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By Lakshmi Bora

V-Excel is located in the Mandaveli area of Chennai. I visited the school along with my spouse and two children. Ms. Sashikala, who leads the school, gave us a tour of the facilities. Since this was immediately after new year, there were very few children in the school.

Sashi helped explain the school's mission, the mix of ages and the approach used to identify if the school can help children in need to special support. Children are welcomed to the school and treated with love and respect. They are taught to be self-sufficient and are taught skills that can help them develop confidence, as well as, in some cases, provide a potential stream of income. There are a variety of options for children to develop skills in areas that appeal to them – these include music, loom-weaving, woodwork and textiles.

Children follow a strict gluten-free diet and a well-defined routine, which gives them predictability. Mid-day meals are cooked in the school's kitchen and each room eats together as a group, with the children encouraged to eat on their own, and put their plates away. The school is clean, and well maintained.

The atmosphere overall, is encouraging and positive. The teachers show a lot of patience and grace with the children, while at the same time, gently teaching them skills that will help them be self-sufficient and able to fit in socially. They adapt the method of teaching to the individual child's needs. The children seem at home, and happy.

I came back feeling very satisfied with how the school is run, and thankful for the tireless efforts of the teachers and staff.