

Site Visit Report:
Sankalp Special School

Date: March 2nd 2020

I visited Sankalp Special School with my husband this year during my trip to India. This is the new location then I visited 5 years back. It is pretty spacious and there is enough space for all classrooms as well as a huge open space for kids to do group activities as well as play.

Dr. Iyer (from Asha Kanpur) and Dr. Dipti had made really good arrangement for us in terms of visiting Kanpur and the school. We arrived at the school by 10:30 am. Currently there are 59 students in the school and 10 teachers. Apart from these, there is a speech therapist, a physiotherapist (with assistant) and a psychologist. Also there are 2 supporting staff members and 1 co-ordinator. All of them were very friendly and gave us a warm welcome.

The building has 6 classrooms including exercise room. There are two small offices for co-ordinator and Principal as well as small kitchen area. Students are divided into these classes based on the degree of their learning disability. The center timings are 10 am to 2 pm. We visited different classrooms and briefly interacted with children. Children for most part seemed happy and engaged in their activities.

Children are taught different activities based on their capability such as reading, writing, counting, drawing, painting, speaking, etc. Each classroom has a dedicated teacher. There is a small kitchen area where kids are sometimes taught very basic kitchen work like filling water, storing food, etc. There is a room dedicated for physiotherapy and speech therapy. There is huge open area outside the building that is used for group activities, dance and other play activities.

All the kids were happy and seemed to enjoy their classes. Vocational training has been going really well for the school and we got an opportunity to see amazing work these kids have done. From paintings, to cards, to Diwali divas/decorations, envelopes, mugs, snacks and much more, these kids have incredible talent. We packed half a bag to bring these items to US with us 😊

It was really amazing to meet all the students and we were amazed by their learning skills. They all seemed enjoying the classes and were involved in their activities. All the teachers introduced me to every student in their class and were kind enough to explain me their daily activities with students. They all were very enthusiastic to tell me success stories of some of the students under them. The ambience was warm and loving. Everyone was very welcoming and full of energy. Some kids made tea for us as well and we got to eat famous Samosa and Jalebi of Kanpur.

I got a chance to meet Swati who is the new psychologist and has taken vocational training in the school to next level. She manages the school in absence of Dr. Deepti these days. Dr. Dipti and Swati walked us through some of the student's files and how they do the assessment and track progress of each student. We saw videos of some kids while they were painting and it was amazing to see the talent. We also discussed some of their plans to start online sales (we suggested hiring an intern to help creating a website). They also spoke about how they are involving parents more by meeting parents every week and discussing their kid's progress one on one. Also having an open conversation with parents and understanding their issues/concerns.

We also went upstairs where there is a huge hall and kids were preparing dance for annual day function. Dr. Deepti walked us through entire building. The upper area is currently not available all the time (the owner sometimes rent it out for wedding or other functions) but Dr. Deepti is trying to work with owner to see how she can use the upper area as well.

Overall the trip was very productive and I enjoyed meeting everyone – all kids, teachers, aaya, helper, admin staff, Swati and Dr. Dipti. It felt really good to see these kids taking a step

towards being self reliant and managing to learn some skills that help them accomplish basic amenities of their life.

After school ended and kids left, we also got a chance to sit with all teachers. We told them about Team Asha/Silicon valley chapter and how we raise funds for all these schools in India. We all left the place around 2:30 pm.

