



# Changes to private school regulations in China

(Information as at September 2022)

China's private school landscape is changing. An advice document for **regulating compulsory education delivered by private schools** was issued by the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and State Council in May 2021;<sup>1</sup> and another document on **regulating public schools' participation in private education at compulsory education level**<sup>2</sup> was issued by the Chinese Ministry of Education and seven government bodies in August 2021. As a result, school sectors in many provinces and cities across China have undergone significant changes in the past year since these documents were published, and developments may have implications for some international providers delivering school education in China.

## *Public schools to withdraw from private operations*

Compulsory education (year 1-9) in China is funded by the central government and offered through public schools as well as private not-for-profit schools<sup>3</sup>. Some private schools, however, are set up by public schools or involve public schools in their operations and are referred to as “**Gōng Cān Mín**”. One of the key aims of the recent policy documents is to make sure that public schools remain the main provider for compulsory education in China, and this involves withdrawing public schools from *Gong Can Min*.

The August 2021 document covers three types of *Gong Can Min* operations, and the subsequent changes are shown below.

	Type of <i>Gong Can Min</i>	Changes according to August 2021 document
1	Private schools set up by public schools	Those operating at compulsory education level will become public schools.
2	Private schools set up by public schools in collaboration with public entities (governments, state-owned enterprises. etc)	Those operating at compulsory education level will become public schools.

3	Private schools set up by public schools in collaboration with private entities and private personnel	<p>Those operating at compulsory levels must satisfy a detailed vetting to demonstrate that the school can operate independently without the public school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the requirements are met, the school may either continue to operate as a private institution after the public school withdraws or seek negotiations to go public.</li> <li>• If it does not meet the requirements to operate independently, it could be closed or made public.</li> </ul>
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According to the August 2021 document, this change process should be completed by the end of 2023, therefore many local governments announced the initiation of the process, or the final decision, before the new semester which started in September 2022.

- On 30 May 2022, Beijing's Haidian district education authority announced<sup>4</sup> that ten private schools in the jurisdiction are subject to the change. As a result, seven of the ten schools will be converted into public schools starting from September 2022 and three will remain private. The change will affect around 10,000 students.
- Taiyuan City in Shanxi Province announced in July 2022 a similar decision to turn 11 of its 14 private schools public from September 2022.<sup>5</sup>
- Hohhot City of Inner Mongolia will turn five of its six private schools public and the remaining private school will suspend teaching at junior high school level, also starting from September.<sup>6</sup>
- Sichuan's Chengdu City announced in April 2022 that it would start the change process.<sup>7</sup>

Although the process is targeted at compulsory study levels, a change of this nature could in theory affect the entire school, including non-compulsory study levels such as senior high school (year 10-12), where the majority of international programs are offered. It remains uncertain what implications the transition of many schools from private to public will have for international curricula offered by, or foreign teachers<sup>8</sup> working at, affected schools given the increased scrutiny over foreign curricula and foreign teaching staff<sup>9</sup>.

### *Reduced number of private schools at compulsory level*

In order to ensure that public schools remain the main provider for compulsory education in China, the May 2021 document specifies that the government should "in theory" not approve the establishment of new private schools operating at compulsory education level and should strengthen supervision of private schools.

Following the release of the document, some provincial governments (including Hunan<sup>10</sup>, Jiangsu and Sichuan) have announced a reduction of the in-school student quota in private schools at compulsory education level to below 5% and that relevant provinces/regions will no longer approve the establishment of new private schools at compulsory education level. The cut to below 5% is an ambitious goal given the current proportion of students studying compulsory education courses at private schools nationwide are 10% for primary school and 14% for junior high<sup>11</sup>.

## Conclusion

In recent years, China has issued a number of high-level directives on the operation of compulsory education, with the main goal of making compulsory education accessible, affordable and strictly under the influence of the government. This includes increasing the proportion of public schools delivering compulsory education while restricting the growth of private schools. Official documents also suggest strengthened supervision over school education in China, which may impact international curricula including those outside compulsory education level.

Australian providers are advised to maintain close contact with Chinese partners and keep up to date with developments in school operations.

For further enquiries, please contact the [Education and Research Section](#) of the Australian Embassy in Beijing.

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<sup>1</sup> People's Republic of China, Nanxian Government, “中共中央办公厅 国务院办公厅印发《关于规范民办义务教育发展的意见》的通知 (The General Office of the CPC Central Committee and The State Council issues circular on the Opinions on Standardising the Development of Non-public Compulsory Education (non-official translation))”, 16 May 2021, [http://www.nanxian.gov.cn/jc\\_nx/187/213/content\\_11540.html#:~:text=%E5%AF%B9%E4%B8%8D%E6%8C%89%E5%9B%BD%E5%AE%B6%E8%A7%84%E5%AE%9A,%E4%BD%93%E7%BE%8E%E5%8A%B3%E5%85%A8%E9%9D%A2%E5%8F%91%E5%B1%95%E3%80%82](http://www.nanxian.gov.cn/jc_nx/187/213/content_11540.html#:~:text=%E5%AF%B9%E4%B8%8D%E6%8C%89%E5%9B%BD%E5%AE%B6%E8%A7%84%E5%AE%9A,%E4%BD%93%E7%BE%8E%E5%8A%B3%E5%85%A8%E9%9D%A2%E5%8F%91%E5%B1%95%E3%80%82)

<sup>2</sup> People's Republic of China, the State Council, “教育部等八部门关于规范公办学校举办或者参与举办民办义务教育学校的通知 (Notice of the Ministry of Education and seven other departments on standardising the establishment or participation of public schools in running private compulsory education schools (non-official translation))”, 2021. [http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2021-08/25/content\\_5633199.htm](http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2021-08/25/content_5633199.htm)

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that Year 1-9 is also offered at “Schools for Children of Foreign Personnel” in China. There are around 100 of these schools in China, which are strictly for the children of foreign personnel. These schools may provide any foreign curriculum at all levels of education and are governed by a separate law, and therefore are not discussed in this policy update.

<sup>4</sup> WeChat, Haidian Education, “新学期，海淀这些学校将迎来新变化！（New changes are coming to these Haidian schools for the new semester!）”, 30 May 2022, <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/83KLGOherIZ17RbYTIPkAA>

<sup>5</sup> Sohu. “公参民学校调整，太原市民办中小学报名工作呈现新情况 (Restructuring of Gong Can Min, new developments for private primary and secondary school registration in Taiyuan City)”, 19 July 2022, [http://www.sohu.com/a/569058508\\_121186586](http://www.sohu.com/a/569058508_121186586)

<sup>6</sup> Xinhua News. “呼和浩特6所“公参民”学校整改 (Six Gong Can Min schools in Hohhot asked to change )”, 21 June 2022, [http://nmg.news.cn/xwzx/2022-06/21/c\\_1128762336.htm](http://nmg.news.cn/xwzx/2022-06/21/c_1128762336.htm)

<sup>7</sup> People's Republic of China, Chengdu City Government, “关于印发《成都市“公参民”学校转设公办学校工作指南》的通知 (Notice on the Issuance of the Guidelines for the Transfer of Gong Can Min schools to public schools in Chengdu(non-official translation))”, 13 April 2022, <http://gk.chengdu.gov.cn/govInfo/detail.action?id=137108&tn=6>

<sup>8</sup> See our policy update on the *Measures for the Employment and Management of Foreign Teachers (Draft for Comment)*, released by the Chinese Ministries of Education, Science and Technology, Public Security, and Foreign Affairs in July 2020, <https://www.dese.gov.au/international-education-engagement/resources/china-propose-draft-regulation-employment-and-management-foreign-teachers-country>

<sup>9</sup> People's Republic of China, Ministry of Education, “教育部：义务教育学校不得使用境外教材 (Ministry of Education: Compulsory education schools must not use teaching materials from abroad)”, 8 January 2020. [http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb\\_xwfb/xw\\_zt/moe\\_357/jyzt\\_2020n/2020\\_zt04/baodao/202004/t20200409\\_441846.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/xw_zt/moe_357/jyzt_2020n/2020_zt04/baodao/202004/t20200409_441846.html)

<sup>10</sup> Caixin, “湖南等地调减民办义务教育在校生规模不再审批新校 (Hunan and other regions reduce the size of private schools offering compulsory education and stop approving new ones)”, 29 June 2022, <https://www.caixin.com/2021-06-29/101733025.html>

<sup>11</sup> People's Republic of China, Ministry of Education, “各级各类民办教育学生情况 (Number of Students of Non-government Education by Type and Level)”, 2020, [http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb\\_sjzl/moe\\_560/2020/quanguo/202108/t20210831\\_556361.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_sjzl/moe_560/2020/quanguo/202108/t20210831_556361.html)