

Ashadeep Site Visit Report – Amrita Chaturvedi

The site visit to Ashadeep was made in July, 2017. The school is situated in Samneghat area, in the city of Varanasi. The school was founded in 2004. At present there are approximately 210 students enrolled. The school is run in a rented building.

Things Observed: When I entered the school, classes were in session so I decided to walk around and see the students being taught. There were 6 classrooms on the first floor and six on the second floor. The first floor also had the principal's room, and computer room. The school had a playground on the back of the building.

The students looked engaged in their classes and were well behaved. Student- teacher ratio was approximately 1: 18 in each class. Soon after it was lunchtime. I could tell the kids were hungry. Lunch was prepared fresh and consisted of dal, rice and one vegetable. During lunch I got to talk to several students. They all shared with me how happy they were to come to school. Some of them shared what they aspired to become after finishing education. I could tell their excitement.

Conversation with the Principal: After lunch I talked with the principal of the school – Connie Rao. She has been running the school for last 13 years. She shared with me how the school has become a part of community the students come from. The school has invested a lot of time and effort developing relationships with student's families and getting them to understand the importance of education. Connie also shared the difficulty of raising funds for the school but was really hopeful that receiving FCRA would address some of that difficulty. Following is the information Connie shared with me regarding the school:

Teacher Salaries. Teacher salaries range from Rs. 5500 -7500 per month depending on education, experience, and hours at the job. They have a total of 17 teachers including class teachers and an English teacher for classes KG-5 and subject teachers (Computer, English, Hindi, Math, Sanskrit, Science, Social Studies) for classes 6-8.

Rent, Utilities. and Maintenance. Rent is now Rs. 72,600/month. This, along with the salaries of handyman and custodian bring regular monthly expenses to 78,300/month. Utility and repair costs bring our average expenditure to around Rs. 83,000/month.

School Lunch. This year they are going to be feeding about 140 students per day. They provide a full, nutritious, freshly cooked meal Monday through Friday when school is in session.

Educational Supplies include items directly related to teaching: textbooks, copies, photocopies, chalk, art supplies, charts, science lab supplies, etc.

Arts Classes. Each Wednesday our students participate in an arts class of their choosing: dance, music, drawing, or craft. Expenses in this category include specialized teacher

salaries and the costs of needed supplies. These costs are covered by a special donation.

Additional Projects includes items like attendance and competition prizes, medicines, and celebrations. It also includes Rs. 43,790 for annual public performance in March.

After-School Program. In August they started a new after-school program to give students a safe place to play and learn. Included in the program is a Lifeskills class for teenagers. The budget for this program is Rs. 11,000/month; it is funded by a special donation.

Graduate Program. This year they are sponsoring 22 students in classes 9-12. The total budget for these students is Rs. 6,49,925. In addition, they are providing financial assistance to two graduates who are studying in coaching classes to enter polytechnic school next year and two (of seven) graduates who are studying in college. The budget for these is Rs. 45,500. Most of graduate costs are borne by donors who sponsor individual students in further studies.

Funding: Ashadeep is supported by donations received from individuals and organizations. No government aid is received.

Overall Impression and things to consider

Ashadeep does a great job providing education to kids who may not otherwise have an opportunity to receive education. However, Ashadeep is completely reliant on individual donors, what happens if individual donors stop supporting the school? I would encourage the school to look at possible avenues to generate funds so they can become self-reliant.