

**Secondary School Places Allocation System 2019/2021
(For Admission to Secondary 1 in September 2021)
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 4 January (Monday) to 18 January 2021 (Monday). All secondary schools participating in the SSPA System (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 Secondary One Discretionary Place through their children's primary schools in early December 2020. 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 3 December 2020 to 18 January 2021.

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 One Discretionary Places (Handbook) distributed to primary schools in early December 2020. 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 2020, 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 Secondary One 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 Secondary One 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 Secondary One 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/Reserve Lists for Discretionary Places. 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 including 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 4 January to 20 January 2021. 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 an S1 place through the SSPA System.

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

A Yes. As there is no limit to the number of NDSS secondary schools that a student may apply to, he/she may be accepted by several NDSS secondary schools. However, provided the parent has surrendered the signed Parent's Undertaking and the original copy 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 NDSS 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 early May 2021. On receiving the Successful Lists of Participating Students from NDSS secondary schools, EDB will not allocate the students on the list to other secondary schools through the SSPA System.

(11) Q Is it necessary for all participating students to complete and return the Secondary One Choice of Schools Form (Choice Form) to EDB in early May 2021?

A Whether or not students have applied for a DP of a participating secondary school (including Jockey Club Ti-I College), or S1 places of NDSS secondary schools, they must return the completed Choice Form to EDB through the primary schools in early May 2021. This is to ensure that in case they have not been successful in their application to these schools, they will still be allocated an S1 place in CA.

If a student is admitted by an NDSS secondary school and his/her parent has signed a Parent's Undertaking with and surrendered his/her Primary 6 Student Record Form to the NDSS secondary school, or notified by a participating secondary school (including Jockey Club Ti-I College) as a successful DP applicant, or admitted by other schools (e.g. international schools or private schools) and decided not to participate in CA, his/her parent only have to 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 NDSS secondary schools nor allocated a school place at the DP stage, the students will be allocated school places according to the established allocation mechanism.

(12) Q Under the arrangements for notifying successful DP applicants (notification arrangements), when will students know the application results for DP in this SSPA cycle?

A Starting from SSPA 2020, all 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 this SSPA cycle is 31 March 2021. These notification arrangements are not applicable to reserve and unsuccessful applicants, nor are the notifications the allocation results. The parents concerned do not need to reply to the notifications.

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) on 6 July 2021.

If students are studying in primary schools not participating in the SSPA System and are allocated with a school place at the DP stage, participating secondary schools or Jockey Club Ti-I College will call the parents to inform them of the official DP results and the related arrangements on 6 July 2021 (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 6 July 2021.

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.

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

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

(14) **Q After receiving notifications 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. The notifications from participating 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's successful DP applications.

(15) **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 this 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.

(16) 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 on 6 July 2021. By then, parents are required to complete the registration procedures with the secondary schools allocated within a specified period.

(17) 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 with an S1 place in schools they have applied to at the DP stage in the capacity of reserve applicants.

(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 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.

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(Updated in December 2020)

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 mid-April 2021. Parents must return the completed Choice Form to the Education Bureau (EDB) through their children's primary schools in early May 2021.

(2) Q What should parents take note of when filling in the Choice Form?

A The Choice 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 mid-April 2021. 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 mid-April for reference.

(3) Q For parents who have received notifications from secondary schools participating in the SSPA System (participating secondary schools) as successful discretionary places (DP) applicants on 31 March 2021, do they need to fill out and submit the Choice Forms for the CA?

A 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.

(4) Q What are the criteria for CA?

A CA is based on a student's allocation band, parental choice of schools and random number.

(5) Q How are the allocation bands determined? What are they used for?

A 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.

(6) Q How are the secondary school nets demarcated?

A 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, in principle, the secondary school net to which a student belongs is determined by the physical location of the primary school he/she attends.

(7) Q How are Secondary 1 (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 an 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 EDB for the netting arrangements for the cycle concerned.

(8) 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 in principle the school net of the primary school he/she attends. If there is a genuine need, with special reasons, to change school net, 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 application documents to EDB for further processing. If the student is approved for cross-net allocation to the school net which his/her Hong Kong residential address (i.e. a dwelling place at which the applicant student resides and which constitutes his/her sole or main home) belongs to, he/she will participate in Part B of CA in the new school net.

(9) **Q What should parents take note of when declaring the applying student's residential address and providing relevant proof documents if they wish to apply for cross-net allocation?**

A Parents should note that the applying student's residential address should be his/her sole or chief residential address in Hong Kong, i.e. a dwelling place at which the applicant student resides and which constitutes his/her sole or main home. Acceptable Hong Kong residential address proof documents include stamped tenancy agreement, demand note for rates and/or government rent, tenancy agreement or tenant's rent card issued by the public housing authorities, residential telephone bill, and the bills from various utility companies, like Towngas, Hong Kong Electric Company Ltd., Water Supplies Department, etc. Other documents such as bank's statements and mobile phone bills will not be accepted. Besides, the name and address of the parent (i.e. the payee) must be printed on the Hong Kong residential address proof document.

(10) **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.

(11) 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 students in 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 students in 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.

(12) 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 Direct Subsidy Scheme secondary schools not participating in the Secondary School Places Allocation System (NDSS 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 subvented 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 NDSS secondary schools?

A For the NDSS 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 NDSS secondary schools that students may apply to, and admission is based on the criteria set by the schools. NDSS secondary schools are required to submit their Successful Lists of Participating Students to EDB by early May. Students included in the Successful Lists of Participating Students of NDSS secondary schools will not be allocated with S1 places of participating secondary schools, including those having selected them as successful DP applicants.

Non-Chinese Speaking Students

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

A All eligible students, irrespective of their races or places of birth, enjoy equal opportunities for admission to public sector schools under the SSPA System, which is fair and transparent. In other words, NCS students as well as Chinese speaking students will be allocated an S1 place according to the same mechanism. NCS students can apply to any two participating secondary schools at the DP stage. For choice-making at the CA stage, they can also choose a maximum of three secondary schools from any school nets in Part A and a maximum of thirty secondary schools in their own school nets in Part B according to their preferences.