

EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE OPTIONS IN SINGAPORE

Introduction

Singapore has a high percentage of expatriate workers from many different countries and is known for its high standard of living and quality of life. Many workers across all industries relocate with their families, so there is a high demand for schools and pre-school childcare. While some companies have standing arrangements with particular schools, it can still be difficult to find the right place at the right time, so having some assistance from professional childcare experts can be extremely helpful.

Childcare Overview

There is a reasonably wide range of childcare options in Singapore for very young children, meaning that parents are able to choose the arrangement that best suits them, and their families. The childcare option chosen by a family will depend on a number of factors, including the age of the child(ren), cost, hours of care required, location and personal preference. Pre-schools and kindergartens are available for children aged 3 - 6yrs, and full-time education is compulsory from the age of 6yrs. The availability and reasonable cost of childcare allows for an employment rate of 72% amongst women aged 25 - 64yrs.

The academic calendar in Singapore varies across academic institutions. All Ministry of Education (MOE) establishments run a calendar of four terms from early January to mid-November. International and independent establishments have academic calendars aligned with their curriculum and 'home' country.

Education system - Schools

In Singapore it is compulsory for children to attend full-time education between the ages of 6 - 17 years. The only (and rare) exceptions to this are individual cases approved by Singapore's MOE, where the child will either be home-

[REDACTED], for a high proportion of Singapore-based expats, private education is preferred. This, together with the multicultural nature of Singapore's expat community, explains the high number of international and private schools within the geographically small city-state.

In turn, this high demand results in high competition for places within Singapore's international schools - which emphasises the need for families relocating here to have the support to understand and find the best establishment(s) for their children. In many cases the final choice of school will help to determine the location of the family's new home, so the successful identification of, and gaining a place at, the preferred school(s) is critical.

There are five types of educational establishments in Singapore:

International schools - these are schools following either the home curriculum, the International Baccalaureate (IB), or a combination of the two. Choosing one of the many private, international schools may well offer the easiest transition into Singapore for the children of expat families both socially and academically. Private schools must be registered with the MOE, but are not subsidised or inspected by the MOE. However, the best schools will be inspected by bodies such as the Council of British International Schools (COBIS) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (UK), and will make the results available to parents.

There are currently [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] -August to early June with three terms;
Australian-based schools will run late January to early December with four terms; etc.

The range of home curriculums, or home + IB curriculums available include:

International Baccalaureate	Canadian	German	British
American	Australian	Swiss	Singaporean
Indian	Dutch	French	Japanese
Korean			

A small number of international schools have religious affiliations - currently these are Methodist, Jewish and Christian.

Pre-schools & kindergartens - enrolment in pre-school education is optional, as education is not compulsory in Singapore until the age of 6 and the beginning of Primary school. However, there are a large number of pre-[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The best pre-schools and kindergartens tend to have waiting lists, so it is recommended to be proactive and politely persistent when contacting your preferred school to try and gain a place.

The majority of pre-schools and kindergartens in Singapore offer one of either Montessori, Reggio Emilia or IB Primary Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Programme as their curriculum basis, with the language of tuition tending to be one of English-only, bilingual, or Mandarin-immersion.

Helping you make the right choices for you and your family

Various pre-schools and kindergartens offer different hours of tuition, being one of half day (9am - 12pm), full day (9am - 3pm) or long day (7am - 7pm). So regardless of a family's childcare requirements there are pre-school options to suit.

Primary schools - these are government run and regulated schools that cater for ages 6 - 12, and cover the academic years Primary 1 - 4 (Foundation Stage) and Primary 5 - 6 (Orientation Stage). In all state schools, the main language of education is English, with additional mother-tongue classes in fluency and literacy available in Mandarin, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. All state school pupils sit the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) at the end of Primary 6, with the results determining which stream of secondary school they will attend. It can be difficult for an older expat child to transition into the highly academic and demanding Singaporean state system unless they are a good psychological and academic fit.

The cost of compulsory state education is highly subsidised, with the monthly cost for international students being SGD \$150, while the monthly cost for Singapore Permanent Residents and citizens is SGD\$60. There are relatively small additional costs for various miscellaneous items, such as uniforms, transport and school materials.

International vs. State schools - Some expat families who have made their long-term home in [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] bearing in mind that Singaporean citizens require special permission from the MOE to attend a private or international school, and state schools prioritise applications from Singaporean citizens, then Singapore PR-holders, then expats.

Generally, if a family is relocating to Singapore with school-age children, or if the anticipated stay in Singapore is relatively short (2 - 5yrs) expats tend to send their children to an international school. This ensures consistency in the children's education and social groups, and will make the family's eventual move away/ repatriation from Singapore a much easier one.

Religious institutions - the Singaporean private education sector also includes the Singaporean Madrasahs. These are full-time, religious institutions that offer a pedagogical combination of Islamic religious education and secular [REDACTED]

Alternative childcare options for <6years

In-home childcare can be provided by nannies, professional babysitters or foreign domestic helpers (FDH). There are a number of agencies through which to source these services legally, and to find someone who has the appropriate, accredited skills to provide childcare within your home.

Foreign Domestic Worker (FDW), or helpers, are maids that are contracted to work for an employer within their home; they must live with the employer and the employer must provide a minimum standard of accommodation. FDW duties generally encompass general household chores, which can (with mutual agreement) extend to in-home childcare and babysitting. Most FDWs in Singapore are from either the Philippines or [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] agencies. Nannies may either live-in with the family, or live independently. Again, the nannies will not undertake general household chores.

Likewise, *au pairs* can be a part of an expat household in Singapore under similar arrangements to those in the UK, however it is recommended to advertise through a reputable and specialist agency.

In situations where a family is relocating to Singapore on a tight timeframe, utilising an experienced service provider such as Parental Choice to assist in finding the right professional, in-home childcare and domestic help can alleviate a significantly stressful process.

PARENTAL CHOICE

Helping you make the right choices for you and your family

Parental Choice is a one-stop shop for all parents' needs. We are here to support families in making the right choices in regards to their childcare requirements. We understand the difficulties that families face and are experienced in supporting families with their search and can give advice at all stages in the process. Parental Choice have a multi-lingual team, with personal experience of the issues facing those relocating. The stress and pressure of relocating a family to a new country, together with understanding local bureaucracy and cultures, is great, not just for busy working families but also those with trailing spouses. Parental Choice will help ease this process with their support and advice.

For families relocating to, or currently based in, Singapore we are able to search for the following Childcare options:

- Western nannies and au pairs
- Schools
- Nurseries / Crèches
- Childminders

Additional Support

In addition to searching for the right childcare for a family Parental Choice provides the following additional services:

- Interview Advice and Questions for those engaging a nanny
- Reference and Vetting services
- Post- employment support – in the UK we provide our clients with bespoke contracts and payroll and pension services. Whilst we will be unable to provide these services in Singapore we will be able to provide the employers with relevant contacts in order to meet their employer obligations as explained above.

Relocation Abroad

When families are planning an international relocation, Parental Choice can assist the family from start to finish. From liaising with the relocation agents to finding schools and childcare to providing destination services assistance, we make sure that the family is looked after every step of the way.

Repatriation – Coming Home

When families are looking to relocate back home, it may look like the easier move, but there will be many new challenges. Parental Choice are able to offer continued support and assist in settling the family back home through childcare support whether this be searching once again for schools with in-year applications or sourcing the best nurseries available, finding nannies, au pairs and assisting with all the administration associated with employment of domestic staff.

Helping you make the right choices for you and your family

For further information visit www.parentalchoice.co.uk or contact the following:

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Relax & let us take care of it!

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