

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL OPEN HOUSES

Student Care Centres

1. Do schools prioritise children from less advantaged backgrounds for admission?

Yes, a key objective of MOE's setting up school-based SCCs is to provide a safe and nurturing environment for students, especially for those who lack such a home environment after school hours. Schools, therefore, work closely with operators to ensure that SCC places are available for students who can benefit most from this support. If there is a capacity constraint, places will be prioritised for these students.

Aligned to this objective, we also ensure affordability for children from low-income families. Eligible¹ children receive the Student Care Financial Assistance (SCFA), a scheme administered by MSF. Children who are eligible under the scheme can receive up to 98% subsidy of the monthly fees. This means that some students may only need to pay as little as \$5 per month after subsidy.

2. Given parents' preference for school-based SCCs over those in community spaces, is MOE intending to eventually provide enough places in schools? If so, when will this be achieved?

MOE has more than doubled the number of school-based SCCs as well as enrolled students in the last four years. MOE also has plans to roll out SCCs to all primary schools by end-2020. However, this must be done at a pace that does not compromise the quality of the student care service provided, nor the safety of the students.

Schools that do not have a school-based SCC will continue to work closely with community-based SCCs in their neighbourhood. MOE will work with schools to develop more school-based SCCs based on (i) the profile of students and demand for SCCs and (ii) whether the school is currently served by a community-based SCC. For schools that do not have a school-based SCC, students and parents may wish to consider SCCs in community spaces in the vicinity of their school.

¹ To be eligible, a student has to be a SC/PR and both his parents must be working.

Everyday Responsibilities

1. Why has MOE introduced everyday cleaning involving all students? How is this aligned to the Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) programme in schools? What are the benefits of everyday cleaning?

The goal of Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) is to inculcate values and build competencies in our students to develop them to be good individuals and useful citizens. Through exploring the three big ideas of Identity, Relationships and Choices, our students learn to be responsible to family and community; and understand their roles in shaping the future of our nation.

On matters such as cleanliness, students would need to exercise personal and social responsibility, be it at home, in school or in the wider community. This effort to emphasise everyday responsibilities in schools would allow students to put their values in action, and support from parents and community partners would help students live out the value of responsibility in various aspects of their lives.

Research has shown that engaging youths in household chores can increase their self-management skills, self-competence, and reduce their stress levels. Another common effect is an increase in relationship management skills as children learn pro-social behaviours such as being helpful, responsible and obedient.

We also encourage parents to reinforce students' learning through some of the CCE Family Time activities where they can discuss ways that their child can show responsibility at home through simple actions like helping to clean the house.

PSLE

- The PSLE scoring and S1 posting changes aim to reduce over-emphasis on academic results and encourage parents and students to select schools that are a good fit with the child's strengths and interests.
- The specific changes, which will be implemented from the 2021 PSLE cohort, are:
 - Reducing fine differentiation of students by replacing subject T-scores with Achievement Levels (ALs) which correspond each to a range of raw marks. Students who perform similarly within the range will be grouped in the same AL. A student's overall PSLE Score will be the sum of the ALs scored in all four subjects.
 - Recognising students' own level of achievement, instead of comparing them with their peers. Students will be graded based on their individual performance in the subjects, regardless of how their peers have done.
 - Giving more weight to choice order of schools. S1 posting will continue to be based on academic merit (i.e. PSLE scores) first. However the choice order in which a student lists the secondary schools will be a new tie-breaker after citizenship. All other things being equal, between two students with the same PSLE score, and if both are Singapore Citizens, the student who has listed the school higher in his/her order of preference will have priority for a place in that school. This encourages families to choose judiciously, and consider factors beyond a school's cut-off point, such as the school culture, ethos and programmes.

1. Would pupils who are exempted from offering Mother Tongue Language at PSLE be at a disadvantage as compared to those who offer the subject at PSLE?

These pupils' PSLE aggregate scores would be adjusted so that they are neither disadvantaged nor advantaged.

Tuition

1. Will my child need tuition?

Our schools currently provide adequate time and attention to students to learn their academic subjects fully. Teachers give remedial classes to those who need help with their school work.

MOE has put in place comprehensive structures and programmes to meet the different learning needs of students, focusing on their engagement and motivation, and building up their foundations, rather than on examinations alone.

- i. MOE has a comprehensive suite of levelling up programmes in literacy and numeracy from pre-school to secondary school, to ensure any student who needs additional help will get it (e.g. Learning Support Programme² (LSP), Learning Support Programme for Mathematics³ (LSM), SSS (STELLAR Supplementary Programme), etc). This is on top of the remedial and supplementary classes that our teachers already provide for our students who need help.

As parents, we should be mindful that our expectations influence our children's learning experiences and stress levels.

Excessive tuition, or tuition where it is not needed, would be detrimental to the child – it detracts from holistic education and independent learning. Too much tuition could also result in burnout in students and their joy of learning being diminished. This is detrimental as their learning journeys are marathons for life, and not sprints.

There is a significant opportunity cost in private tuition, particularly for students who do not have a real need for additional out-of-school academic support. These students would be better off spending the time to gain new experiences, broaden their interests and deepen their 21st Century Competencies. Life skills matter more in the long haul, not just exam grades. We should prepare our students for the test of life, not a life of tests.

² The LSP is a specialised early intervention programme aimed at providing learning support to pupils who enter Primary 1 with weak English language and literacy skills. Pupils are identified for LSP through a systematic screening process carried out at the beginning of Primary 1. The objective of the LSP is to equip pupils with basic literacy skills so that they could access learning in the regular classroom. The LSP is implemented by qualified teachers appointed by their schools to be Learning Support Coordinators (LSCs). LSCs are given additional training by MOE HQ that equips them with specialised knowledge and skills to implement the programme. Pupils are supported daily for half an hour a day in groups of 8 to 10 pupils. Support continues in Primary 2 for pupils who need it.

³ Learning Support for Mathematics (LSM) is an early intervention effort aimed at providing additional support to pupils who do not have foundational numeracy skills and knowledge to access the Primary 1 Maths curriculum. Pupils were identified for the intervention through a screening process carried out at the beginning of Primary 1. They were supported by a LSM Teacher for 4–8 periods a week. Starting in 2006, all schools were provided with additional teacher posts, which are allocated according to the needs of each school. Training and teaching resources were provided for LSM teachers in supporting their LSM pupils.

There are many examples of well-rounded students who excel at school without tuition, by paying attention in class, consulting teachers and working consistently throughout the year and could afford time (freed up from not having tuition) to broaden their interests, deepen valuable life skills and pursue their passion.