



4 in 10 Primary 1 pupils with ASD-ID could not start SPED school by June

Description

Four in 10 Primary 1 pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Intellectual Disability (ASD-ID) could not start Special Education (SPED) school by June over the past three years, as demand for places outran supply. The figures come from a [Ministry of Education](#) written parliamentary reply on 7 October.



A pupil rides a scooter in class at a Rainbow Centre special education school. Photo: Rainbow Centre

More than 90 per cent of pupils in every other SPED disability profile started school in January. ASD-ID is the exception. Six in 10 ASD-ID pupils had started school by June, and 85 per cent had started by the end of their Primary 1 year. That leaves 15 per cent who did not start school at all during the year they were meant to be in Primary 1.

Why ASD-ID places run short

Demand is the main reason. Applications for ASD-ID places doubled between 2021 and 2025, and that has put pressure on Primary 1 capacity in particular.

Planning is also harder for this group. A child's educational needs often become clear only close to school-going age, and school placement assessments are best done when a child is six or seven, when

development is more stable. Depending on the result, a child may be better supported in a mainstream school or in one of several types of SPED school.

3,000 more SPED places by the early 2030s

MOE is expanding SPED capacity by 30 per cent, from 9,000 places today to 12,000 in the early 2030s. The plans were announced at the Committee of Supply debate this year and are being rolled out from the second half of 2026 to the early 2030s.

The expansion has three parts:

- converting spare space in existing SPED schools into extra classrooms
- new campuses, or a move to a larger interim campus, for four existing MINDS schools
- three new schools, run with APSN Education Services, Autism Association (Singapore) and St. Andrew's Mission Hospital

What happens while a child waits

Children who cannot start in January can stay in early childhood settings. MOE works with the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) so the child can stay on at a preschool or early intervention centre, keeping up learning and support.

Parents also receive the MOE Home Learning Package, which focuses on communication, daily living and social-emotional skills. MOE will keep monitoring how these children progress through their schooling.

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