



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Letter to the Editor

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Review Procedure For Admission Of Under 6 Year Olds To Standard 1

Children must have completed 6 years of age on 1st January of the year they are entering school. However, since 2003 an exception is given to children who are up to two weeks younger (born 2nd to 15 January) if they have reached the “mental and reading age” of 6 year olds.

These 2-weeks younger children are required to go through a very stressful evaluation process (saringan). The first stage is a written test and if they pass, then there is an oral interview.

These tests are centralised and conducted on two different dates by the Ministry of Education at one centre in each state. In Penang this year the centre was in the Bukit Mertajam District. In Selangor last year, it was in Shah Alam.

This process deters parents from registering their children and is stressful for the children who have to travel long distances to take the tests.

These children will not be put in special schools but will be attending the same schools as the 6 year olds. The Ministry Officials are spending so much time on the preparations and conducting the two stages of the “saringan”, when the evaluation of the “mental and reading age” of the two weeks younger children could be done very easily.

All children entering Standard 1 have to take a test within the first few days of school for the purpose of streaming, i.e. whether they will be in class A, B, C..... etc. according to their “mental and reading age”.

Since the 2-week younger children will be in the same schools and classes with the 6 year olds, they should take the same test with the proviso that they will be admitted only if they pass (normally 50% marks or above) and if not they have to wait until they have reached the “mental and reading age” of 6 year olds.

The Ministry needs to be innovative in doing things to bring about improvement and this calls for moving away from established ways and having confidence in making changes. The Ministry has nothing to lose but experience to gain by allowing the 2-weeks younger than age 6 children to take the same test that 6 years olds take during the first week of school.

The Ministry should not hold back the education of children who are slightly younger than 6 years of age but have reached the “mental and reading age” of six year olds with a tedious stressful “saringan” process that deters the parents of these children registering them for early admission as allowed by the Ministry.

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