

Secondary School Places Allocation System 2021
Arrangements for Notifying Successful Discretionary Places Applicants
Frequently Asked Questions

(1) Q What are the arrangements for notifying successful Discretionary Places (DP) applicants (notification arrangements) under the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System?

A Parents of students who intend to apply for DP will submit applications to not more than two preferred participating secondary schools (including all public sector secondary schools and Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) secondary schools participating in the SSPA System) in January every year as usual. The application period for SSPA 2021 is from 4 January to 18 January 2021.

Starting from SSPA 2020, participating secondary schools (including Jockey Club Ti-I College) will be required to, after processing DP applications, notify parents of all successful applicants of their children's inclusion in the Successful Lists for Discretionary Places by letter and phone on a specified date before Central Allocation (CA)¹. The specified date for SSPA 2021 is 31 March 2021. Parents who have received notifications from participating secondary schools of successful applications do not need to fill out the Choice of Schools Forms (Choice Forms) at the CA stage which begins in April.

The aforementioned notification arrangements are administrative measures. The existing SSPA mechanism and procedures remain unchanged. All students in this SSPA cycle will receive the SSPA allocation results (including results at the DP and CA stages) in early July as usual. Parents are required to complete the registration procedures with the secondary schools which their children are allocated to within a specified period. The allocation results for SSPA 2021 will be announced on 6 July 2021, and the registration period is from 8 July to 9 July 2021.

(2) Q Under the notification arrangements, will reserve and unsuccessful applicants be notified by participating secondary schools of their application results in advance?

A Under the notification arrangements, participating secondary schools are required to notify only successful applicants of their inclusion in the schools' Successful Lists for Discretionary Places. Schools are not allowed to notify reserve and unsuccessful applicants of their DP application results to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings.

¹ Please refer to EDB Circular No. 18/2019 for details of the arrangements for notifying successful discretionary places applicants and the sample notification letter

(3) Q Are the notification arrangements the same as an official release of DP results?

A The notification arrangements as administrative measures are not the same as the release of the final allocation results. The existing SSPA mechanism remains unchanged. All students in this SSPA cycle will receive the SSPA allocation results (including results at the DP and CA stages) in early July as usual. Parents are required to complete the registration procedures with the secondary schools which their children are allocated to within a specified period. The allocation results for SSPA 2021 will be announced on 6 July 2021, and the registration period is from 8 July to 9 July 2021.

(4) Q In what ways will participating secondary schools notify parents of students who are selected as successful DP applicants?

A Participating secondary schools are required to notify parents of all successful DP applicants by letter and phone on a specified date. Schools are required to keep parents well-informed of the notification arrangements, and collect necessary contact information beforehand. The specified date for participating secondary schools to notify successful DP applicants for SSPA 2021 is 31 March 2021.

(5) Q If students have submitted DP applications to two participating secondary schools, will they be notified as successful applicants by both schools respectively?

A For individual students who have submitted DP applications to two participating secondary schools and have been successful in both applications, their parents will receive notifications of successful applications from two participating secondary schools respectively. The students concerned will be allocated to schools of their first choice according to the existing SSPA mechanism.

(6) Q After receiving notifications as successful DP applicants from participating secondary schools, do the parents concerned have to disclose their order of school preference to the schools concerned and confirm their acceptance of the DP offered?

A According to the existing SSPA System, parents do not have to disclose their order of school preference to the schools they have applied to at the DP stage. The notifications from participating secondary schools to parents under the notification arrangements are not an official release of allocation results. Hence, parents do not have to disclose their order of school preference to the schools concerned, nor confirm their acceptance of the DP offered after receiving notifications of their children as successful DP applicants from participating secondary schools.

(7) Q Can participating secondary schools enquire parents about their children’s order of school preference?

A Under the existing SSPA System, parents who apply for DP for their children do not have to disclose their order of school preference to the schools concerned. The existing SSPA mechanism remains unchanged under the notification arrangements. Hence, participating secondary schools should not enquire parents about the related information.

(8) Q What are participating secondary schools required to note when they notify parents of successful DP applicants by letter and phone on the specified date?

A When receiving DP applications from parents (especially for parents who are residing/working outside Hong Kong), schools should remind them to update contact information in due course. Parents should also be well informed of the arrangements for notifying successful DP applicants by letter and phone on the specified date. Besides, schools should also make proper arrangements according to their school-based circumstances, including reserving the time required for mailing to ensure that parents of successful applicants will receive written notification of their children’s inclusion in the schools’ Successful Lists for Discretionary Places on the specified date, scheduling the time of making phone calls to the parents concerned, devising arrangements for parents whom cannot be contacted on the specified date, etc.

(9) Q How should participating secondary schools handle phone enquiries from parents regarding whether or not their children are successful DP applicants of the schools?

A Considering the difficulties in verifying the caller’s identity over the phone, schools are recommended not to disclose the information of individual successful DP applicants when receiving such enquiries, in order not to contravene the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance. Schools may inform parents of the ways in which parents of successful DP applicants will be notified. If parents have other enquiries, schools may handle them according to their school-based enquiry mechanism.

(10) Q Apart from notifying parents of successful DP applicants by letter and phone, can secondary schools use other means to notify them?

A In addition to notifying parents of successful DP applicants by letter and phone, schools may also notify the parents of successful DP applicants by other means if necessary. Yet, schools are required to comply with the principles and requirements of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance when notifying the parents concerned by other means.

(11) Q After receiving notifications from participating secondary schools as successful DP applicants, can parents change the order of school preference for their children?

A According to the existing SSPA mechanism, the Application Forms for Secondary One Discretionary Place, once submitted, cannot be retrieved or cancelled, and no change can be made to the order of school preference. Hence, parents are not allowed to change the order of school preference after receiving notifications of their children's successful DP applications from participating secondary schools.

(12) Q After receiving notifications from participating secondary schools as successful DP applicants, are parents required to complete registration procedures with the schools concerned at once?

A The notification arrangements are administrative measures. The existing SSPA mechanism and procedures remain unchanged. The notifications from participating secondary schools to parents are not an official release of allocation results, and parents are not required to complete the registration procedures with the schools concerned at once. Parents will receive the Allocation Slips and Admission Slips after the official release of SSPA results in early July. By then, parents are required to complete the registration procedures with the secondary schools allocated within a specified registration period.

(13) Q For parents who have received notifications from participating secondary schools of their children's successful DP applications, do they need to fill out and submit the Choice Forms for the CA?

A All students participating in the SSPA System will receive the Choice Forms at the CA stage which begins in April. For students who have been notified as successful DP applicants by participating secondary schools, their parents only have to sign on the forms after filling in contact information, cross out the parts on school choices to indicate that they do not have to make school choices, and return the forms to the primary schools their children attend.

(14) Q For parents who have received notifications from participating secondary schools of their children’s successful DP applications, can they surrender the DP and fill out the Choice Forms for participation in the CA?

A Under the existing SSPA mechanism, all students who are allocated with DP will not be allocated other school places at the CA stage. Hence, parents of successful DP applicants are not required to make school choices on the Choice Forms. Even if they have made school choices on the Choice Forms at the CA stage which begins in April, their children will still be allocated to the secondary schools they have successfully applied to at the DP stage according to the existing mechanism.

(15) Q If students have applied for DP to one or two secondary schools before they apply for cross-net allocation, and have cancelled their DP application(s) because of their cross-net application, do their parents have to fill out the Choice Forms at the CA stage?

A Under the existing SSPA mechanism, students may cancel one or both of their DP applications if they need to apply for cross-net allocation. If they have cancelled one or both of their DP applications because of their cross-net application, even if they have been notified as successful applicants under the notification arrangements, the DP concerned will automatically be cancelled. If all the DP offered by participating secondary schools have been cancelled because of cross-net application, the parents concerned will have to fill out the Choice Forms so that their children can participate in the CA. If the parents concerned do not make any school choices on the Choice Forms and the students concerned have not been offered a school place by any non-participating DSS secondary schools (NDSS secondary schools), the students concerned will be allocated with a school place according to the established allocation mechanism.

(16) Q If students have not been notified by participating secondary schools as successful DP applicants, does it mean that they will not be allocated with a school place at the DP stage?

A Under the notification arrangements, some students may receive notifications of their successful DP applications from two participating secondary schools and they will eventually be allocated to schools of their first choice according to the existing SSPA mechanism, leaving one school place available. Besides, some successful applicants may relinquish the DP allocated to them and accept the places offered by NDSS secondary schools. The places allocated to these successful DP applicants will also be rendered available. Hence, some students who have not been notified may be allocated to schools they have applied to at the DP stage in the capacity of reserve applicants.

(17) Q When will reserve applicants be notified by participating secondary schools that they are allocated with DP?

A The notification arrangements are not applicable to reserve and unsuccessful applicants. All students (including reserve applicants) will receive the official allocation results from EDB on 6 July 2021 as usual.

(18) Q Can parents approach other preferred secondary schools and enquire about admission after participating secondary schools have issued notifications to successful DP applicants?

A Under the existing SSPA mechanism, the Secondary 1 (S1) places of schools, after deducting the repeater and DP quota, will be used for the CA. Secondary schools should not conduct selection or admission procedures to fill any possible unused places before the release of allocation results in July. This is to avoid bringing undue pressure to parents and students and create unfair situations. As such, parents need not approach other preferred secondary schools to avoid affecting schools' operation.

(19) Q Some students are notified by participating secondary schools as successful DP applicants and also offered an S1 place by an NDSS secondary school. If they decide to decline the offer from the NDSS secondary school, why must they retrieve the originals of the signed Parent's Undertaking and the Primary 6 Student Record Form from the NDSS secondary school concerned? If the documents are not retrieved, will the students be eventually allocated to the participating secondary schools concerned?

A According to the existing mechanism, on the premise of effective use of public resources, NDSS secondary schools will collect from parents of students who accept the S1 places offered the signed Parent's Undertaking together with the original copy of the Primary 6 Student Record Form for confirmation of acceptance of offer and surrendering of other subsidised S1 places (including the S1 places of participating secondary schools and Jockey Club Ti-I College) to be allocated through the SSPA System, in order to prevent the students concerned from occupying two subsidised secondary school places at the same time. Under the notification arrangements, if students have been notified by participating secondary schools (including Jockey Club Ti-I College) as successful DP applicants and also offered an S1 place by an NDSS secondary school, they may decide whether to decline the offer from the NDSS secondary school within a specified period of time in April (i.e. within around 5 working days after receiving notifications from schools as successful DP applicants at the end of March; the last date of notification to NDSS secondary schools for SSPA 2021 is 12 April 2021 under normal circumstances). If parents do not notify the NDSS secondary schools concerned and retrieve the originals of the signed Parent's Undertaking and the Primary 6 Student Record Form within the specified period of time, under the existing mechanism, the students concerned will still be included in the Successful Lists of Participating Students of the NDSS schools to be submitted in early May and thus they will not be allocated with S1 places of participating secondary schools, including those having selected them as successful DP applicants.

(20) Q Can NDSS secondary schools reject parents' requests for retrieving the originals of the signed Parent's Undertaking and the Primary 6 Student Record Form?

A The existing arrangement for collecting the originals of the signed Parent's Undertaking and Primary 6 Student Record Form as confirmation of parents' decision is premised on the principle of optimising the use of public resources and to prevent the students concerned from occupying two subsidised secondary school places at the same time. Under the notification arrangements, if the parents of successful DP applicants decide to decline the offer from the NDSS secondary schools, they may notify the NDSS secondary schools concerned and retrieve the originals of the signed Parent's Undertaking and the Primary 6 Student Record Form within a specified period of time (i.e. within around 5 working days after receiving notifications from schools as successful DP applicants at the end of March, the last date of notification to NDSS secondary schools for SSPA 2021 is 12 April 2021 under normal circumstances). The NDSS secondary schools have to return the relevant documents upon parents' request. Once the originals of the signed Parent's Undertaking are retrieved, it will serve as confirmation that the parents have surrendered the school places in the NDSS secondary schools. As such, parents must prudently consider before making the decision.

(21) Q If parents of successful DP applicants do not retrieve the originals of the signed Parent’s Undertaking and the Primary 6 Student Record Form from NDSS secondary schools within a specified period of time, can they retrieve these documents from the schools concerned afterwards so as to surrender the school places in the NDSS secondary schools?

A Under the existing arrangements, parents will submit to NDSS secondary schools the originals of the signed Parent’s Undertaking and the Primary 6 Student Record Form for confirmation of acceptance of the offers from NDSS secondary schools and surrendering of other S1 places (including the S1 places of participating secondary schools and Jockey Club Ti-I College) to be allocated through the SSPA System. On the other hand, under the notification arrangements, as some students may decline the school places offered by NDSS secondary schools after receiving notifications from participating secondary schools as successful DP applicants, the parents concerned may retrieve the originals of the signed Parent’s Undertaking and the Primary 6 Student Record Form from the NDSS secondary schools within a specified period of time in order that the NDSS secondary schools may admit other students in accordance with their waiting lists to fill the vacancies, and submit their Successful Lists of Participating Students to EDB in early May. In this connection, under normal circumstances, parents of successful DP applicants should not retrieve the originals of the signed Parent’s Undertaking and the Primary 6 Student Record Form from NDSS secondary schools after the specified period of time.

(22) Q If parents have retrieved the originals of the signed Parent’s Undertaking and the Primary 6 Student Record Form from the NDSS secondary schools to confirm surrendering of the school places offered, can they request the NDSS secondary schools concerned to admit their children again in future?

A If parents have retrieved the originals of the signed Parent’s Undertaking and the Primary 6 Student Record Form from NDSS secondary schools, it indicates that they have decided to surrender the places offered by the NDSS secondary schools. After the release of SSPA results in July, if parents would like to apply for S1 places in the NDSS secondary schools concerned again, schools can decide whether to admit the students according to their school-based student admission mechanism.

(23) Q Can participating secondary schools amend the Successful/Reserve Lists for Discretionary Places after submitting to EDB?

A Participating secondary schools are required to submit the Successful/Reserve Lists for Discretionary Places to EDB on or before a specified date (the specified date for SSPA 2021 is 30 March 2021). Schools must check the Lists with extreme care before submission. After submitting the Lists, schools are not allowed to make any changes to them except under special circumstances (e.g. the applicants are not eligible for DP application, the number of successful DP applicants the school has notified is more than the DP quota of the school, etc.). If there are special circumstances, schools should provide a written explanation to EDB and seek prior approval from EDB as soon as possible before they notify parents of the affected students.

(24) Q Under the notification arrangements, will the number of school places shown in the related documents of CA which begins in April be updated, with the number of DP offered deducted accordingly to facilitate parents' choice of schools at the CA stage?

A Under the notification arrangements, some students may receive notifications of their successful DP applications from two participating secondary schools and they will eventually be allocated to schools of their first choice according to the existing SSPA mechanism, leaving one school place available. Besides, some successful applicants may relinquish the DP allocated to them and accept the places offered by NDSS secondary schools. The places allocated to these successful DP applicants will also be rendered available. Under the existing SSPA mechanism, some students may be allocated with these unused DP in the capacity of reserve applicants and the remaining places will be used for the CA. The CA related documents have to be printed in March for distribution to parents for their reference in April. Hence, it is not feasible to update the number of school places concerned due to the tight schedule.

(25) Q Are participating primary schools still required to submit the internal assessment results of students who have been notified as successful DP applicants for the calculation of their allocation bands?

A Under the notification arrangements, the existing SSPA mechanism remains unchanged. Participating primary schools are still required to submit the internal assessment results at the end of Primary 5, in the middle of and at the end of Primary 6 for all students (including those who are notified by participating secondary schools as successful DP applicants or those who are admitted by NDSS secondary schools). In the CA stage, the scaled marks of all participating students in the territory/same school net will be put into an order of merit by a computer. Then the students will be equally divided into three territory/net bands, each consisting of one-third of the total number of participating students in the territory/same school net. In other words, the number of students in each band is determined by the total number of participating students. Under the notification arrangements, the allocation bands of all participating students (including those who are notified as successful DP applicants) will be calculated based on their scaled internal assessment results.

(26) Q Why is EDB going to provide each participating primary school with its respective list of successful DP applicants in early April every year?

A EDB will provide each participating primary school with its respective list of successful DP applicants in early April every year in order to facilitate primary schools' reminding of the parents concerned that they do not have to make school choices at the CA stage, and provide appropriate support to students not having received notification in preparation for the CA. The names of the secondary schools concerned, the order of school preference in DP applications and whether the students are selected as successful DP applicants by one or two secondary schools will not be shown on the lists.

(27) Q Can primary or secondary schools disclose the proportion or number of students who are notified as successful DP applicants?

A Under the notification arrangements, individual students may be selected as successful DP applicants by two participating secondary schools. They will eventually be allocated to schools of their first choice and some successful applicants may opt for studying in NDSS secondary schools. Hence, some students who have not been selected as successful DP applicants may still have the opportunity to be allocated DP in the capacity of reserve applicants. In other words, such information is not the final DP application results. Students on the Successful List for Discretionary Places of a school may not be eventually allocated to that school. In addition, whether or not students will be selected as successful applicants at the DP stage is affected by various factors, including parents' strategies for choosing schools, the number of applicants, the admission criteria and weightings, and the number of school places, etc. Hence, the proportion or number of students who receive notifications of their successful DP applications to participating secondary schools is actually not an indicator of the academic level or overall performance of the schools concerned. Primary or secondary schools are not allowed to disclose the related information/data to avoid affecting other students' strategies for choosing schools at the CA stage.

School Places Allocation Section
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