



The British
Chamber of Commerce
in Hong Kong
香港英商會

Mr Yeung Yun-hung, Kevin, JP
Secretary for Education
The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
11/F, East Wing, Central Government Offices
2 Tim Mei Avenue
Tamar
Hong Kong

25 February 2022

Dear Secretary Yeung,

The British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong would like to thank the EDB for meeting representatives from international schools on Wednesday February 23rd, to consider the disruptive effects of the Government's announcement to change the 2021/22 school calendar.

The Chamber welcomes the EDB's intention to re-open schools for in-person teaching during the week of April 18th. The Chamber supports the Government's request to use school premises as venues for the proposed mandatory universal testing scheme. The majority of schools have readily agreed to this request.

The Chamber was also delighted to hear that the EDB recognises that the needs of local schools and international schools differ greatly, particularly in respect to the school calendar and contractual arrangements regarding employment contracts.

The international schools have made it very clear that it would be extremely difficult and damaging to move the summer holidays to an earlier date, as has been suggested. There are several reasons for this:

1. Student Welfare

- International exams begin at the end of April. It is essential that students are fully prepared for these potentially life changing events. Requiring students to take their summer holiday with no online teaching support at this time would have a serious and damaging impact on their exam performance. Parents do not understand this requirement and consider it as unacceptable.
- Continuing to run online lessons, while not preferred to in-person classes, will keep students at home and help to contain "people flow in the community". This should reduce social contact and help contain the spread of the virus. The international schools are very well equipped to continue online lessons during the period when

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school premises are required for mandatory testing. I should also add that continuing to provide online learning also means providing continuity of established structure for students and means that schools can continue to support students during these challenging times.

2. Teacher Contractual Arrangements

- Teacher employment contracts are signed according to pre-published school year dates. Since resigning teachers will leave at the end of June, and replacing staff only arrive towards the end of August, schools will struggle to provide a full operation in July and August.
- Many international teachers have not been able to visit their homes for nearly 3 years. This year's summer holiday has been extended by many schools to last 2 months, allowing time for travelling and quarantine. Flights have been booked.
- Schools are legally obliged to honour all of these contracts.

3. School Refurbish Commitments

- Some schools look to upgrade facilities and have signed contracts regarding refurbishment of premises during July and August. Accordingly, it will be difficult to use the premises during that period.

With these considerations in mind, the British Chamber of Commerce respectively urges the EDB to support the international schools in their request to leave their current school calendar unchanged.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Burnett OBE
Chairman
The British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong

Cc Ms Priscilla To Kit-lai, JP, Deputy Secretary for Education
Mr David Graham, Executive Director, The British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong
Mr Mark Loasby, Chair of Education Committee, The British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong