



# Needy students get more private tuition help

Both Casper Chong (left) and Chin Li Wen receive free tuition at the Stag Match Tuition Centre. Four of Stag Match's 14 branches cater to students from low-income families. ST PHOTO: SEAH KWANG PENG

## Free services offered by some tuition centres and religious, college groups

By AMELIA TENG

STUDENTS in need of private tuition but who cannot afford to pay the fees are being given a growing number of options.

Along with community centres and self-help groups, they can now turn to several tuition centres and groups from universities and religious organisations that have started offering help in the

last few years.

The Stag Match Tuition Centre, for example, has been giving free tuition since 2009. Four of its 14 branches cater to students from low-income families. More than 400 needy students were enrolled last year, up from 50 in 2009.

Students from households with a monthly income of below \$3,500 qualify. They pay just \$4

per month for materials to prevent individuals from taking advantage of the scheme.

Stag Match's director Alex Wong said: "Some come from broken families or have uneducated parents, but they are more hard-working than their peers who are better-off."

Bedok View Secondary School student Casper Chong, 13, who attends the centre said: "My parents wanted me to come here, otherwise I have nothing to do at home."

Another programme, Connect Tuition, was set up a year ago by a

group of University Scholars Programme (USP) students from the National University of Singapore (NUS). It started with 23 students from interim rental housing flats in Dover, and is increasing its intake to 40 students this year.

A pool of about 40 undergraduate tutors teach a variety of subjects from English to principles of accounts.

"It's only once a week for two hours. It's not too much to ask of us," said sociology undergraduate and a tutor with the programme, Ms Poh Yu Ting.

"We're there for the tutees to

speak to if they have problems, not just to help improve their grades."

Life Edu Services, which registered as a non-profit organisation last June, has a team of about 10 volunteers who give free tuition. It had 47 students last year, up from 20 in 2006.

To allow more students to qualify, it has raised its monthly per capita income criteria from \$500 to \$750 in the last two to three years.

Religious organisations are also offering free tuition services.

The Kong Meng San Phor Kark

See Monastery along Bright Hill Road in Bishan has been offering free tuition for the public since 2013.

The initiative, which has 15 tutors, has helped about 30 students, mainly those taking the O- and N-levels.

Mr Victor Lim, who heads its youth department that conducts the programme, said: "This year, we started writing to schools nearby to ask them to recommend students who need help to us. Tuition is not cheap, and we don't want poorer students to lose out."

✉ [ateng@sph.com.sg](mailto:ateng@sph.com.sg)