



Hong Kong's Education Highlights

School Education



School education in Hong Kong is divided into kindergarten, primary and secondary education. Kindergarten education institutions are privately run and cater for children aged three to six. Some kindergartens have affiliated child care centres (i.e. kindergarten-cum-child care centres) to provide child care services for children aged below three.

Primary education normally starts at the age of six (the minimum admission age is five years and eight months). All eligible children are, on application, allocated Primary 1 places in government or aided primary schools through the "Primary One Admission System". Free primary education is available in all government and aided primary schools.

After completing primary education, students will be allocated subsidised Secondary 1 places through participation in the "Secondary School Places Allocation System". They will proceed to receive six years of free secondary education.

With effect from the 2008/09 school year, the Government provides full subvention for full-time courses run by the Vocational Training Council for Secondary 3 leavers to offer an alternative free avenue for senior secondary students outside mainstream education.



New Academic Structure

To meet the needs of the 21st Century, the New Academic Structure (NAS) has been implemented at Secondary 4 since September 2009, under which all students have the opportunity to receive three years of junior secondary and three years of senior secondary education.

Under the NAS, senior secondary students are required to take 4 core subjects, i.e. Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics and Liberal Studies. In addition, they can choose 2 or 3 subjects from 20 New Senior Secondary (NSS) elective subjects, a range of Applied Learning subjects or 6 other language subjects according to their interests. Apart from core subjects and elective subjects, students are required to acquire Other Learning Experiences, including Moral and Civic Education, Community Service, Career-related Experiences, Aesthetic Development and Physical Development, for facilitating their whole-person development.

Upon completion of the three-year senior secondary education, students will sit for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination and choose different pathways in the light of their interests and abilities to fully stretch their potentials.



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Types of School

At present, all curricula offered in Hong Kong's primary and secondary schools are prepared by the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) (an advisory body established by the Government) and recommended for use in schools by EDB. Primary and secondary schools offering curricula prepared by the CDC can be divided into four main types:

- Government schools which are operated by EDB;
- Aided schools which are subvented by EDB but run by school sponsoring bodies;
- Direct Subsidy Scheme schools which have greater flexibility in curriculum design and charging of tuition fees; and
- Some private schools.

International schools, and some of the Direct Subsidy Scheme schools and private schools provide students with other curricula.

International schools provide non-local curricula, mainly for children of expatriates residing in Hong Kong and returnees' children. Students of international schools do not sit for local public examinations. At present, there are 48 international schools and 1 international special school (including 15 schools operated by the English Schools Foundation) providing a wide range of curricula including the American, Australian, British, Canadian, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Singaporean and the International Baccalaureate programme. Different mediums of instruction are used to cope with the curricula offered, including English, French, German, Korean and Japanese.

Universal Basic Education

EDB provides nine-year free universal basic education to children aged between 6 and 15. Parents have the prime responsibility to ensure that their children of the above age range attend schools regularly.

Starting from the 2008/09 school year, the Government has extended free education to





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include senior secondary education provided by public sector secondary schools.

Section 74, Education Ordinance, Cap. 279 empowers the Permanent Secretary for Education to issue attendance orders to parents who fail to send their children to school without reasonable excuses. Section 78 stipulates that any parent who without reasonable excuse fails to comply with an attendance order shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine at level 3 and to imprisonment for 3 months on conviction.

Medium of Instruction



In Hong Kong, English language is taught as a major subject in both primary and secondary schools. Most government and aided primary schools adopt mother tongue as the medium of instruction (MOI) in the teaching of subjects other than the subject of English Language. Whereas in secondary schools, under the fine-tuned MOI arrangements implemented from Secondary 1 since the

2010/11 school year, schools are allowed the flexibility to adopt school-based MOI arrangements with regard to their individual school circumstances. Secondary schools' MOI arrangements have become diversified with appropriate teaching strategies devised to address students' learning needs.

Gifted Education

The mission of gifted education by EDB is to provide support to schools, so that schools can fully explore and develop the potential of gifted students systematically and strategically by providing them with appropriate education opportunities. A three-tier operation mode is adopted in implementing gifted education in Hong Kong, including whole-class (school-based), pull-out (school-based) and off-site support. These supports enable students to fully develop their potential in a flexible teaching and learning environment.

There are three types of gifted education programmes: extension (more depth), enrichment (more breadth), and acceleration (faster pace). These programmes encompass the enhancement of the generic skills (general enrichment) and catering for the learning needs in specific Key Learning Areas/domains (subject/domain focused). The content can be extended or compacted and tailor-made according to the abilities, characteristics and needs of the gifted students.





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Special Education



There are currently 60 aided special schools in Hong Kong which are subvented by EDB and operated by school sponsoring bodies. They provide places for children with visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical disability, intellectual disability, or severe emotional and behavioural difficulties, and children hospitalised for a period of time.

Meanwhile, EDB implements integrated education by providing additional resources, teacher training and professional support to ordinary schools to help them cater for students with special educational needs. Schools are encouraged to adopt the Whole School Approach to cater for the students' needs.

Higher and post-secondary education

After completing the new senior secondary curriculum, eligible students may further pursue post-secondary programmes at bachelor degree and sub-degree level offered by publicly-funded and self-financing post-secondary institutions. Details are available at the Joint University Programmes Admissions System website (<http://www.jupas.edu.hk>) and Information Portal for Accredited Post-secondary Programmes (<http://www.ipass.gov.hk>).



Vocational education and other study opportunities

After completing the new senior secondary curriculum, students may choose to study the "Higher Diploma", "Foundation Diploma" (Level 3), or "Diploma in Vocational Education" programmes provided by the member institutions of the Vocational Training Council (VTC), namely the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education, the Hong Kong Design Institute and the Youth College. They may also study the industry-specific vocational education and training courses provided by the Hospitality Industry Training and Development Centre, the Chinese Cuisine Training Institute, the Maritime Services Training Institute and Pro-Act Training and Development Centres of VTC.

Other study opportunities "Ethnic Minority Project" run by VTC and "Youth Pre-employment Training Programme" and "Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme" run by the Labour Department, etc.

