

Ref : 1230-2025-8035-9010-0004

**Government of the HKSAR
Education Bureau**

27 May 2025

Education Bureau Circular No. 6/2025

Refined Options for Future Planning of Secondary Schools

[Note : This circular should be read by –

- (a) School Sponsoring Bodies, Supervisors and Heads of Government Secondary Schools, Aided Secondary Schools (excluding Special Schools) and Caput Schools – for action; and
- (b) Heads of Direct Subsidy Scheme Secondary Schools and Special Schools, and Heads of Sections – for information.]

Summary

This circular aims to announce to government secondary schools, aided secondary schools and caput schools as well as their respective School Sponsoring Bodies (SSBs) the refined arrangements applicable to them for class structure and future planning. This circular supersedes Education Bureau (EDB) Circular No. 17/2023 dated 25 August 2023. It should be read in conjunction with other relevant circulars, letters, or guidelines that are still applicable.

Background

2. In planning the provision of public sector school places and the development of schools, the prime consideration of EDB is the interests of students, ensuring the healthy and sustainable development of the education system in Hong Kong. EDB implemented transitional measures in the past in response to the temporary change in school-age population. However, considering the structural rather than transient decline in school-age population, EDB will, with the aim of “soft landing”, keep conducting assessments of the demand and supply of school places, reviewing the

relevant arrangements of approving the class structure, and maintaining close communication with SSBs in supporting the sector to plan ahead and adopt appropriate measures as well as strategies to consolidate resources in response to the changes in the demand and supply of school places while enhancing the quality of education continuously.

3. Schools are places for nurturing the whole-person development of students. Having an appropriate size of the overall student population and the number of classes are beneficial to create a conducive teaching and learning environment and opportunities for group learning, thereby fostering the values of getting along with others and mutual respect among students, and for whole-person development. Secondary education is an important learning stage for nurturing the growth and development of young people while providing a broad and balanced curriculum can benefit students with diversified opportunities and group interactions.

4. SSBs and schools should act according to circumstances, taking into consideration the school circumstances, to get themselves well-prepared to respond to the challenges to student enrolment brought by the changes in population. At the same time, they should carefully read the various arrangements and measures as set out in this circular, in order to plan for and formulate the direction most suitable for schools' long-term development as early as possible to optimise the use of public resources, and upgrade the quality of education to safeguard the interest of student learning.

The Number of Secondary One (S1) Classes

5. The ceiling of the number of S1 classes participating in the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System, except in special circumstances, will be the same number of approved S1 classes after the September headcount of the previous school year. With effect from the 2023/24 school year, EDB has implemented the following arrangements:

Schools with three approved S1 classes

- (i) For a school with three approved S1 classes after the September headcount, if the number of Discretionary Place (DP) applications received in each of the latest three consecutive years is not less than 80% of the total number of

S1 places available for SSPA purpose in the respective year, the school may submit application¹, for participating in the next SSPA cycle with four classes².

Schools with fewer than three approved S1 classes

- (ii) For a school with fewer than three approved S1 classes after the September headcount, the number of classes capped in the next SSPA cycle will be determined by the number of approved S1 classes of the school in the latest two school years (whichever is higher but capped at three classes).

6. To work along with Hong Kong's aim of developing high-quality of education, better addressing parents' preferences and taking into consideration the enrolment situation of schools, EDB will allow schools participating in SSPA with four classes, meeting the following requirements, to apply for participating in SSPA with five S1 classes under a pilot scheme in the 2025/26 school year³:

- (i) The number of DP applications received in each of the latest three consecutive years is not less than 100% of the total number of S1 places available for SSPA purpose in the respective year; and
- (ii) The conditions of the premises meeting the need for having additional classes (including but not limited to having sufficient registered classrooms and facilities in the school premises for accommodation, while no additional expenditures from the government will be incurred).

¹ Schools meeting the prescribed criteria may submit their application within a month from the September headcount to their respective School Development Section.

² Once the application is approved, the school must be allocated with sufficient number of students for the operation of four S1 classes when the SSPA results are announced (calculated on the basis of the maximum number of students to be allocated per class under SSPA of the school concerned). For example, if a school participates in SSPA with 31 as the maximum number of students to be allocated per class, and it can be allocated not fewer than 94 students, which is exceeding the total number of students to be allocated for three S1 classes, the school will meet the number of students required for operating the fourth class, and so on. By then, the number of approved S1 classes concerned will be adjusted upward accordingly, but the final number of approved S1 classes is still subject to the September headcount.

³ Once the application is approved, the school must be allocated with sufficient number of students for the operation of five S1 classes when the SSPA results are announced (calculated on the basis of the maximum number of students to be allocated per class under SSPA of the school concerned). For example, if a school participates in SSPA with 31 as the maximum number of students to be allocated per class, and it can be allocated not fewer than 125 students, which is exceeding the total number of students to be allocated for four S1 classes, the school will meet the number of students required for operating the fifth class, and so on. By then, the number of approved S1 classes concerned will be adjusted upward accordingly, but the final number of approved S1 classes is still subject to the September headcount.

7. Upon receipt of the applications from schools, EDB will holistically assess, including the demand and supply of school places in Hong Kong, and the actual situation of the districts where the schools are located, the relevant facilities of the schools, the track record of school's governance and the preference of parents etc., when considering whether to approve the schools' applications. The quota set for the SSPA 2026 Cycle is five at most. **After a thorough review of the relevant situation, this pilot scheme will be extended for three years starting from the SSPA 2027 Cycle until the SSPA 2029 Cycle, with a maximum quota of five approved cases each year.** EDB will keep the relevant arrangement under review, and according to the actual situations, keep refining the arrangement.

Approving the Overall Class Structure

8. Under the existing arrangement, EDB conducts headcount for public sector schools on a specified date in September each year and adjusts the number of approved classes of a school for that school year according to the actual enrolment on that date⁴ and the applicable basis for calculating the number of approved classes.

9. To maintain an appropriate overall student population and class size, and to align with the policy for schools to offer a broad and balanced curriculum so as to provide students with diversified group learning opportunities, EDB will act according to circumstances to make timely revisions to the basis for calculating the number of approved classes and the arrangement for approving the class structure, so as to ensure the quality of education and high-quality development. The relevant amendments are set out below:

The Calculation Basis

- (i) Starting from the 2025/26 school year, the calculation basis for approving the number of S1 classes will be adjusted upward from 25 to 27 students per

⁴ The actual enrolment refers to the number of students reckoned by EDB. Taking S1 as an example, the actual enrolment includes (i) students participating in SSPA of that school year, (ii) S1 repeaters taking up the repeater quota (up to two per class), (iii) dropouts referred by EDB or other non-governmental organisations, and (iv) S1 students who attend Hong Kong's public sector secondary schools for the first time and are admitted by schools themselves before the headcount on the specified date in September of that school year. EDB will not approve additional classes in schools which admit by themselves students exceeding the total enrolment capped by the number of approved S1 classes.

class⁵, and further to 29 students per class⁶ starting from the 2026/27 school year. The relevant basis will be carried forward to S6 on a yearly basis for the same cohort of students. Please refer to **Appendix 1** for details. EDB will keep the arrangement under review.

Headcount Arrangements

Arrangements for S1 to S3 classes

- (ii) EDB conducts headcount of the actual S1 enrolment on a specified date in September to determine the number of approved S1 classes for that cohort using the applicable calculation basis for approving classes in that school year. The relevant practice will be carried forward starting from the S1 cohort of the 2025/26 school year until it covers S3⁷.
- (iii) If a school has the number of approved classes at any levels from S1 to S3 adjusted downward to fewer than two classes after the September headcount, the school is required to apply for the applicable development option as stated in **Appendix 2**, to ensure that students are provided with a broad and balanced senior secondary curriculum and enriched with opportunities for group learning when they progress to senior secondary levels. Please refer to paragraphs 10 to 11 for details.

Arrangements for S4 to S6 classes

- (iv) If a school has the number of approved S4 classes adjusted downward to fewer than two classes after the September headcount, the SSBs must inject additional resources to ensure that a broad and balanced curriculum and rich

⁵ If a school admits 28 students in the relevant cohort, the school will be approved for two classes in that cohort; if the school admits 55 students, the school will be approved for three classes in that cohort, and so on.

⁶ If a school admits 30 students in the relevant cohort, the school will be approved for two classes in that cohort; if the school admits 59 students, the school will be approved for three classes in that cohort, and so on.

⁷ For example, in the 2026/27 school year, EDB will conduct headcount at S1 and S2 levels on a specified date in September and use 29 (applicable to S1 in the 2026/27 school year) and 27 (applicable to S2 in the 2026/27 school year) as the basis for approving the number of classes for the respective cohorts; and in the 2027/28 school year, using 29 (applicable to S1 and S2 in the 2027/28 school year) and 27 (applicable to S3 in the 2027/28 school year) as the basis for approving the number of classes for the respective cohorts. From the 2028/29 school year onwards, EDB will conduct headcount on the three junior secondary levels, and use 29 as the basis for approving the number of classes for the relevant cohorts.

opportunities for group learning are provided for that cohort of students throughout senior secondary studies, unless there are other feasible alternatives. Besides, to ensure the continuity of stable learning environment at the senior secondary levels so as to enable schools to provide students with a broad and balanced senior secondary curriculum, the approved number of S4 classes after the September headcount will continue to be used for the cohort when it is promoted to S5 and S6 levels.

Surplus Teachers

- (v) In the event of downward adjustment of the number of approved S1 to S4 classes after the headcount, surplus teachers/laboratory technicians may be tolerated until the end of that school year⁸. EDB will also adjust class grants and all related grants (except the Fractional Post Cash Grant) based on the adjusted number of approved classes according to the prevailing practice.

Refinements to the School Development Options

10. To further support SSBs in planning school development based on the school circumstances, EDB has refined the development options available for schools to choose effective from the 2025/26 school year, and opened up different development options for applications by SSBs and schools. For details, please refer to **Appendix 2**.

11. As mentioned in paragraphs 8 and 9 above, if the number of classes at any junior secondary levels of a school has to be adjusted downward to fewer than two classes after the headcount on a specified date in September, the school is required to apply for a development option for that cohort according to **Appendix 2**. If the school does not apply for any development options for that cohort or the chosen option is not approved, but it still chooses to continue to operate subvented S1 classes, EDB will adopt the “per capita subvention mode” to calculate the subvention for the following cohorts of S1 students (including those admitted after the commencement of the

⁸ In the school year concerned, supply teachers substituting for teachers on leave for three or more consecutive days may be employed only if the number of teachers on leave at the same time exceeds the number of surplus teachers the school has. The school concerned must rectify the surplus situation as soon as opportunity arises. For schools with established IMC, the provision of Teacher Relief Grant (including Annual Recurrent Cash Grant and Optional Cash Grant) will be adjusted according to the revised teaching staff establishment.

school year) until they complete S3 in the same school. The details of the “per capita subvention mode” are set out at **Appendix 3**.

12. EDB encourages all SSBs and their schools to adopt a forward-looking perspective for holistic and long-term planning, and make reference to **Appendix 2** to plan ahead for school development. EDB will also keep reviewing various relevant policies in responding to the changes in student population, refine the relevant arrangements as appropriate, and explore innovative development options, to ensure a sustainable education ecosystem.

Other Support Measures Pertaining to School Development

13. For other support measures pertaining to school development, including the number of S1 classes capped after SSPA, please refer to **Appendix 4**.

Enquiries

14. For enquiries, please contact the respective Senior School Development Officers.

(Ms W S LEUNG)
for Permanent Secretary for Education

**Revised Calculation Basis for Approving Number of Classes
and Headcount Arrangements**

1. Starting from the 2025/26 school year, the calculation basis for approving the number of S1 classes will be adjusted upward from 25 to 27 students per class and further to 29 students per class starting from the 2026/27 school year. The relevant basis will be carried forward to S6 on a yearly basis for the same cohort of students.
2. Starting from the 2025/26 school year, EDB will also use the applicable calculation basis for approving classes in that school year to determine the number of approved S1 classes for that cohort when conducting headcount of the actual S1 enrolment on a specified date in September. The relevant practice will be carried forward starting from the S1 cohort of the 2025/26 school year until it covers S3.
3. The number of approved S4 classes will be subject to the headcount of actual enrolment on a specified date in September, and the number of approved S4 classes after the September headcount will continue to be used for that cohort when it is promoted to S5 and S6 levels.
4. EDB will keep the aforementioned arrangements under review, and make adjustments as appropriate.
5. According to the above situation, the table below summarises the applicable levels for the September headcount, and the applicable calculation basis for the respective cohorts (“✓” refers to the levels which headcount is arranged while the number refers to the calculation basis):

School Year	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6
2025/26	✓ 27	25	25	✓ 25	25	25
2026/27	✓ 29	✓ 27	25	✓ 25	25	25
2027/28	✓ 29	✓ 29	✓ 27	✓ 25	25	25
2028/29	✓ 29	✓ 29	✓ 29	✓ 27	25	25
2029/30	✓ 29	✓ 29	✓ 29	✓ 29	27	25

Development Options for Schools

1. EDB has been proactively communicating with different SSBs and schools in recent years, encouraging them to take note of the projection of the future demand for school places, and review the enrolment situations of the schools under their purview, with a view to planning ahead the way forward and future development of their schools, including consideration of ceasing the operation of schools with prolonged under-enrolment. While considering schools' applications for development options, EDB puts the well-being of students as the prime concern and considers factors such as the quality and efficiency of teaching and learning, feasibility and sustainability of option, optimal use of public resources, and the overall situation in Hong Kong, etc.

2. To fully support SSBs in planning school development based on the school circumstances, EDB has refined the development options available for schools to choose, and opened up different development options for applications by SSBs and schools. Starting from the 2025/26 school year, schools that are not approved to have two classes at any junior secondary levels have to apply for one of the following development options.

Option 1: Merging with Other Schools (available for all aided secondary schools to apply)

3. SSBs and schools may consider merging with one or more schools under the same or different SSB. For schools being approved for fewer than two classes at any junior secondary levels, they can only choose to merge with schools operating two or more classes at all levels. Furthermore, the merged school must maintain a minimum of three approved classes at each junior secondary level to ensure stable school development and sustainable provision of a broad and balanced senior secondary curriculum with reasonable choices and combination of elective subjects, enabling students having rich opportunities for group activities.

4. SSBs and schools must propose to EDB the mode, schedule and all details of the merger for the consideration of whether the application can be approved. Schools that are considering merger has to obtain consent from the SSBs and School Management Committees (SMCs)/ Incorporated Management Committees (IMCs).

They should also inform the major stakeholders (including teachers and parents) and respond to their opinions and inquiries.

5. Merging schools can help consolidate resources, enhance synergy, improve the quality of learning and teaching and ensure the well-being of students. In order to facilitate the smooth implementation and transition of the approved merger:

- (i) If two schools merge, the school that continues to operate S1 classes after the merger will be provided with a one-off additional allowance in the amount of \$0.50 million for each merging level to cover the involved merging schools' additional expenses incurred due to the merger. If three or more schools are involved in the merger, the amount of the relevant additional allowance can be adjusted upward to 25% at most.
- (ii) If there are surplus teachers in the school that continues to operate S1 classes after the merger, it will be allowed to retain, for three years, the incumbent teachers on the approved teaching staff establishment⁹ related to the levels under merger of the schools concerned in the school year preceding the merger so that the school may have time to adjust the staff strength through natural wastage and other means¹⁰.
- (iii) If the school that continues to operate S1 classes after the merger suffers from class packing at the S1 level due to under-enrolment after the September headcount, the school, during the 3-year transitional period, can be allowed to participate in the next SSPA with one more class plus the number of classes approved after the September headcount. If the school can be allocated with sufficient students in that SSPA¹¹, the number of S1

⁹ Approved teaching staff establishment is stated in the Class Organisation and Staff Establishment approval letter for the relevant school year. Teaching staff entitlement derived from the number of approved classes can be retained, while the additional teachers provided under specific improvement programmes will be subject to applicability. Teachers not holding a regular post and supply teachers appointed for temporary replacement (i.e. substituting for teacher on leave) are not included. The toleration arrangement is not applicable to government schools.

¹⁰ Regarding the salary arrangement of surplus teachers and over-ranked teachers, schools have to follow the prevailing practice. Surplus teachers at basic ranks are allowed to proceed along their pay scales, while surplus teachers at promotion ranks are subject to the prevailing salary arrangements of over-ranked teachers. If there are vacancies on the establishment, surplus teachers are to be absorbed first. Schools are not allowed to offer any new appointment before rectifying the surplus situation.

¹¹ The relevant arrangement will be calculated on the basis of the maximum number of students to be allocated per class under SSPA of the school concerned. If a school participates in SSPA with 31 as the maximum number of students to be allocated per class, and it can be allocated not fewer than 94 students (i.e.

classes approved in the school will be adjusted upward accordingly (capped by the number of approved classes as announced when it is approved for the merger), but the final number of approved S1 classes will be subject to the September headcount.

- (iv) To further support the development of merged schools, schools that continue to operate S1 classes upon merger can, during the first three school years of the commencement of the merger (i.e. the transition period), be exempted from applying for the development option for that cohort if the approved number of S1 classes is adjusted downward to below two classes for the first time in the September headcount. In such cases, EDB will provide additional resources equivalent to one class per year for that cohort when the cohort reaches the three-year senior secondary levels. If, during or after the transition period, the school's approved number of S1 classes is adjusted downward to one class again in the September headcount for the subsequent school year, the school must apply for the development option for the relevant cohort. **The above transitional arrangement is only applicable to S1.** If a school that continues to operate S1 classes upon merger is approved with only one class in any cohort at the junior levels other than S1, the SSB and/or the school will still be required to apply for a development option for students in the that cohort to ensure that those students can receive a broad and balanced senior secondary curriculum during their study at the senior secondary levels¹².

- ~~(iv)~~(v) EDB will discuss individual merger proposals with SSBs and provide facilitation as far as practicable.

exceeding the total number of students to be allocated to three classes), the school will meet the number of students required for operating the fourth class, and so on.

¹² For example, if two schools start merging from the 2026/27 school year, the three-year transition period will last from the 2026/27 to the 2028/29 school years. For instance, in the 2027/28 school year, if a school that continues to operate S1 classes upon merger has its number of S1 classes being adjusted downward to one class in the headcount of September 2027 for the first time during the transition period, the school can be exempted from applying for the development option for that cohort. When the students in that cohort progress to senior secondary levels (i.e. Secondary 4 to Secondary 6), EDB will provide additional resources equivalent to one class to ensure that those students can receive a broad and balanced senior secondary curriculum during their study at the senior secondary levels. However, if the number of S2 or S3 classes is adjusted downward to one class due to under-enrolment as found in headcount of September 2027, or if the school is approved to have one S1 class in the 2028/29 school year again, the school has to apply for the development option for those cohorts in accordance with **Appendix 2**.

6. If the SSBs choose to merge starting from the S1 level, the schools involved in merging will continue to operate for a period of time. The school that does not operate S1 classes (but still operating classes above S1 level) can still operate on the class subvention mode until it ceases operation. Regarding the specific phasing-out proposal, including whether students at S2 and S3 will complete senior secondary education in the original school, the SSB in conjunction with the school, having regard to the best interest of student learning, should consider a basket of factors, including the actual and projected number of classes and students, and whether the school has sufficient resources and capacity to provide a broad and balanced curriculum as well as rich opportunities for group activities for students at S4 to S6. As for the resources arrangement, apart from the injection of resources by the SSB, the school may apply to EDB for granting special approval for using its own resources, such as the Operating Expenses Block Grant (OEBG)/ Expanded Operating Expenses Block Grant (EOEBG), to top up the resources required. Consideration will be given with respect to the applications of individual merger proposals.

Option 2: Co-organising Diversified Educational Courses at Senior Secondary Levels with Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET) Organisations (available for all aided secondary schools to apply)

7. After conducting a self-assessment, SSBs and schools may apply for co-organising diversified VPET courses at senior secondary levels with post-secondary institutions, VPET organisations, in addition to the core and elective subjects of the senior secondary curriculum. These courses aim to provide a high-quality, diversified pathway with multiple entry and exit points to students with different aspirations, abilities and learning needs. The VPET courses should be at Qualifications Framework Level 2 or 3 and must have been accredited by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications, or by well-established and well-recognised organisations.

8. When choosing to operate co-organised courses, the SSB and the school have to ensure that they **have the capability to operate the courses on a self-financing basis for a continuous period of at least six school years**, during which the SSB and the school should not impose course fees on students. If necessary, upon EDB's approval, the school may collect charges from students to cover the costs of teaching

materials or related sundries expenses. In addition, the relevant co-organised courses could not incur any additional government resources. The school should provide contingency measures (e.g. opting the injection of additional resources by the SSB instead) to prevent the collaboration plan from any changes to safeguard the interests of students.

9. The SSB and school have to obtain approval from the SMC/ IMC. They should also inform the major stakeholders (including teachers and parents) and respond to their opinions and inquiries. In particular, students and parents should be clearly informed of the curriculum outline/ contents of the diversified educational courses, and possible pathways for further studies and employment.

10. For schools operating fewer than two classes at any junior secondary levels, regardless of whether the approved number of S1 classes increases to two or above in subsequent school years, SSBs and schools **must operate the co-organised courses for at least six school years**. Therefore, SSBs and schools must ensure that they have the capability to continuously operate the co-organised courses on a self-financing basis for at least six school years, in order to secure provision of a broad and balanced senior secondary curriculum for students, facilitate students' long-term planning for further studies and career pathways, while stabilising the future development of schools. After operating the co-organised courses for six school years, the school should submit a proposal to EDB again, if the number of approved classes at any junior secondary levels of the school is still fewer than two, stating whether the school will continue co-organising the course with post-secondary institutions, VPET organisations, or opt for other applicable development option. If the approved number of classes at any junior secondary levels of the school resumes to two or above after six school years, the school is not required to continue operating the co-organised courses. However, if the school wishes to cease operating the co-organised courses, the school must submit a proposal and timetable to EDB **at least two school years** before the cessation to allow students to adapt to the new curriculum learning environment in a timely manner.

11. For schools operating two or more classes at any junior secondary levels, EDB also welcomes these schools to apply for operating the co-organised courses. **The co-organised courses must be operated for at least six school years**. If the school's application for operating the co-organised courses is approved, and for the first time

the school fails to operate two classes at any junior secondary levels within the subsequent six school years after the approval, the school can still continue operating the cohort on the “class subvention mode” and receive resources for operating two S1 classes, which will be progressively extended to higher levels until the cohort completes the senior secondary curriculum. However, if the school is unable to operate two classes at any of the subsequent junior secondary cohorts, the school may choose to apply for this option as a development option as stated in paragraph 10 above, or apply for other applicable development options as stated in this appendix.

Option 3: Turning into Private Schools (available for all aided secondary schools to apply; only applicable to secondary schools with terms and conditions of land lease and/or tenancy agreement permissible for the operation of schools in private mode)

12. As long as the terms and conditions of the relevant land lease and/or tenancy agreement are permissible, SSBs and schools may apply to turn into a private school by phases. In other words, the subvention mode for current operating classes is, in principle, not affected and the school will not participate in the SSPA starting from the next year.

13. At the time a SSB and a school apply for this option, if the school operates fewer than two approved classes at any junior secondary levels, by then, all students studying in the junior secondary levels may complete S3 in the original school. They will then participate in the Central Placement and be allocated subsidised S4 places in other subvented schools for pursuing senior secondary curriculum.

14. As the Government will not provide any subvention to private schools, the SSB should provide evidence that it is financially sound and is capable of shouldering all the expenses of operating private classes, including payment for teachers’ salary and all related expenses. The school has to demonstrate that it is capable of providing quality education and that the learning environment and facilities meet the requirements for the all-round development of students. Schools offering local curriculum have to ensure that the staff establishment and the qualifications of its teachers for the private classes are comparable to their counterparts in the subvented classes.

15. Regardless of whether the applicant school is finally approved to be turned into a private school or not, the school is not allowed to choose another development option. The SSB has to obtain consent from the SMC/ IMC. It should also consult the major stakeholders (including teachers and parents) and respond to their opinions and inquiries.

Option 4: Cessation of Operation of School or Particular Level(s) (available for all aided secondary schools to apply)

16. SSBs and schools, taking into account the school's circumstances, may consider cessation of operation of the school or particular class level(s) for the sake of students' well-being. This allows students to switch to other schools for studies earlier and adapt to new learning environments. EDB will provide feasible and appropriate support regarding the arrangements for students transferring to other public sector schools.

17. SSBs and schools are required to propose to EDB the mode and timetable of cessation of operation. The plan has to be consented by the SSB and the IMC/ SMC concerned, and the key stakeholders (including teachers and parents) have to be informed of the plan and their opinions and inquiries responded.

Option 5: Shouldering Additional Resources to Provide a Broad and Balanced Senior Secondary Curriculum (Starting from the 2025/26 school year, this option is only applicable to schools that have not used this option in the past six school years, counting from the year of application)¹³

18. Schools operating fewer than two classes at any junior secondary levels may apply for injecting additional resources by the SSBs to provide a broad and balanced

¹³ Such arrangement is only applicable to junior secondary levels. For instance, if a school has failed to meet the requirement of operating two approved classes at any junior secondary levels after the September headcount in the 2025/26 school year, and the school was approved for injection of additional resources by SSB in the past six years (i.e. from the 2019/20 to 2024/25 schools years), then the school in the 2025/26 school years cannot apply for Option 5 allowing SSB to inject additional resources to provide a broad and balanced senior secondary curriculum, and so on. As for S4 to S6, to ensure that schools will not be affected by changes in the class structure and can continue providing students with a broad and balanced senior secondary curriculum, the approved number of S4 classes after the September headcount will continue to be used for the cohort when it is promoted to S5 and S6 levels. If a school fails to meet the requirement of operating two approved S4 classes after the September headcount, the SSB must inject additional resources, unless there are other feasible alternatives, ensuring that relevant cohort of students will be provided with a broad and balanced senior secondary curriculum and rich opportunities for group activities.

senior secondary curriculum for the relevant cohort, including but not limited to the provision of a wide range of senior secondary curriculum electives with reasonable subject combinations, and rich opportunities for group activities.

19. SSBs should make reference to the staff establishment, recognised qualifications and professional training of teachers, and grants related to student support as stipulated in the Codes of Aid and other relevant documents, and supplement the resources of the school concerned to meet all the necessary requirements for operating at least two S4 classes, so that students of that cohort can receive, throughout the three-year senior secondary curriculum, not less than the same level of educational resources as those available to other students in the subvented mode of operation.

20. SSBs and schools are required to submit detailed plans, information and justifications (including the four areas of management and organisation, learning and teaching, school ethos and student support, and student performance) to demonstrate that the school has the capability to provide quality education for students, and that the learning environment and facilities of the school meet the requirements of students' all-round development. SSBs and schools will also be required to provide resource assurance.

21. Before submitting their applications, SSBs and schools are required to obtain the approval of their IMCs/ SMCs, inform key stakeholders (including teachers and parents), and respond to their opinions and enquiries.

Relevant arrangements for schools failing to operate two approved classes at any junior secondary levels for the second time

22. If a school has failed to admit the minimum number of students for operating two classes at any junior secondary levels after the September headcount and has been approved for injecting additional resources by the SSB to provide a broad and balanced senior secondary curriculum, but fails to admit the number of students required for operating two approved classes at any junior secondary levels for the second time in the next six school years, it cannot apply to EDB for the injection of additional resources to provide a broad and balanced senior secondary curriculum again. If a school does not choose another option (i.e. Options 1 to 4 mentioned above), or if the option chosen is not approved and the school still chooses to continue operating

subsidised S1 classes, EDB will adopt the “per capita subvention mode” in calculating the number of S1 students (including the relevant transfer students) to be admitted by the school for the next and subsequent school years, until they complete S3 in the same school. Details of the “per capita subvention mode” are set out in **Appendix 3**.

Operating Junior Secondary Classes on the “Per Capita Subvention Mode”

1. For schools operating only one class at any junior secondary levels after the September headcount, if they do not apply for any development option, or their applications are not approved, but they still choose to continue operating subvented S1 classes, EDB will adopt the “per capita subvention mode” to calculate the subvention for that and the following cohorts of S1 students (including the relevant transfer students admitted after the commencement of school year).
2. The unit rate of per capita grant is based on the average cost of a subsidised school place¹⁴. It is payable monthly and adjusted every school year. Schools operating classes under the “per capita subvention mode” cannot impose school fees on students in these classes. The mode of operation, including school curriculum, teaching and learning, teaching staff establishment and deployment, etc. of the classes operated under the “per capita subvention mode” must be equivalent to other ordinary subvented classes.
3. Schools operating junior secondary classes on the “per capita subvention mode” may continue to participate in the subsequent SSPA cycles with one class, but students will not be allocated to these schools unless students choose the schools at the central allocation stage (i.e. the school participates in the SSPA under the principle of “no-choice-no-allocation”).
4. After the September headcount, for schools operating only one class at any junior secondary levels, when the students studying in the junior secondary levels concerned are promoted to S4, they will participate in Central Placement and be allocated subsidised S4 places in other subvented schools for pursuing senior secondary curriculum. For students at the junior secondary levels operating under the “per capita subvention mode” admitted in the subsequent school years, they may complete S3 in their original schools and subsequently participate in Central Placement and be allocated subsidised S4 places for pursuing senior secondary studies in other subvented schools.

¹⁴ The unit rate of per capita grant is based on the average cost of a subsidised school place, excluding the staff cost and grants provided on a school basis, such as a school principal and Native-speaking English Teacher, etc.

5. If a school can only be approved for one S3 and/or S2 class(es) after the September headcount, even if two classes can be approved at any of the lower levels in the same school year, all classes in that school year will still be operated under the “class subvention mode”, but the students studying in the junior secondary levels in that school year may also participate in Central Placement and be allocated subsidised S4 places to transfer to other subvented schools upon completion of S3 level for pursuing the senior secondary curriculum.

6. As the “per capita subvention mode” is not applicable to senior secondary levels, schools will no longer be authorised to operate the subsidised S4 level upon the students studying in classes operated under the “per capita subvention mode” complete their studies of S3.

7. Since the school will not be provided with any public funding for operating senior secondary classes, it may consider to operate self-financed private senior secondary classes. Schools should be aware of the terms and conditions of the relevant lease and/or tenancy agreement and should understand the allowable usage or limitation in the use of land to avoid any contravention.

Other Support Measures Pertaining to School Development

(1) S1 Allocation Class Size

EDB had originally scheduled to revert the S1 allocation class size to 34 (“place reinstating” in short) in the 2023/24 to 2026/27 school years. Owing to the continued decline in S1 school-age population as projected for 2025 and beyond, the current-term Government has announced the suspension of the requirement for schools to revert the S1 allocation class size to 34 as originally scheduled for the 2023/24 school year to the 2026/27 school year, and will continue to conduct assessments of the demand and supply of school places and review the S1 allocation class size.

(2) Trial Arrangement for the Use of Repeater Quota at S1 Level

At present, the number of students capped for each S1 class is determined by the maximum number of students allocated per class under the SSPA in that school year plus two repeater places. However, in addition to repeaters, some schools may use these quotas to admit non-repeaters. To enable schools to utilise the two repeaters places per class as far as possible in accordance with the policy intent, starting from the 2023/24 school year, for a period of three school years, the trial arrangement for admitting non-repeaters with a cap at an average of one repeater place per class at S1 level has been implemented. Under the new arrangement, the average number of non-repeaters admitted per class must not exceed the maximum number of students allocated per class under the SSPA plus one place. This arrangement has been implemented on a trial basis for three school years starting from the 2023/24 school year to the 2025/26 school year¹⁵. After a thorough review of the relevant situation, this trial arrangement will be extended for three school years until the 2028/29 school year. EDB will keep the relevant arrangement under review, and keep refining the arrangement having regard to the actual situations.

(3) Relaxing the “Not Less Than Three Class” Requirement for Each level

From the 2013/14 school year onwards, in view of the transient fluctuation in the school-age population at that time, EDB launched a basket of targeted relief

¹⁵ Details of the trial arrangements were announced in the letter dated 5 July 2023 from EDB to government secondary schools, aided secondary schools (excluding special schools) and caput schools.

measures, accepting schools operating at least two classes for each level to offer diversified elective subjects through flexible deployment of resources, different means and strategies to provide students with a broad, balanced and sustainable senior secondary curriculum. Such schools do not need to apply for school development options. EDB will keep reviewing the relevant arrangement.

(4) Number of S1 Classes Capped after SSPA

To alleviate the impact caused by mass transfer of students after the SSPA, EDB has set a cap on the number of S1 classes after the SSPA¹⁶. In principle, the number of approved classes derived from the total number of students who will be reckoned¹⁷ in the September headcount should not exceed the number of S1 classes capped after the SSPA unless there are exceptional circumstances. For schools with prior approval of three or more S1 classes, the cap will remain at three classes for the schools concerned to admit students after the announcement of SSPA results even if the schools are allocated with less than three classes. The final number of approved S1 classes of the schools will not exceed three and will be subject to the result of the September headcount. For schools with prior approval of two or fewer S1 classes, the cap will remain at the number of classes approved for participating in the SSPA for the schools concerned to admit students after the announcement of SSPA results even if the schools are allocated with fewer students than that for the number of approved classes. The final number of approved S1 classes of the schools cannot exceed the number of classes approved for participating in the SSPA and will be subject to the result of the September headcount.

¹⁶ The number of classes capped is calculated by dividing the sum of the number of students allocated by SSPA and the approved repeater quota (i.e. two places per class) by the criteria for approving classes in the prevailing school year and rounding the quotient to the next integer. However, the number of classes derived from this calculation should not exceed the original number of provisionally approved S1 classes.

¹⁷ Students concerned include: those who have participated in the SSPA of that school year, S1 repeaters taking up the repeater quota (up to two per class), dropouts referred by EDB or other non-governmental organisations, and S1 students who attend Hong Kong's public sector secondary schools for the first time and are admitted by the schools themselves before the headcount on the specified date in September of that school year. EDB will not approve additional classes in schools which admit by themselves students exceeding the capacity of the total enrolment of the number of S1 classes capped.