(For Admission to Secondary 1 in September 2019)
Frequently Asked Questions

Discretionary Places

(1) Q What are discretionary places (DP)?

A DP are Secondary 1 (S1) places reserved by secondary schools for admission of students at their own discretion. Government, aided and caput secondary schools may reserve not more than 30%, and Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) secondary schools participating in the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System may reserve more than 30% of their S1 places as DP.

(2) Q What are the procedures of applying for a DP?

A The DP application period for this cycle is from 3 January (Thursday) to 17 January 2019 (Thursday). All participating secondary schools accept applications within the same period.

Parents of participating Primary 6 (P6) students of the current cycle will receive two copies of Application Form for S1 Discretionary Place through their children’s primary schools in early December 2018. Students not studying in participating primary schools can obtain the Application Forms from the School Places Allocation Section of the Education Bureau (EDB) (Address: Office 2, 2/F, Manulife Financial Centre, 223 Wai Yip Street, Kwun Tong, Kowloon; Tel: 2832 7740 and 2832 7700) during office hours from 6 December 2018 to 17 January 2019.

DP application is not subject to restriction on districts. Each student may apply to not more than two participating secondary schools, otherwise his/her chance of acquiring a DP will be forfeited. Of the two Application Forms received by the student, one carries Order of School Preference 1 and the other carries Order of School Preference 2. Order of School Preference 1 stands for a student’s first choice and Order of School Preference 2 stands for a student’s second choice.

As regards the lists of participating secondary schools, parents may refer to the Handbook for Application for Secondary 1 Discretionary Places (Handbook) distributed to primary schools in early December 2018. Parents may also visit EDB’s Homepage (www.edb.gov.hk) (Select: Home > Education System and Policy > Primary and Secondary School Education > School Places Allocation Systems > Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System) to download the lists or call EDB’s 24-hour Automatic Telephone Enquiry System on 2891 0088 (Press 2 (English) > 5 (Fax Services) > 04 (Secondary School Places Allocation System: School Lists)) to obtain the lists by fax.
(3) **Q** What should be taken into consideration when parents choose a school for their children?

**A** Parents should consider all aspects of a school, e.g. its educational philosophy, culture, class structure, development and operation, and their children’s abilities, inclinations and interests so as to make a suitable school choice.

Schools may decide on their own admission procedures, admission criteria and weightings according to their educational philosophy and characteristics. The admission criteria and weightings adopted by the school must be fair, just, open and educationally sound, and must be made public prior to admission, e.g. by displaying in a prominent place of the school, uploading on the school’s homepage, publishing in the Secondary School Profile or informing each applicant in writing. Schools may arrange interviews, but no written test should be conducted.

Parents may refer to the Secondary School Profiles distributed by the Committee on Home-School Co-operation in early December 2018, or visit the school’s website so as to find out more information about the school.

(4) **Q** As secondary schools are not allowed to conduct any written test for admission purpose, how can they assess the performance of the applicants?

**A** Applications will be evaluated based on the admission criteria and weightings set by the schools, e.g. the academic and non-academic performance of the students. Some schools will also make use of the interviews to understand the applicants’ aptitude, interest and potential in order to select suitable students for admission.

(5) **Q** What do parents need to note when making a DP application for their children?

**A** Students who are successful in DP application will not be allocated a school place in central allocation (CA). Parents should, therefore, apply to school(s) of their preference. As the Application Form for S1 Discretionary Place once submitted cannot be retrieved or cancelled, and no change can be made to the order of school preference, parents should make very careful consideration before submitting an application so as to make a suitable choice.

(6) **Q** When making a DP application, what documents are required to be submitted to the secondary school applied to?

**A** The documents to be submitted should include the Application Form for S1 Discretionary Place and the documents as required by the school concerned, e.g. students’ school report cards, awards or prizes, and certificates or records for extra-curricular activities and community service. Submission of information not immediately available, such as primary schools’ recommendation letters as well as scores or positions of students in individual subjects, is not required.
(7) Q What are the criteria for allocating a DP if a student has applied to two participating secondary schools and is accepted by both of them?

A Each Application Form for S1 Discretionary Place carries a unique Application Number for identifying the student’s order of school preference. EDB will match the students’ preferences against the schools’ Successful and Reserve Lists. If a student is successful in both of the schools to which he/she applies, allocation will be based on the student’s order of preference. In other words, the student will be allocated to his/her first choice.

If parents have applied to a secondary school which eventually will not offer S1 places under the SSPA System in this allocation cycle, that application will not be processed.

(8) Q What is the consequence of making DP applications to more than two participating secondary schools?

A If a student applies to more than two participating secondary schools for DP regardless of government, aided, caput or participating DSS secondary schools, his/her chance of acquiring a DP will be forfeited.

(9) Q Apart from applying to not more than two participating secondary schools, can students apply to Jockey Club Ti-I College at the same time?

A Yes. The application period for S1 admission to Jockey Club Ti-I College is from 3 January to 21 January 2019. If students are successful in their application to Jockey Club Ti-I College, they will not be allocated a DP or a place in CA under the SSPA System. If they are unsuccessful in their application, they can still be allocated a S1 place through the SSPA System.

(10) Q Can students also apply to Direct Subsidy Scheme secondary schools not participating in SSPA (non-participating DSS secondary schools) at the same time?

A Yes. As there is no limit to the number of non-participating DSS secondary schools that a student may apply to, he/she may be accepted by several non-participating DSS secondary schools. However, provided the parent has surrendered the signed undertaking and the original of the Primary 6 Student Record Form to one of the schools making the offer, this will serve as a confirmation of the acceptance of the S1 place offered by the non-participating DSS secondary school and the agreement to give up any other subsidised S1 places (including the S1 places of participating secondary schools and Jockey Club Ti-I College). The school will notify EDB of the parent’s decision by mid-April 2019. On receiving the Successful Lists from non-participating DSS secondary schools, EDB will not allocate the students on the list to other secondary schools through the SSPA System.
Q Is it necessary for all participating students to complete and return the Secondary One Choice of Schools Form to EDB in early May 2019?

A Whether or not students have applied for a DP of a participating secondary school and/or Jockey Club Ti-I College, or S1 places of non-participating DSS secondary schools, they must return the completed Secondary One Choice of Schools Form (Choice Form) to EDB through the primary schools in early May 2019. This is to ensure that in case they have not been successful in their application to these schools, they will still be allocated a S1 place in CA.

If a student is admitted by a non-participating DSS secondary school and his/her parent has signed an undertaking with and surrendered his/her P6 Student Record Form to the school, or admitted by other schools (e.g. international schools or private schools) and decided not to participate in CA, his/her parent should sign on the Choice Form and cross out the part of School Choices to indicate the intention of not participating in CA. If parents do not make any school choices and have not indicated their intention of not participating in CA on the Choice Form, and the students are not admitted by non-participating DSS secondary schools, the students will be allocated school places according to the established allocation mechanism.

Q When will students know the application results for DP?

A The results of DP of all secondary schools (including participating secondary schools and Jockey Club Ti-I College) will be released together with the results of CA on 9 July 2019. Schools will not notify the applicants of the application results individually. Parents need not make enquiries to the schools they apply to before the announcement of the allocation results.

For students studying in primary schools not participating in SSPA, if they are admitted by participating secondary schools or Jockey Club Ti-I College at DP stage, the secondary school concerned will call the parents to inform them of the application results and the related arrangements on 9 July 2019, i.e. the date of announcement of the allocation results. If necessary, parents may also contact the secondary school(s) to which they have applied on the aforesaid date.

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Central Allocation

(1)  Q  When will parents receive the choice-making documents for central allocation (CA)?
A  Parents of participating Primary 6 (P6) students of the current cycle will receive the Secondary One Choice of Schools Form (Choice Form) and the related choice-making documents through their children’s primary schools in early April 2019. Parents must return the completed Choice Form to the Education Bureau (EDB) through their children’s primary schools in early May 2019.

(2)  Q  What should parents take note of when filling in the Secondary One Choice of Schools Form?
A  The Secondary One Choice of Schools Form is divided into Part A and Part B. For Part A Unrestricted School Choices, parents may choose a maximum of three secondary schools from any school nets, including schools in their children’s own net. As for Part B Restricted School Choices, parents can choose a maximum of thirty secondary schools within their children’s net. If the secondary schools they have indicated in Part A are also located in their children’s school net, they may include these schools in Part B. However, parents should not repeat the same school choices within the same Part as this will not increase the chance of their children being allocated to these schools.

When parents complete Part A with the school choices, they should refer to the Handbook for Unrestricted School Choices (Handbook) distributed to primary schools in early April 2019. Parents may also visit EDB’s Homepage (www.edb.gov.hk) (Select: Home > Education System and Policy > Primary and Secondary School Education > School Places Allocation Systems > Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System) to download the lists or call EDB’s 24-hour Automatic Telephone Enquiry System on 2891 0088 (Press 2 (English) > 5 (Fax Services) > 04 (Secondary School Places Allocation System: School Lists)) to obtain the lists by fax. When parents complete Part B with the school choices, they should refer to the Secondary School Lists of the school net their children belong to. Together with the Choice Forms, the Secondary School Lists are distributed to parents in early April for reference.

(3)  Q  What are the criteria for CA?
A  CA is based on a student’s allocation band, parental choice of schools and random number.
How are the allocation bands determined? What are they used for?

Students get their allocation bands according to their scaled internal assessment (IA) results. Students’ IA results at the end of Primary 5, and both in mid-year and at the end of P6 will be standardised, and scaled by the average of the sampled results of the Pre-Secondary One Hong Kong Attainment Test (Pre-S1 HKAT) 2016 and 2018 of the school. For the schools which do not have the sampled results of the Pre-S1 HKAT 2016 or 2018 (e.g. a newly participating school), the average of the sampled results of all participating primary schools in the same school net in the test in that particular year will be used for scaling.

For the allocation of school places in Part A Unrestricted School Choices of CA, the scaled marks of all students in the territory will be put into an order of merit. Then the students will be equally divided into three Territory Bands, each consisting of 1/3 of the total number of primary students in the territory. As regards allocation of school places in Part B Restricted School Choices of CA, the scaled marks of all students within the same school net will be put into an order of merit. Then the students will be equally divided into three Net Bands, each consisting of 1/3 of the total number of primary students in the school net.

While Territory Band is used to determine the order of allocation of a student for unrestricted school places in Part A of CA, Net Band is for allocation of restricted school places in Part B of CA. Allocation band is not an absolute standard for assessing P6 students’ academic performance, and the allocation band of individual students will not be retained after the allocation procedure is completed.

How are the secondary school nets demarcated?

In principle, in line with the administrative districts, the whole territory is divided into 18 secondary school nets for the allocation of school places as CA in Part B is done by school net. According to the existing policy, the secondary school net to which a student belongs is determined by the physical location of the primary school he/she attends.
(6) **Q** How are S1 places assigned in each school net?

**A** Provision of public sector secondary school places is planned on a territory-wide basis. The SSPA System aims at allocating a S1 place to each participating student in an orderly manner. To cater for the needs of parents and participating students, parents are allowed to choose schools from any districts at the DP Stage and in Part A Unrestricted School Choices at the CA Stage, and to choose any schools in the school net to which a participating student belongs through Part B Restricted School Choices at the CA Stage. Given the uneven distribution of secondary schools among school nets and demographic movement, it has been a long established practice of making netting arrangements when there is a shortage of school places in a net. Factors to be considered include the demand and supply of school places in each district, the locations of schools and the availability as well as accessibility of transportation means between school nets, and the established netting pattern, etc. We will, in consultation with the SSPA Committee (members comprising a secondary / primary school representative from each school net and representatives from major secondary and primary school councils), strike a balance between the needs of different stakeholders as far as possible in the whole process.

The number of secondary schools and school places provided from other districts may vary from year to year according to the demand and supply situation. Parents should refer to the Secondary School Lists distributed in April every year by the EDB for the netting arrangements for the cycle concerned.

(7) **Q** What is cross-net allocation?

**A** The allocation of school places for Part B of CA is done by school net and the school net to which a student belongs is determined by the physical location of the primary school he/she attends. If change of school net is necessary, parents may submit an application for cross-net allocation together with relevant proof documents to EDB through the primary school their child is attending before early March. The primary school would forward all verified copies of the application documents to EDB for further processing. If the student is approved for cross-net allocation, he/she will participate in Part B of CA in the new school net.

(8) **Q** If a student is approved for cross-net allocation, how is his/her Net Band determined in the new school net?

**A** For a student approved for cross-net allocation, the scaled marks he/she obtained in the school in his/her original school net will be compared with the scaled marks of the students in the new school net to determine the Net Band he/she belongs to. In other words, the student’s Net Band in the new school net may be different from that in his/her original school net.
Q  What is the allocation procedure for CA?

A  The Unrestricted School Choices in Part A are processed first. Only after the school choices of all students in Part A have been processed, the computer will begin to process the Restricted School Choices in Part B.

When processing the Unrestricted School Choices in Part A, the computer will first allocate school places to students in Territory Band 1 according to their order of preference of school choices. After screening the school choices of all these students, the computer will follow the same procedure to process the school choices of students in Territory Band 2 and finally those of Territory Band 3. Students successful in obtaining a place in Part A will not be allocated a place in Part B. If a student is not allocated a school place in Part A after all his/her school choices have been exhausted, he/she will be allocated a place in Part B.

When processing the Restricted School Choices in Part B, the computer will first allocate school places to students in Net Band 1 according to their order of preference of school choices. If a student cannot be allocated a school place even after all his/her school choices have been exhausted, the computer will allocate a place to him/her from the remaining places in the school net. After all the students in Net Band 1 have been allocated school places, the computer will follow the same procedure to process the choices of students in Net Band 2 and finally those of Net Band 3.

If parents have chosen a secondary school which eventually will not offer S1 places under the SSPA System in this allocation cycle, that school choice will not be processed.

Q  What is the random number used for?

A  The random number is generated by the computer before running the central allocation program. It is used to determine the order of allocation of students within the same allocation band. If the demand for school places of a certain secondary school exceeds the supply, the student possessing a smaller random number within the same allocation band will be allocated a place first. The random number has no connection with the Student Reference Number or the student’s personal data, and will not be retained after the allocation procedure is completed.

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Others

Feeder and Nominated Schools

(1)  Q  What are the Secondary 1 (S1) admission arrangements for a Primary 6 (P6) student studying in a feeder/nominated school?

   A  In general, after the deduction of repeater and discretionary places (DP), a feeder secondary school has to reserve 85% of the remaining places for its feeder primary school(s), and a nominated secondary school 25% of the remaining places for its nominated primary school(s) at the central allocation (CA) stage. A P6 student of a feeder/nominated school is eligible for a reserved place if he/she is in Net Band 1 or 2 and has chosen the feeder/nominated secondary school as his/her first choice in Part B Restricted School Choices. Parents may make enquiries to the feeder/nominated secondary school(s) direct.

   If the number of eligible students exceeds the number of reserved places, the order of priority for allocation will be based on the student’s Net Band and random number until all the reserved places are filled. On the other hand, all unused reserved places, if any, will be automatically used as open places for allocation.

   If a P6 student of a feeder or nominated school is approved for cross-net allocation, he/she will not be eligible for a reserved place of the feeder or nominated secondary school(s).

“Through-train” Schools

(2)  Q  What are the S1 admission arrangements for a P6 student studying in a “through-train” school?

   A  A P6 student of a “through-train” school may choose to proceed to its linked secondary school direct. If the student applies for DP of participating secondary schools or S1 place(s) of non-participating Direct Subsidy Scheme secondary schools (no matter successful or not), or participates in CA, he/she will not be allowed to retain the right to proceed direct to the linked secondary school.

Direct Subsidy Scheme Secondary Schools

(3)  Q  What should parents take note of if they wish to send their children to a Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) secondary school?

   A  Parents should note that DSS secondary schools may be fee charging. Students may be promoted to Secondary 4 (S4) in their own DSS secondary schools upon completion of Secondary 3 and will not be centrally placed to S4 in other schools subsidised by the Education Bureau (EDB).
(4) Q For the participating DSS secondary schools, what are the differences in the allocation arrangements as compared with government, aided and caput secondary schools?

A For the participating DSS secondary schools, their allocation arrangements are basically the same as the government, aided and caput secondary schools except that participating DSS secondary schools may reserve more than 30% of their S1 places as DP and the S1 places of participating DSS secondary schools are allocated on a “no-choice no-allocation” principle in Part B Restricted School Choices of CA, i.e. students will not be allocated to a participating DSS secondary school unless they have included the school as one of the choices in Part B of CA.

(5) Q What is the admission procedure for the non-participating DSS secondary schools?

A For the non-participating DSS secondary schools, they can admit students according to their own procedures and schedules and will not be allocated students through the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System. There is no limit to the number of non-participating DSS secondary schools that students may apply to, and admission is based on the criteria set by the schools. However, successful applicants have to decide whether or not to accept the S1 places offered by the non-participating DSS secondary schools and to give up any other subsidised S1 places by mid-April.

Non-Chinese Speaking Students

(6) Q What are the allocation arrangements for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students?

A Under the SSPA System, all participating students will be allocated an S1 place with the same allocation arrangements. In other words, NCS students as well as Chinese speaking students can apply to not more than two participating secondary schools at the DP stage. For choice-making at the CA stage, they can also indicate their preferences by choosing a maximum of three secondary schools from any school nets in Part A and a maximum of thirty secondary schools in their own school net in Part B.

Other languages:  Hindi, Indonesian, Nepali, Tagalog, Thai, Urdu and Punjabi

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