Will Dragon babies enter University next year?

In 1995, the Education Ministry built 9 new primary schools to accommodate a bigger group of Primary 1 pupils - the so called Dragon babies.

In 2001, MOE increased the number of secondary 1 places because of them.

Next year, the Dragon babies will be entering University.

What's being done to cater to these students?

Education reporter Jeremy Koh finds out.

Dragon years, which occur once in a 12-year astrological calendar, are considered by the Chinese to be auspicious times to have children.

This has resulted in a bumper crop of 53,000 children who were born in 1988, the Year of the Dragon.

Going forward, 2007 will be the year when the female Dragon babies enter University.

Will it lead to a huge surge in students?

Two of the three local universities, NUS and SMU, say they're expecting an increase in applications.

But the increase is likely to be modest.

NUS's Deputy Director of the Office of Admissions R Rajaram explains why.

“They're not all coming in the same year because the girls will come in right after the pre-university exams, the boys will come in only 2 years later, so the cohort is sort of split, and the ones who had gone to the polytechnics, which is another significant group that comes into the university, they'll be applying in subsequent years.”

NTU on the other hand, says males entering university next year are born in the Year of the Tiger, which is traditionally a year of lower birth rate.

As such, it'll even out any increase in applications by the Dragon babies.

But should there be an increase in applications, would it lead to a higher cut-off point for entry to university?

SMU says admission will become more competitive, while NUS thinks otherwise.

Mr Rajaram again.

“Because we have provisions to take in, and we're aware of the varying intakes every year, and we make adjustments for the number of places, we're not expecting a very significant swing in the cut-off points.”

Meanwhile, 2007 will also be the year when Singapore's 2nd law school opens its doors.

The school, which is run by SMU, will take in about 90 students per year for a start.

NUS will also increase its annual intake of law students from 220 to 250 next year.

It's part of efforts to increase the number of lawyers in Singapore.