based primarily on parental choices of schools as well as the demand and supply of school places, centrally manages matters relating to admission to Primary One in all government and aided primary schools in Hong Kong under the principles of openness and fairness. The entire procedure is effective, transparent and orderly. After the release of POA allocation results in early June every year, some parents, due to various reasons such as moving to a new home or seeking admission to a preferred school for their children, may approach other schools directly to apply for admission for their children (a phenomenon commonly known as "door-knocking"). The schools will decide whether to admit these students in light of their school-based circumstances (such as the availability of vacant school places).

Our reply to the Hon Chan Han-pan's question is as follows:

(1) and (2) Parents whose children have joined the POA System but have not secured a place at the DP stage have to complete the Choice of Schools Form (the Form) in order to join the CA. Normally, parents who apply for CA for their children are required to make their choice of schools at a designated CA Centre on the submission dates of the Form at the CA stage. After confirming that the Form is duly completed, staff of the CA Centre will keep the Education Bureau's (EDB) copy of the Form and give the stamped parent's copy to the parents for retention.

In light of the development of the COVID-19 epidemic situation, some CA Centres have been arranged to use drop boxes for collecting the Forms this year for compliance with epidemic control and social distancing measures. Under this special arrangement, parents only needed to put the EDB's copy of the Form and the Letter of Authorisation – Making School Choices (if applicable) into the drop box at the CA centre and keep the parent's copy in order to complete the procedure. In this regard, we have put up notices at the related CA Centres to clearly inform parents of the special arrangement.

The Form is a document used by the EDB during the CA stage and once the CA is completed, the Form will not have any other uses. This is not a document specified by the EDB that parents have to bring along for "door-knocking". In fact, it is entirely an arrangement made by individual schools on their own whereby parents, when applying directly to their preferred school for admission, are required to meet certain requirements in relation to their choices of school in the POA System i.e. entering the concerned

school as their first choices in the DP as well as both Part A and Part B of the Form for the CA, and that parents are required to present the Form during the application. Owing to the epidemic situation, special arrangement has been made for the submission of the Form this year, leading to the situation that some of the parent's copies may not have been stamped. In view of this, we have reminded the school sector not to request parents to provide the stamped parent's copies for reference during "door-knocking". For parents who have difficulties in the related matters, they may contact the School Places Allocation Section of the EDB (Tel no.: 2832 7700) for assistance.

(3) The current POA mechanism, which was introduced according to the recommendation of the Education Commission after extensive public consultation, has been in place for Primary One admission since the 2002/03 school year. On the whole, the current mechanism has strived to strike a right balance between the expectations of various stakeholders and is generally accepted by the public. For the time being, the EDB has no plan to conduct a comprehensive review on the POA mechanism. We will continue to closely monitor the implementation of the POA System and welcome any feasible and specific recommendations to improve the operation arrangement as needed.

Labour Department continues to set up mobile specimen collection stations to provide COVID-19 testing services for foreign domestic helpers and encourages them to get vaccinated

The Labour Department (LD) announced today (June 2) that mobile specimen collection stations will continue to be set up at popular gathering places of foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) on Sundays in June, and at the Tuen Ng Festival (June 14) to provide COVID-19 testing services for FDHs, and encouraged FDHs to get vaccinated as soon as possible to protect their health.

An LD spokesman said, "The LD will continue to set up mobile specimen collection stations in June at popular gathering places of FDHs to assist FDHs to receive the test voluntarily. No prior appointment is required. We also appeal to all FDHs to get vaccinated as soon as possible to protect their own health and the health of their employers' families and others."

The four mobile specimen collection stations will be set up at Chater Garden in Central (near Exit J2 of MTR Central Station), Hing Fat Street entrance of Victoria Park in Causeway Bay (near Exit A2 of MTR Tin Hau

Station), Lai Chi Kok Park entrance (near Exit D of MTR Mei Foo Station) and Tai Ho Road entrance of Tsuen Wan Park (near Exit D of MTR Tsuen Wan West Station). Mobile specimen collection stations are open on Sundays in June (June 6, 13, 20 and 27) and at the Tuen Ng Festival (June 14), from 10am to 5pm. An FDH should bring along his/her Hong Kong identity card or passport, and register his/her personal information on the spot at the government website (www.tgptest.gov.hk). Please select "Non-Government Staff – Foreign domestic helpers") in order to receive an SMS notification of the test result. FDHs will receive an SMS notification of the barcode number of the specimen bottle they collect after registration for reference. If necessary, duty officers can assist the FDH in registration.

The testing agent will provide specimen collection services by combined nasal and throat swab to FDHs receiving the test, and will deliver the specimens to the laboratory for testing. The testing agent will not acquire or retain any personal information of the participants. Participants will be notified of a negative test result via SMS. Positive cases will be referred to the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health (DH) for follow-up, and the DH will contact the participant concerned if it is confirmed to be an infection case.

For enquiries, please contact the LD through the dedicated FDH hotline at 2157 9537 (manned by 1823) or by email to fdh-enquiry@labour.gov.hk.

[COVID-19 Vaccination Programme statistics](#)

The COVID-19 Vaccination Programme has been implemented for 96 days since February 26, 2021.

So far, about 2 434 000 doses of vaccines have been administered under the Vaccination Programme. Details are as follows:

	Number of persons receiving Sinovac vaccine	Number of persons receiving BioNTech vaccine	Total number of doses
First vaccine dose	606 000	793 300	1 399 300
Second vaccine dose	441 600	593 000	1 034 700

* The numbers are rounded to the nearest hundred.

In the 24 hours ending at 8pm today (June 1), about 33 500 persons have

received vaccination and about 47 600 new vaccination bookings have been made online. Details are as follows:

	Sinovac vaccine	BioNTech vaccine
Number of persons receiving first dose	11 200	8 600
Number of persons receiving second dose	5 600	8 100
Overall percentage of persons receiving vaccines at Community Vaccination Centres (CVCs)	96%	97%
Number of online bookings for receiving first and second vaccine doses	15 000	32 600

* The numbers are rounded to the nearest hundred.

In the 24 hours ending at 0.00am today, there were eight cases of ambulance transfer to hospital from CVCs or designated general out-patient clinics of the Hospital Authority. They were sent to hospital after experiencing common side effects after vaccination and were in stable condition. Four of them were discharged, two persons were admitted for observation and two persons were discharged against medical advice.