When should families start planning an AEIS application?

The short answer is: as soon as a family knows they want their child to enter a mainstream Singapore school through the Admissions Exercise for International Students (AEIS). Starting at least six to nine months before the intended exam sitting gives enough time to understand the process, gather documents, and prepare academically. Many families find that earlier planning reduces stress and improves the child's readiness.

Understanding the AEIS timeline

The AEIS is held twice a year, typically in February (for the Supplementary Admissions Exercise) and in September or October (for the main exercise). The exact dates are published by the Ministry of Education (MOE) a few months before each sitting. Registration windows are narrow, often opening about a month before the exam and closing within two to three weeks. Missing the window means waiting for the next sitting, which can delay school entry by several months.

United Ceres College is also on Instagram.

Because the registration period is short, families should have all required documents ready well in advance. These include previous school reports, transcripts, and any supporting letters. The child's age on the exam date determines the entry level they will be assessed for, so knowing the child's exact date of birth and the corresponding grade placement is essential.

Assessing eligibility and entry level

The AEIS is designed for international students who wish to enter Primary 2 to 5 or Secondary 1 to 3 in Singapore's mainstream schools. The child's age on the exam date dictates which level they can apply for. For example, a child who is 12 years old on the exam date would typically be considered for Secondary 1 or 2 entry, depending on their academic background. Families should check the MOE's age eligibility guidelines carefully, as applying for the wrong level can result in disqualification.

View the location on Google Maps

Some children may have gaps in their schooling due to different academic calendars in their home country. Early planning allows families to address these gaps before the exam. It also gives time to gather certified translations of school records if they are not in English.



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Academic preparation and the role of coaching

The AEIS tests English and Mathematics at the level the child is applying to enter. The English paper assesses literacy, comprehension, and writing skills, while the Mathematics paper tests problem-solving ability. The standard is aligned with the Singapore curriculum, which can be quite different from what a child has studied elsewhere.

Many families start academic preparation three to six months before the exam. This is especially important for children whose mother tongue is not English, as the English paper can be challenging. A structured approach might involve familiarising the child with the Singapore syllabus, practising past-year papers, and building exam techniques.

For families who want targeted help, AEIS exam coaching can provide focused support on the specific content and format of the test. Such coaching often includes practice papers, time management strategies, and feedback on areas where the child needs improvement. It is not a substitute for regular schoolwork but can supplement it. Parents should look for coaching that aligns with the MOE syllabus and is delivered by experienced tutors who understand the exam's demands.

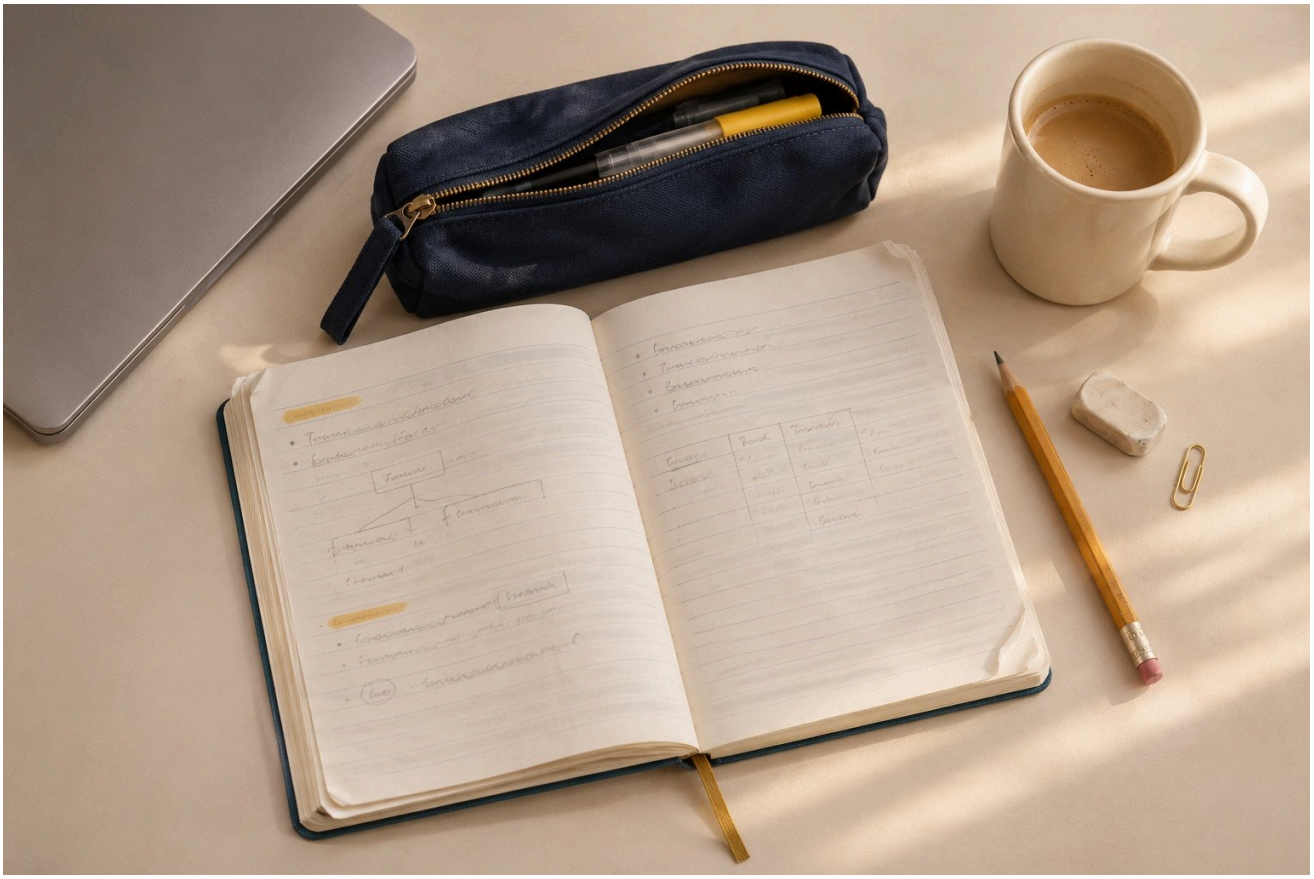
Logistics and administrative planning

Beyond academics, families need to consider practical matters. If the child is applying from overseas, travel to Singapore for the exam must be arranged. The exam is held at designated centres in Singapore, and families are responsible for their own travel and accommodation. Booking flights and lodging early can save money and avoid last-minute stress.

Parents should also think about what happens after the exam. If the child passes, school placement is offered based on the results and available vacancies. The child may be placed in a school that is not the family's first choice. Families need to be prepared for this possibility and have a plan for transport and daily routines. Some families visit the area around the school before accepting a placement to check the commute and neighbourhood.

Financial considerations

The AEIS itself has a registration fee, and there are additional costs for any preparatory courses or coaching. Families should budget for these expenses early. If the child needs to attend a preparatory course, the cost can vary depending on the provider and duration. It is wise to compare options and understand what is included in the fee.



Some families also factor in the cost of private tutoring or **AEIS exam coaching** if they feel the child needs extra support. Starting the planning process early allows time to save for these expenses rather than rushing to find money at the last minute.

Emotional and social readiness

Moving to a new school system in a new country is a big change for any child. Families should talk to their child about what to expect and help them feel prepared emotionally. Children who are anxious or resistant to the idea may struggle with the exam and with adjusting to school life later. Early planning gives time for the child to visit Singapore beforehand if possible, or to connect with other international students who have gone through the process.

Some families find it helpful to involve the child in the preparation, such as letting them choose study materials or set a study schedule. A sense of ownership can boost motivation and reduce anxiety.

What to do if the child does not pass

Not every child passes the AEIS on the first attempt. Families should have a backup plan. This might include waiting for the next sitting and using the extra time to strengthen weak areas, or considering alternative pathways such as enrolling in a private school or a preparatory programme. The MOE also offers the Supplementary Admissions Exercise for those who narrowly missed the main exam. Knowing these options in advance can reduce panic if the results are not what was hoped for.

When to start: a practical checklist

- 12 months before: research the AEIS process, check age eligibility, and start saving.
- 9 months before: gather and translate school documents, begin academic assessment, and consider enrolling in a preparatory course.
- 6 months before: start focused preparation, register for coaching if needed, and book travel if coming from overseas.
- 3 months before: confirm exam dates, complete registration, and finalise logistics.
- 1 month before: do a final review of practice papers, check travel arrangements, and ensure the child is rested and healthy.

This timeline is a guideline. Every child's situation is different, and some may need more or less time. The key is to start before the registration window opens, so that the family can act without rushing.



Getting professional advice

For families who feel overwhelmed by the process, consulting with an education advisor or a school that offers AEIS preparation can be a good idea. They can help clarify the steps, review documents, and provide guidance on the best approach for the child. This is especially useful for families who are new to Singapore's education system.

If you are considering this path, you can reach out to a local institution for more information. United Ceres College, located at 37 Middle Rd, #05-00, Singapore 188946, can be contacted at +65 8699 3609 for enquiries about their preparatory programmes and support for international students.