

Site Visit Report - Disha Special School & Autism Center, Vadodara, Gujarat

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Summary:

I visited Disha Special School and Autism Center in Alkapuri area of Vadodara city. I was given a tour of the facility by Mr. BK Parmar, Project manager and Mrs. Shashi Puri, Senior project manager. Disha Center is located in a very developed and popular area of the city of Vadodara. They are in a two story permanent structure which is donated to them by someone with various activity rooms like prayer room, physiotherapy room, sensory development room as well as some outdoor garden and playground space. There were about 4-5 various school buses/vans which are used to transport kids to and from home and also for field trips.



Details:

They have about 150 kids ages up to 22 years of age enrolled in this school with various disabilities, out of which 20 are partially to completely blind and deaf children which are through Sense India that we are supporting. Most are able to walk and climb stairs with help. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 restrictions the children were not present so could not talk to them or see them in action. Some staff members including Dr. Twinkle who is a physiotherapist, Dr. Mittal who is a speech and communication therapist and Dr. Shanu who is an occupational therapist. Their therapists work with all children at the center not only the deaf and blind. Dr. Mittal helps them learn some basic academics like words, numbers, colors, shapes etc using large flash cards and also on computers. Dr. Shanu works with them largely on developing life skills like brushing, bathing, using the toilet, eating, dressing up etc mostly by touching and sensing. I asked how challenging and how long it takes them to learn such skills and she gave an example of Vatsal, age 15 who happened to drool a lot and to teach him how to wipe his face and put the napkin in his pocket took him 6 months to learn. I also met two teachers Ms. Paru & Ms. Sunita (in the pic above) who works with Sense India kids only. During Covid they are connected with these children via smart phone and in some cases just regular voice phones. I asked them if they can't see or hear very well how you can help them? They said most kids have fairly supportive parents so they do help them during the call. They work via WhatsApp

video call with each child and work with pretty much what they have available in their home. They do try to teach them alphabets, numbers, sign language as well as art and crafts but their main goal is for these children to know and learn about the basic objects and materials that they use and need in daily lives. Because they are deaf, blind and do not speak also, as per the teachers, it is a very slow and challenging process to see progress for these kids. They had a special room with surfaces to feel under feet as well as hand, through vibrations and lights as well at the center. Sometimes if kids are not interested in learning they have a 3'x3' ball pit where they can play with different types of balls. They also teach older and able kids sewing, printing, art etc that they try to exhibit and sell at various places and also pay them to do such work as well. Overall, I thought they have a very good setup for partially deaf and blind kids, with good teachers and therapists on site full time.

Needs:

I asked them for their immediate needs and Mr. Parmar said they need medical expenses for Vatsal as he needs some immediate medical attention. Some families needed ration help too. I noticed that they only had one computer in a small closet type of area so would be nice if they had multiple. They can also use some more advanced tools to teach children with deafblindness.

I enjoyed visiting this center very much. It was truly a rewarding and humbling experience for me. I can only imagine the challenges these kids face in their day to day lives but I am very grateful and have a huge respect for the teachers who work directly with these children with so much patience everyday. Thank you Team Asha for giving me the opportunity to visit. I am so happy to be part of this wonderful group.

Some Photos from my visit



CHILDREN'S NAME	AGE
VATSAL PATROD	4
KRISHNA KANAR	4
ARISHA TONGAT	4
SHIVAM DHOT	4
YAKSH DHOT	4
VANSH PERMER	4
SMIA PATEL	4
MEHUR CHAUDHAR	4
NOLAN MODANI	4
KARAYTA RUPAK	4
ADARSH GANDHI	4
JIYA THAKUR	4
MURKAT PATIL	4
TARSH PATEL	4
ARCHANA	4





