



Ministry of Education
SINGAPORE

USER GUIDE

For the SPED School Application Form

This User Guide aims to provide guidance to parents, professionals and referring agencies supporting applicants who are applying to SPED schools and who are not currently enrolled in a mainstream school. It is only relevant for the following categories of applicants:

- Preschool applicants
- Returning Singaporeans
- PRs / International Students not currently enrolled in mainstream school
- Applicants who have been receiving homeschooling

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1. Background

Under the Compulsory Education (CE) Act, all Singapore Citizens born after 1 January 1996 and living in Singapore must attend a national primary school unless an exemption is granted. With effect from 2019, all Singapore citizens with moderate-to-severe Special Educational Needs (SEN) born after 1 January 2012 are also liable for compulsory education. Parents will be able to fulfil their CE obligations by enrolling their child in a government-funded special education (SPED) school and ensuring that they complete their primary education there.

To facilitate parents' application to SPED schools, MOE has put in place a common SPED application form which all the SPED schools use. As part of the nationwide efforts to digitalise processes, MOE has created a digitised SPED application form which can be accessed at <https://go.gov.sg/spedschoolapplicationform>.

For children who are currently enrolled in a mainstream school, parents should approach their mainstream school principal to apply for a transfer to a SPED school. The digitised SPED application form at the link above is not applicable to children currently enrolled in a mainstream school.

This booklet aims to guide referring agencies, professionals and parents on the application process and how to complete the SPED School Application form.

2. Psycho-educational Assessment for Students with SEN

This User Guide should be used in conjunction with the Professional Practice Guidelines (PPG) on the Psycho-educational Assessment and Placement of Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN). In 2011, MOE, in collaboration with the Department of Child Development (KK Women's and Children's Hospital), the Department of Paediatrics (National University Hospital), the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (Institute of Mental Health) and SPED schools, published the first edition of the Professional Practice Guidelines (PPG). The PPG was revised in 2018 and includes best practices and considerations for professionals when conducting assessments for students with SEN. The revised PPG is available at the following website or you may scan the QR code below.

<https://go.gov.sg/2018ppg>



<https://go.gov.sg/2018ppg>

2. Psycho-educational Assessment for Students with SEN

Prior to making a referral to SPED schools, professionals are strongly encouraged to refer to the Guidelines when conducting the assessment for SEN, in particular, the following chapters:

- Chapter 2: Psycho-educational Assessment Data
 - Guidelines on sources of assessment data; types and areas of assessment; who should conduct the assessments; and factors to consider when selecting and using assessment measures.

- Chapter 3: Assessment for Specific Purposes
 - Key considerations to ascertain appropriate educational

- Chapter 4: Assessment Considerations for Specific Populations
 - Assessment considerations for commonly occurring disabilities seen among students in Singapore.

- Chapter 5: Framework and Pathways for Educational Placement of Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN)
 - Overview of the categories of SEN and the support provisions available, as well as the pathways for educational placement of students with SEN in Singapore

3.1 Application Process

Guiding Parents in Making Informed Choices for Preferred SPED schools

The SPED School Application Form allows parents to state their three preferred SPED schools in a single application, thus removing the need for multiple applications to different schools. Parents and referring agencies complete only one set of application form and send it to their first choice SPED school. The application form and supporting documents will be routed to other SPED schools for consideration in the event that the first choice school is unable to offer the child a place.

In cases where parents' first choice SPED school is unable to offer the child a place due to unsuitability of its curriculum for his / her profile, the SPED school will seek advice from the Multi-Agency Advisory Panel (MAAP) to recommend an alternative SPED school that can meet the student's learning needs. The MAAP comprises specialists and professionals from the MOE, government-funded hospitals (KKH, NUH and IMH), Community Psychology Hub and government-funded SPED schools.

In cases where the first choice SPED school is a suitable profile but does not have vacancies, the SPED school will refer applicants to MOE for Alternative Placement in another suitable SPED school.

3.2 Roles of Referring Agencies

Referring agencies play a critical role in guiding parents and taking the lead in the application process. Referring agencies include:

- SPED schools – for students enrolled in SPED schools;
- Early Intervention Programme for Infants & Children (EIPIC) Centres – for students enrolled in EIPIC centres;
- Hospitals – for children who are not in the above settings e.g. mainstream kindergartens;
- Others (e.g. social workers and counsellors from Social Service Agencies (SSAs))

(Note: Some parents may choose to make a self-referral, with advice from private professionals.)

For students who are already enrolled in a mainstream school or specialised school and seeking a transfer to a SPED school, the transfer will be facilitated by their current school and MOE. SPED schools will not accept direct applications from parents, legal guardians, private professionals or hospitals.

Referring agencies play **three key roles**:



Guide



Submit



Monitor

3.2 Roles of Referring Agencies

Role 1: To **guide** parents in the application process.



Guide

Referring agencies should provide **guidance to parents for the following:**

- **Completion of the SPED School Application Form**

Referring agencies may be required to explain or translate certain terms to parents who are not fluent in the English Language. For parents who have difficulty completing Section I of the SPED School Application Form independently, referring agencies could complete the section on their behalf based on information provided by the parents.

- **Completion of all four sections of the SPED School Application by the respective parties**

Referring agencies may have to advise parents to have Section III and Section IV of the SPED School Application Form completed by a medical doctor and qualified psychologist respectively.

- **Selection of suitable SPED school(s)**

Referring agencies should ensure that parents have been given adequate information about their child's educational options to enable them to make informed decisions about the appropriate educational placement. Referring agencies should guide parents in listing their three choices of suitable SPED schools based on the recommendations by the psychologist (in Section IV of the SPED School Application Form). In addition, information on the list of SPED schools for application based on the child's primary diagnosed condition can be found at <https://www.moe.gov.sg/special-educational-needs/educational-journey/>.

3.2 Roles of Referring Agencies

Role 2: To **submit** the SPED School Application Form.



Upon ensuring that all sections of the SPED School Application Form have been completed, referring agencies should collate the application form together with all supporting documents, i.e. the child's and parents' identification documents, child's learning records and work samples, and past medical reports, if any. E-copies of these supporting documents will have to be uploaded on the digitised application form.

The complete documentation will then be submitted online at <https://go.gov.sg/spedschoolapplicationform>. The application will be forwarded to the first choice SPED school for processing. Only one application form should be submitted and there should not be multiple applications to more than one SPED school.

Referring agencies will be able to receive a copy of the submitted form if a valid email address is provided. Parents will also receive a copy for their reference.

3.2 Roles of Referring Agencies

Role 3: To **monitor** the status of the application.



Monitor

After the SPED Application Form has been submitted, referring agencies should monitor and keep parents informed of the status of the application.

If the child has been accepted by the first choice SPED school, the parents and referring agencies will be informed by the SPED school accordingly.

If the first choice SPED school is unable to offer the child a place due to unsuitability of its curriculum for him/ her, or the unavailability of suitable vacancy, the application form will be forwarded by the SPED school to MOE for recommendation of alternative SPED school(s). If needed, MOE will consult MAAP for recommendation of a suitable alternative SPED school that can meet the child's needs. The recommendation of a suitable alternative SPED school will be communicated to the parents and referring agency by the first choice SPED school. Parents can be assured that the application form and its accompanying documents submitted by parents and referring agency will be forwarded to the alternative SPED school. In this way, additional applications are not required.

4. Guide to Completing the SPED School Application Form

This chapter includes:

- An **overview** of the SPED School Application Form and documentation requirements; and
- A **section-by-section guide** on how to complete the SPED School Application Form, including explanations of key terms used.

A soft copy of the SPED School Application Form can be downloaded from:

<p>https://go.gov.sg/spedapplication</p>	 <p>https://go.gov.sg/spedapplication</p>
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4.1 Overview of Application Form and Documentation Requirements

The SPED School Application Form consists of four Sections (I to IV).

All sections must be completed, together with all supporting documents. Applications will only be processed when ALL of the following documents are completed and received by the SPED schools:

- Original** Special Education (SPED) School Application Form (consists of Sections I to IV with supporting documents)
- Photocopy of Student's Identification:
 - For Singapore Citizens: Birth Certificate
 - For Singapore Permanent Residents: Singapore Permanent Residents Re-entry Document
 - For International Students: Student Pass (Dependant Pass)
 - Deed Poll (Legal document required if the child has changed his/her name)
- Photocopy of Parents'/Guardian's Identification:
 - For Singapore Citizens and PRs: NRIC/Passport
 - For International Students: Passport **AND** Employment Pass (if applicable)
- Photocopy of divorce and/or custody documents (if applicable)
- Photocopy of Certificate of Legal Guardianship (if applicable for subsection C)
- Report book results / Progress reports
- Workplace Literacy and Numeracy scores (if applicable)

4.1 Overview of Application Form and Documentation Requirements

Section I: To be completed by referring agency and parents

- A. Declaration by Parent/Guardian
- B. Child's information
- C. Family's information
- D. Parent Report

Section II: School Report – To be completed by a teacher

Section III: Medical Report – To be completed by a medical doctor

Section IV: Psychological Report – To be completed by a psychologist

Section I: A – D

Section I should be *jointly* completed by the referring agency and parents. In the event that parents have difficulty completing this section, personnel from the referring agency, e.g. Social Worker, Teacher or School Personnel, could complete the form based on information provided by the parents.

Section I consists of the four sub-sections (A to D) as detailed below:

A. DECLARATION BY PARENT / GUARDIAN

The main objectives of this sub-section are to record: (i) the parents'/guardians' written informed consent for the child to be referred to SPED schools; and (ii) the parents'/guardians' preferred choices of SPED schools. Referring agencies should ensure that parents have been given adequate information about their child's educational options and have made an informed decision. Parents and referring agencies should also refer to <https://www.moe.gov.sg/special-educational-needs/educational-journey/> for more information and understanding of SPED schools and their programmes and follow the procedures listed in <https://www.moe.gov.sg/special-educational-needs/apply>.

In listing their choice of SPED schools, parents should be guided by the recommendations of suitably qualified professionals, e.g. registered clinical or educational psychologists. Parents are required to indicate all three SPED school choices which offer programmes for their child's primary diagnosed condition.

B. CHILD INFORMATION (B1, B2, B3 & B4)

B1 – IDENTIFYING INFORMATION:

Information reflected in B1 should correspond with the child's particulars in the photocopies of their citizenship status documents, e.g. birth certificate.

B2 – ALTERNATIVE LIVING ARRANGEMENTS (*if applicable*):

Complete B2 only if the child is not living with his/her parents.

B3 – CHILD’S EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION

The education institution(s) the child is currently enrolled in should be listed in sub-section B3. If the child is not enrolled in any formal educational settings (e.g. home-schooling, home-based therapy), please indicate this under the heading ‘Others’.

B4 – MEDICAL AND ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS’ INVOLVEMENT

Current involvement by medical and/or allied health professionals should be listed in the table in sub-section B4. This information will help SPED schools understand the range of services and interventions that the child is currently receiving. SPED schools can contact the relevant professionals directly if they require further information.

If available, please provide a copy of the relevant reports from the professionals listed in this section.

C. FAMILY INFORMATION (C1, C2, C3 & C4)

Information in this sub-section is needed for the purpose of registration after the child has been accepted by the SPED school. The information will also be used to ascertain if there is a need for a follow-up interview to assess the family’s need for financial assistance or other forms of social support. As far as possible, please ensure that the information provided in this section is up to date.

D. PARENT REPORT

This section is for parents to provide information about their child. Referring agencies should assist parents in completing this section if necessary. The information will help the

SPED school better understand the child's strengths and needs and how to keep the child safe.

Section II: School Report

This section should be completed by a teacher who is most familiar with the educational needs of the child, such as the child's main teacher in the current preschool or early intervention centre. This section could also be completed together with other personnel who have worked with the child (e.g. Early Interventionist). The purpose of Section II is to provide the SPED school with comprehensive information about the child's behaviour in teaching and learning contexts.

For children who have not attended any preschool or EI centres, this section could be completed by a therapist or clinician who has worked directly with the child.

Section II consists of two sub-sections, as detailed below:

NEEDS INVENTORY:

For all items in this section, the teacher is required to:

- Tick the most appropriate options that best describe the student's functioning as observed in teaching and learning contexts, e.g. classroom, group/individual therapy sessions. For items that require the teacher to make a judgment about the extent of delay in functioning, the teacher should compare his/her observations of the student's skills with that of the student's same-aged peers.
- Elaborate on the child's skills and difficulties by providing examples or evidence to support the choice of ticked box(es). For example, for item 2 on literacy skills, the teacher can elaborate by providing details such as the child's reading age and listing examples of words that the child can read independently.

- Provide brief descriptions of the support strategies that have benefited the student. Examples of these support strategies could include:
 - Skills training that aims to reinforce or guide the student in his/her area of learning need, e.g. paired reading with parent volunteer or school staff, social skills training with therapists or school staff, individual or group therapy work.
 - Classroom accommodations that aim to create a more conducive learning environment for the student, such as, provision of differentiated work, materials and modes of instruction, preferential seating arrangements, use of visual schedules, and provision of extra time to complete written tasks and during tests.

Please note that items 8 to 10 are only applicable to students aged 17 years or older. For item 9 on 'Attendance and punctuality in the last 12 months', attendance and punctuality rates should be calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Attendance (\%)} = \frac{\text{Number of days where the student is present}}{\text{Total number of school days in the school term}} \times 100\%$$

$$\text{Punctuality (\%)} = \frac{\text{Number of days where the student is punctual}}{\text{Total number of school days in the school term}} \times 100\%$$

BEHAVIOURS IN GROUP LEARNING CONTEXTS, E.G. PRESCHOOL, EI CENTRES, CLASSROOM

In this sub-section, the teacher should report his/her qualitative observations of the student's behaviour in classroom/school contexts. The information will be used to identify additional support that the student may require in future. Teachers should base their feedback largely on the student's general day-to-day behaviour. When describing specific problem behaviours (if any), teachers should provide a clear indication of how often these behaviours occur and the extent to which they impact the child's ability to function in a group learning setting.

Section III: Medical Report

For most children, Section III should be completed by a Medical Specialist or General Practitioner (e.g. family doctor). However, if the child has been diagnosed with hearing or visual impairments, this section should be completed by a medical specialist, such as an ophthalmologist or Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT) specialist. A list of these specialists can be found at the MOH Specialists Accreditation Board website as listed below: <https://www.healthprofessionals.gov.sg/sab/>.

Section IV: Psychological Report

This section must be completed by a qualified psychologist. Parents who have chosen to obtain the psychological report from a private psychologist must ensure that the clinical or educational psychologist is registered with the Singapore Register of Psychologists (SRP). A list of the psychologists in SRP is available here (<https://singaporepsychologicalsociety.org/members-directory/>). Please refer to the first part of Chapter 4 for the link and QR code to the soft copy of the SPED Application form. This version would allow psychologists more space to provide comments and details of assessment findings, if required.

The psychologist should refer to the “Professional Practice Guidelines (PPG) for the Psycho-educational Assessment & Placement of Students with Special Educational Needs” published by MOE (2018) when completing this section. Copies of this Professional Practice Guidelines have been distributed to all SPED schools, government hospitals, relevant SSAs, as well as to members of the SRP. Please refer to page 3 for the link and QR code to the soft copy of the PPG.

The aim of Section IV is to provide SPED schools with a comprehensive analysis of the child’s psycho-educational needs. Evidence can be drawn from multiple sources, including the psychologist’s direct interviews, observations and assessments, results of

standardised psycho-educational testing, teachers' and caregivers' views, and reports from other professionals who have worked with the child. Based on the analyses and triangulation of all the available evidence, the psychologist would provide his or her diagnosis of the child's special educational needs, and professional recommendations about the type of SPED school that would best meet the child's learning needs.

- During the assessment of the child's psycho-educational functioning, the following should be kept in mind: When using psychometric tests, such as IQ tests, standardised tests of literacy or numeracy, tests of attention and/or other executive functions, please ensure that the names of individual tests are clearly and accurately indicated, and all technical information (including all sub-test scores) are included as appendices. Where available, professionals should use updated tests that have been validated for the local Singapore population, e.g. Singapore Ability Scales (information on the SAS is available at <https://www.singaporeabilityscales.sg/>).
- When reporting evidence from past assessment reports or reports from other allied health professionals, a copy of the original report should be included as an appendix.

Directions for each of the sub-sections are as follows:

CHILD'S PARTICULARS:

Please ensure details are accurate and consistent with B1 – 'Identifying Information' of Section I.

DIAGNOSTIC INFORMATION (*attach supporting documents, if any*):

For children with dual diagnoses of Autism Spectrum Disorder and Intellectual Disability, a separate Diagnostic Report stating the diagnosis of ASD should also be submitted as a supporting document.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Please provide details of relevant information about the child's medical history, past assessments or family background in this section.

TEST BEHAVIOUR

Please list all the dates of assessments conducted to ensure that the findings reflect the child's current level of functioning, i.e. no more than two years from the date of application. Please provide qualitative descriptions of the child's behaviour during these testing sessions that have implications for the interpretation of the tests results, e.g. the child's level of engagement and compliance during testing, reactions to challenges, and understanding of instructions and language used. Any accommodations and adaptations to the standardised administration protocol should also be documented. If any of the tests were discontinued, please provide your reasons for doing so.

COGNITIVE FUNCTIONING

This section aims to provide a summative conclusion of the psychologist's assessment about the child's cognitive functioning. Cognitive functioning refers to the intellectual processes by which the child becomes aware of, perceives, or comprehends ideas. It involves aspects of perception, thinking, reasoning and memory.

Based on the evidence presented, the psychologist's conclusion about the severity of cognitive impairments should be clearly stated by ticking the relevant check boxes and elaborating in the space provided. The psychologist's conclusion should be based on a triangulation of evidence from standardised testing as well as other sources of information, e.g. observations, work samples, parent's report. To ensure a shared understanding of the terms used, please refer to the following operational definitions, extracted from Chapter 5 of the Professional Practice Guidelines:

- 'Adequate functioning' is indicated by standard scores that are within two standard deviations from the mean.
- 'Mild cognitive impairment' is indicated by standard scores that are more than two standard deviations below the mean.
- 'Moderate to severe cognitive impairment' is indicated by standard scores that are more than three standard deviations below the mean.

When standardised tests are used, please indicate the test used, and include all technical information (including all sub-tests scores), which can be appended to Section IV – Psychological Report.

To enable SPED schools to better understand the child's cognitive profile and gauge his/her ability to access the curriculum in the different SPED schools, the psychologist's evaluation of the child's cognitive abilities in the verbal and non-verbal domains are required. As far as possible, the psychologist should use tests of cognitive abilities that have been standardised and validated for the local Singapore population e.g. Singapore Ability scales (SAS).

ADAPTIVE FUNCTIONING

Adaptive functioning is an umbrella term referring to a range of skills which affects the child's ability to cope with everyday demands. Evaluations of three aspects of adaptive functioning are required:

- Communication skills refer to the child's ability to listen, understand and attend to messages, follow instructions, use interactive speech and express his/her ideas.
- Daily Living skills refer to aspects of the child's self-care, home living, motor, self-direction, safety, health and leisure skills.
- Socialisation skills refer to the child's ability to respond to others, express and recognise emotions, use social communication, maintain friendships and recognise social cues.

Based on the evidence presented, the psychologist's conclusion about the severity of deficits in adaptive skills should be clearly stated. To ensure a shared understanding of the terms used, please refer to the following operational definitions, extracted from Chapter 5 of the Professional Practice Guidelines:

- 'Adequate adaptive functioning' is indicated by standard scores that are within two standard deviations from the mean.

- 'Mild deficit in adaptive functioning' is indicated by standard scores that are more than two standard deviations below the mean.
- 'Moderate to severe deficit in adaptive functioning is indicated by standard scores that are more than three standard deviations below the mean.

Examples of commonly used standardised tests of adaptive functioning are:

- Adaptive Behaviour Checklist – Teacher's Version (ABC)
- Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales – Third Edition (Vineland-3)
- Adaptive Behavior Assessment System – Third Edition (ABAS-3)

LITERACY AND NUMERACY SKILLS

Literacy skills refer to skills necessary for reading and writing. They include the awareness of relationship between letters and sounds, vocabulary, spelling and reading comprehension skills. Numeracy skills refer to the ability to apply numerical concepts and consist of comprehending fundamental mathematics like addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

An example of a standardised literacy and numeracy test that has been validated for the local population are:

- Word Reading and Spelling Subtests of the Singapore Ability Scales – Achievement Scale (SAS)

To ensure a shared understanding of the terms used, please refer to the following operational definitions, extracted from Chapter 5 of the Professional Practice Guidelines:

- 'Adequate literacy and numeracy skills' is indicated by standard scores that are within two standard deviations from the mean.
- 'Mild deficit in literacy and numeracy skills' is indicated by standard scores that are more than two standard deviations below the mean.
- 'Moderate to severe deficit in literacy and numeracy skills' is indicated by standard scores that are more than three standard deviations below the mean.

If no standardised literacy or numeracy assessments were conducted, the psychologist can use alternative sources of evidence, e.g. academic records, qualitative analysis of child's independent school work, curriculum-based measures and informal observations, to assess the child's literacy or numeracy skills.

OTHER ASSESSMENT INFORMATION (IF ANY)

Please include details and information on other assessments that you have conducted here (E.g. Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule – Second Edition, Autism Diagnostic Interview – Revised).

DAILY FUNCTIONING IN GROUP LEARNING CONTEXT OR CLASSROOM

Daily group learning or classroom functioning refers to the child's level of on-task behaviour and the degree of supervision and behaviour support required to address challenging behaviours. This information has implications for the level of individualised attention that the child may need when learning in a group context, e.g. low student-teacher ratio.

VOCATIONAL SKILLS (*if applicable*)

This section is applicable to students aged 17 years and above who are applying to a SPED school that offers vocational certification, for example, APSN Delta Senior School and Metta School.

In this section, please provide details of the child's previous vocational training and work experience and indicate the child's level of work readiness. Work readiness includes work attitude, work habits and work safety, interpersonal, communication and self-management skills.

OTHER COMMENTS

In this section, please provide information on other relevant aspects of the child's needs, and his/her views, interests and strengths. For children with sensory and/or physical impairments, please include information about developmental prognosis, if available.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, the psychologist should make a clear statement of the child's diagnosis / diagnoses. The psychologist is required to integrate all the evidence which provide the bases for recommending special education for the child.

In addition, the psychologist should make appropriate educational recommendations that will meet the child's needs in the short and long term; these may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Referrals for further assessments or therapy e.g. speech and language therapy, occupational therapy;
- Curriculum accommodations such as access arrangements for school or national examinations, and exemption from Mother Tongue Examination, if appropriate; and
- Other strategies and interventions, e.g. social skills training, counselling.

RECOMMENDED EDUCATIONAL PLACEMENT

In this sub-section, the psychologist may tick up to 2 boxes from the categories listed. The recommended category / categories of SPED schools should be based on the psychologist's independent and objective professional assessment and diagnosis of the child's special educational needs. The professional recommendation need not be the same as parent's preferred choices. When identifying the type of SPED school that would be suitable for the child, the psychologist should refer to <https://www.moe.gov.sg/special-educational-needs/educational-journey/> for more information and understanding of SPED schools and their programmes.