What to Check Before Applying for the AEIS from Overseas

Moving to Singapore and enrolling a child in a local school requires planning. The Admissions Exercise for International Students (AEIS) is the central route for non-citizens seeking placement in primary and secondary schools. Families applying from abroad face extra layers of coordination: immigration rules, exam logistics, and school placement procedures all need to align before arrival. A clear checklist helps avoid last-minute surprises.

Understand the AEIS Timeline

The AEIS is held twice a year, typically in February and September, though dates shift annually. Registration windows open roughly two months before each test date and close early. Missing the window means waiting for the next cycle, which can delay a child's entry by several months. Check the official Ministry of Education (MOE) website for confirmed dates as soon as your relocation timeline firms up. Mark the registration opening date and set a reminder at least two weeks before. Some parents also monitor the supplementary AEIS (S-AEIS) window, which offers a second chance for certain levels.

Confirm Your Child's Eligibility

Eligibility depends on age, academic history, and the level being applied for. The AEIS is open to children who are not Singapore citizens or permanent residents and who have not previously been a student in a Singapore school. Age cut-offs are strict: a child must be within the typical age range for the desired grade as of January of the intake year. Gather school records, birth certificate, and passport details early. If your child has studied outside a standard curriculum, such as a homeschool or non-traditional program, check whether additional documentation or equivalency assessments are needed. The MOE website lists the specific age requirements for each level from Primary 2 to Secondary 3.



Plan the Exam Logistics

The AEIS is held in Singapore. For families applying from overseas, this means travelling to the country for the test. Book flights and accommodation only after the exam date is confirmed by MOE, not before. Build in a buffer of at least a few days before the test so the child can rest and adjust to the time zone. Also consider that the application process may require a parent or guardian to be present for registration or to collect results. Check whether you need an entry visa for the child or accompanying adult. Singapore has a visa-free entry for many nationalities

for short stays, but it is worth verifying with the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) well ahead of travel.

View the location on Google Maps

Prepare the Required Documents

The application itself is done online through the MOE AEIS portal. You will need scanned copies of the child's birth certificate, passport (biopage), and recent school reports or transcripts for the last two years. If those documents are not in English, certified translations must be submitted. Some families also prepare a letter explaining any gaps in schooling or special circumstances. The portal asks for a recent passport-sized photograph, so have that ready in digital format. Double-check file size and format requirements before uploading. Incomplete submissions are not processed, and the deadline will not be extended.

Prepare for the Academic Assessment

The AEIS tests English and Mathematics at the level applied for. The English paper assesses reading, writing, and language use. Mathematics is based on the Singapore curriculum, which may differ from what your child has studied in terms of topics and problem-solving style. Past papers and sample questions are available from the MOE website and from some private preparation programmes. Many families enrolling from overseas find it helpful to work with a structured revision plan that covers the Singapore syllabus. This is where expert guidance through AEIS preparation can make a difference, especially for children unfamiliar with the local exam format. A focused programme can help identify gaps and build confidence before the test date.

Consider School Placement After the Exam

Do not expect to choose a school. MOE assigns successful candidates to schools based on their test performance, available vacancies, and the child's stated preferences. Families applying from overseas usually list preferred schools, but the final placement may not be in the most popular location. It is wise to research school zones and consider how the commute will work with your housing plans. Some schools have waiting lists, so even a good score does not guarantee a spot at the first choice. Understand that the AEIS is a route to placement in a mainstream school, not a specific one. After the results, you will usually have a few days to accept or decline the offered place.

Sort Out Immigration and Housing

Once your child receives a school placement, the next step is obtaining a Student's Pass. This application is handled by the ICA and requires the school's endorsement. Processing can take several weeks, so begin the housing search early. Many families rent a temporary serviced apartment or a short-term lease while waiting for the pass to be issued. Do not sign a long-term lease until the Student's Pass is confirmed. Also check if your family will need a Dependent's Pass or other visa for siblings or non-working parents. The immigration rules are separate from the AEIS process, so coordinate with an immigration agent if needed.



Prepare for the Transition

Moving to a new country for school is a big adjustment. Beyond academics, help your child understand the cultural and language environment of a Singapore classroom. Some children benefit from a short bridging programme or orientation before the school term starts. If your child is entering a secondary level, they may be placed in a class with students who have been following the Singapore curriculum for years. Extra support in the first term can ease the transition. Talk to the school about any available buddy systems, counselling, or language support. The more your child feels prepared socially and emotionally, the smoother the start will be.

Keep Communication Open with the School

After placement, stay in touch with the school's administration. They will guide you on uniform purchase, textbook lists, and orientation dates. Some schools have a dedicated international student coordinator. Ask about the first day procedures, especially if your child will arrive after the term has started. Confirm the school's policy on mobile phones, uniforms, and school hours. Also clarify how the school communicates with parents: many use a parent portal or messaging app. Knowing these details in advance reduces stress for both parent and child.

Revisit Your Plans Regularly

AEIS dates and application procedures can change. Bookmark the official MOE AEIS page and check it monthly during the application period. Join online forums or parent groups focused on international families in Singapore. They often share real-time updates about registration openings, common document pitfalls, and experiences with school placement. While every family's situation is different, hearing from others who have gone through the process can highlight something you might have overlooked. Keep a checklist on a shared document that you and your partner can both access and update.

United Ceres College is also on Instagram.

Final Practical Checks

Before submitting the AEIS application, run through a quick checklist: passport valid for at least six months beyond the exam date, birth certificate ready, school reports for the last two years (translated if needed), a digital photo meeting the portal's specs, and a payment method for the application fee. Confirm that you have an email address you check daily; the MOE sends all correspondence by email. If you are using a consultant or a preparation programme, ensure they have a copy of your child's records and know the deadlines. **Expert guidance through AEIS preparation** can be especially valuable for families who are not familiar with the Singapore system, but the final responsibility for submitting a complete and timely application rests with you.



For more information on preparation options and to discuss your family's specific situation, contact United Ceres College at 37 Middle Rd, #05-00, Singapore 188946, or call +65 8699 3609.