

# Acoustic louvre system cuts out noise in school

By Pamela Ngai

A SCHOOL in Kwai Chung is no longer troubled by heavy traffic noise, thanks to an innovative acoustic louvre system which may be the solution to noise problems plaguing other schools as well.

The method would be recommended to the Education Department early next year after the experiment was completed, according to the Kwai Tsing District Board's working group which commissioned the project.

A member of the group, Mr Chow Sum, told *The Standard* that consultants from the Hong-kong Productivity Centre had come up with the innovative design to help schools troubled by heavy traffic noise.

The school's principal, Mr Raymond Lai, said when the windows were open, the normal noise level of 73 to 74 d(B)A was reduced to 62 d(B)A by the acoustic louvres.

"Both teachers and pupils are very satisfied with the system. They can now hear each other even with windows open," he

said.

Mr Lai said a noise level at 60 d(B)A was generally considered acceptable.

He said students using 24 classrooms facing Kwai Chung Road had long been troubled by traffic noise.

In normal circumstances, he said, the windows were open slightly for ventilation and teachers had to use microphones during lessons.

Mr Chow, who also heads the district board's Environmental Affairs Committee, said installing the system would be cheaper than using air-conditioners, both in terms of capital and operating costs.

Mr Lai said an earlier pilot noise-abatement scheme in the school using air-conditioners had also proved to be very satisfactory, but the cost of electricity to air-condition a single room was \$500 a month.

He added that since the louvres were installed in mid-March, no maintenance work had been necessary.

A senior consultant at the

Productivity Centre, Mr Lin Chaan-ming, said the study on the effectiveness of the system in reducing noise had been completed.

"We are now assessing its effects on the class by collecting the views of teachers and pupils. We want to find out their subjective feelings regarding light and ventilation," he said.

According to the Environmental Protection Department, a study done several years ago estimated that between 4,000 to 6,000 classrooms were troubled by traffic noise.

An acting principal environmental protection officer, Mr Simon Hewitt, said the Government intended to expand the school noise-abatement scheme to cover these schools.

"A set of abatement measures have been devised and they will be implemented step by step once funding is available," he said.

First priority had been given to schools troubled by aircraft noise because their problems were more serious, he said.

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