

J. C. M. P.

5 Dec. 1979

Aid plea for caput schools

By AGNES CHEN

The Caput Schools Council yesterday appealed to the Government to continue its support of caput schools which refuse to be converted into aided schools.

The caput schools, run by private non-profit-making organisations, were asked in May to join a four-phased conversion programme to become aided schools, said the council's chairman, Mr Y.C. Au Yeung.

Under the White Paper on Senior Secondary and Tertiary Education, the Government proposed the re-classification of all existing schools into three sections: Government schools, schools financed under the Code of Aid and private schools operating without Government grants, Mr Au Yeung said.

Schools which have agreed to the conversion scheme will become aided schools in four years.

However, some 10 out of about 70 schools have not yet decided to join the programme and they have until May to give a definite answer.

Mr Au Yeung questioned whether the Government will continue to support those schools which do not agree to be converted.

"The Education Department explained that the caput schools will retain their present status for as long as the Government buys places from them," he said.

"The Government may stop the present per caput grant to these schools once it gets an adequate supply of seats for junior secondary education in Government and aided schools."

The amount of the per caput grant is fixed according to the number of students in

the junior secondary classes.

But Mr Au Yeung felt the Government will have to rely on bought seats from private schools in the coming few years.

He based his belief on a recent announcement by the Governor, Sir Murray MacLehose, who said:

"The provision of the planned number of senior secondary school places requires 130 schools, but financial constraints and geotechnical problems have delayed 12 of these schools and we will temporarily extend our reliance on bought places in private schools."

Referring to the four-phased conversion programme, Mr Au Yeung said the first phase was launched in September.

Those caput schools joining the scheme now get an improvement grant in addition to the Government's per caput grant for students studying from form one to three.

However the lack of money is still a problem for these schools. So is sufficient manpower.

"Fortunately, the Education Department has agreed to meet the council thrice annually to discuss and solve the problems," he added.

By September 1981, the per caput grant will include students from form four and form five students will enjoy similar benefits the following year, which is the year for final phase.

"By then, the caput schools will become aided schools and teachers from the former schools will have similar rights," he said.

Mr Au Yeung was speaking at a lunch meeting of the Rotary Club of Kowloon East.