

Five more MOE kindergartens coming in 2015

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Total of 540 places at centres in Punggol, Jurong West, Sengkang, Bukit Panjang, Yishun

Amelia Teng

The Education Ministry will open five more kindergartens next year, with space for 540 children.

The locations of the new kindergartens – in Punggol, Jurong West, Sengkang, Bukit Panjang and Yishun – were revealed yesterday by Education Minister Heng Swee Keat, who said demand was the key consideration.

That is why Punggol is getting a second centre. The first, at Punggol View Primary School, was the only one among the first five ministry-run kindergartens to fill all 120 places.

The new one will be at Punggol Green Primary.

Three others in the new batch will be within primary schools – Jurong West's Frontier Primary, Sengkang Green Primary and West Spring Primary at Bukit Panjang.

They will have 120 places each.

The fifth centre – at the void deck of Block 318A, Yishun Ave 9 – will have 60 spots.

Care services will be provided at these kindergartens.

Mr Heng said his ministry decided on the locations and intake after working with the Early Childhood

Development Agency. Projected demand for pre-school services was high in newer towns such as Punggol and Sengkang, which have younger families.

He spoke to reporters after visiting the open house of the kindergarten in Dazhong Primary in Bukit Batok. It was one of the first five ministry kindergartens that opened this year – four in primary schools, and one at a void deck in Tampines Street 45.

Except for the one in Punggol View Primary, they met with a muted response after parents complained about a lack of childcare and school-bus arrangements.

Only about 130 children are enrolled at the four centres, which had offered 440 places.

Location a draw

"The main attraction is that it is in a primary school which has new facilities, and he can get used to the primary school environment earlier."

Civil servant Lim Hui Jun, 33, is hoping to enrol her four-year-old son in the new centre at Frontier Primary

Last month, the ministry said it would cut next year's new enrolment by as much as half at the four centres, while the one at Punggol View will continue to offer 120 places.

Mr Heng reiterated that the ministry, which plans to run 15 kindergartens by 2016, was not chasing after intake figures, but wants to use the centres to develop high-quality resource materials and appropriate teaching methods.

The centres will help the ministry test and develop fresh approaches and best practices in early education, to be shared with other pre-school centres.

Yesterday's open house was attended by about 50 families.

Civil servant Lim Hui Jun, 33, is hoping to enrol her four-year-old son in the new centre at Frontier Primary, near her Jurong West home.

"The main attraction is that it is in a primary school which has new facilities, and he can get used to the primary school environment earlier," she said. "It's not so much about the academics. I want him to learn social skills and mix with other children."

Parents who want to enrol their children for K1 at any of the 10 kindergartens may do so on April 4 and 5.

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LONGEST BRIDGE IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA



Second Penang bridge opens to fanfare

Malaysia's new icon



Georgetown – At 24km, South-east Asia's longest bridge spans roughly the distance between Singapore's Marina Bay and Woodlands.

The second Penang bridge linking Batu Maung on Penang island with Batu Kawan on the mainland was inaugurated by Prime Minister Najib Razak last night before some 10,000 people.

Naming it the Sultan Abdul Halim Mua'dzam Shah Bridge, after the current Malaysian King, the Sultan of Kedah, Datuk Seri Najib said no toll would be charged for a month. The bridge was opened to the public from midnight. A fireworks display followed soon after

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