

ST. Premium Saturday Special Report

EASING THE STIGMA

What's in a name?

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IN THIS politically correct age, many special education (Sped) schools have coined new names for themselves.

These new names no longer make any reference to the child's disability, so students are not labelled by their problems.

Many Sped schools have also dropped the word special from their names, given that some parents do not want others to know that their child has problems and is attending a Sped school.

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Ms June Tham, executive director of Rainbow Centre, which runs two schools for children with multiple disabilities and autism spectrum disorders, said: 'We have realised that the word special gave a negative connotation, that the child is not normal.'

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So in 2006, Margaret Drive Special School became Rainbow Centre-Margaret Drive School, and Balestier Special School is now Rainbow Centre-Yishun Park School, after it moved to Yishun.

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Other schools that have changed their names include:

- Singapore Autism School was renamed Eden School in 2008.
- Singapore School for the Visually Handicapped is now known as Lighthouse School. The school's first name when it was set up in 1956 was Singapore School for the Blind. In the 1980s, it was renamed the Singapore School for the Visually Handicapped, before becoming Lighthouse School in 2008 to reflect its broader student base.
- Canossian School for the Hearing Impaired shortened its name to just Canossian School in 2003.



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Meanwhile, some charities that run special schools have also changed their names.

For example, the Association for Educationally Subnormal Children became the Association for Persons with Special Needs (APSN) in 2000.

APSN president Francis Chen says: 'Although clinically it is the most apt description, the term educationally subnormal conjures up unpleasant connotations, as if this group of children were not normal.'

'This is generally regarded as politically incorrect, so we adopted the more acceptable name of Association for Persons with Special Needs.'

THERESA TAN

NEXT STORY: Deaf get a voice at this school

