

Site Visit – KHUSHBOO WELFARE SOCIETY (Gurugram, Haryana)

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The site visit for Khusboo Welfare Society (KWS) for 2019 was conducted on 6th September 2019. We had arrived at the school premises at 11:15 hrs., and the visit concluded at 14:15 hrs.

We had our first impression of the complex, and we can state that KWS has been able to create a spacious and efficient infrastructure, with all features and amenities modelling other formal schools in and around Delhi – NCR. At the entrance, we were greeted by Sahdev who is one of the security personnel at the school. Sahdev then guided us towards the office block, where we met Mr. Vijay Pal (Director – Administration). After a brief discussion, we requested Mr. Vijay for a tour of the school, which he happily obliged to. We would like to mention that Mr. Rakesh Jhinsi (President & CEO) was unable to join us due to some personal engagements.

After exiting the administration block, we walked towards the corridor where Mr. Vijay showed us a new wall mural painted by Blackrock India, as part of their recent visit to the school in the previous week. We then proceeded towards the out-patient department.

This segment caters to special abled children below the age of 6 years. The teaching methodology is similar to mother-toddler program in pre-school industry and KWS has specific programs as per the need and requirement of each child enrolled here. The classes are conducted four days a week, from 9:30 – 12:30 hrs. We would like to state here that no assistant staffs were allotted to this room, as the curriculum involves parent-child and special educator intervention. We met Ms. Shashi (special educator for OPD), who has been associated with KWS since 2003, along with two other parents who have their children enrolled for OPD activities. They were very happy with the facilities offered by KWS, and expressed the need for speech therapists for the children.

We then entered the main school complex and walked towards the first class – Little Lilly

The students were very excited to meet us, even though we entered during their recess time. We met Ms. Suman (special educator for the class), who informed us about the colouring activity which was held today after the early morning yoga session. Some students showed us their art work they made; some even walked up to us and introduced themselves to us.

We then went towards ‘Blooming Rose’ - for students aged between 11 and 14 years with higher ability issues. The students were learning how to count numbers from 1 to 20 using number flash cards, and also asked us to participate with them. The overall ambience was energetic, with students coming forth to see, identify the correct card and were even more enthused when they got the correct answer. Here, special mention must be made of one girl (from one of the senior classes), who came to assist another child in the class for his meals. Mr. Vijay then responded that this is a regular responsibility undertaken by the girl as part of their focus to make students self-reliant, and we expressed our appreciation for such gestures.

When we entered ‘Marigold’, students were enjoying their recess meals, after spending the morning activity of cut-and-paste crafts. Ms. Kavita (special educator of class) showed us the craftwork done by the students on the class pin-up board. We were then invited by Deeksha, a student of the class to

come and sit with her for meals. Her level of confidence was amazing - she introduced herself, explained her routine till recess, and also introduced us to her friends sitting next to her.

We then continued our tour towards 'Care Buds', where students with severe disabilities are taken care of. We met with Ms. Rekha, the special educator who explained the day's routine to us. She told us that the learning schedule involves more housekeeping activities to help them establish and enhance their fine and gross motor skills. Similar set of students were also in the 'Care Group' class, where they were enjoying their recess time. The classroom is also equipped with a desktop computer and a music system.

We then arrived at the physiotherapy room, where we saw three children undergoing therapy and one child was using two support rails to improve their gait. We met Ms. Priyanka Kalra, who is the senior physiotherapist and was accompanied by a male occupational therapist and one female attendant. Mr. Vijay also showed all the equipment around the room, and also showed a set of newly added training stairs (which had short and large steps) for better posture and stability therapy. Ms. Priyanka explained the kind of therapies offered at the school, with an average of 15-20 kids attended to in a day. She also introduced us to one of the attendants, who has been associated with KWS since the beginning and is currently able to manage up to seven children singlehandedly. Ms. Priyanka however did provide a couple of suggestions – she stated that there was a requirement for an additional air conditioning unit, since the children become more uncomfortable in the current heat and humidity. She also expressed the need to hire two more psychologists, to which Mr. Vijay responded that they are searching for the right candidate(s).

After this, we entered the pre-vocational class where Ms. Lalti was to conduct the music class with another instructor. It was a great experience to watch the students interpret rhythm and sound as they practised on Djembe drums and tambourines to the tunes set played in the background. Post this; Mr. Vijay took us towards the kitchen and cafeteria section, and it was neat and well-maintained as before. While there were no students present in the section, we got a brief idea on how students learn to work independently on daily household tasks. We met one of the housekeeping staff there (a special abled lady) who has been working with KWS for a long time.

We then proceeded towards the hospitality section, where we got a glimpse of training activities imparted to students. Students are trained on how to set dining tables, organize and arrange cutlery, proper techniques to lay beds, organize and set the kitchen, as well as arranging and storing sheets and linen ware. Mr. Vijay also informed us that a business hotel brand in Gurugram (Lemon Tree Hotel) had recently invited some students for a workshop class on housekeeping services, since the hotel industry has been proactively hiring special-abled people as part of their diverse workforce.

We then went towards the clay pottery class, where we observed three students working with their instructor on making intricate clay models. One of the students came forth and displayed his new clay art which resembled a wheel and tyre, as he confessed he was fond of automobiles. Another student was shaping a vase on the pottery wheel, while the third student was kneading small pieces clay miniature details on the models. The students shared their joy and enthusiasm, and before we exited the class, they gifted us two beautiful models of Lord Ganesha, while the third student gifted us a small model of the Feng Shui money frog. We were immensely thankful to the students and we

bid them farewell where we then walked towards the audiometry and computer labs. At the computer lab, we met a student on a motorised wheelchair who was busy editing a magazine cover. We were amazed looking at his editing knowledge on the computer, with minimal supervision. Mr. Vijay also explained that the student had been worked diligently to gain these skills, and has also created some magazine covers independently. While standing in the corridor outside the computer lab, we looked downstairs at the playground where students from 'Care Buds' were present for their afternoon activity. The students could be seen passing the baton to the other team member, something similar to sprint relay races; while the rest of the group was participating in some group matches in the far end corner of the playground with their instructor. Mr. Vijay responded that they have identified six potential students for the upcoming Summer Olympics 2020 and these students are asked to report between 08:00 and 09:00 hrs. daily for their practice sessions.

The final section of the school tour was the multipurpose hall, where Ms. Suman had organized a dance session for students of 'Little Lilly'. Ms. Suman devised the dance routine for the kids, which we witnessed in the class. Mr. Vijay informed us that they have hired an external dance instructor who visits the school three times a week, while other days are managed by Ms. Suman. He also informed us that the students had participated in the "Very Special Art India" competition, where the theme was on the "Save Water" campaign, and the students won 1st prize in the competition.

With our tour of the complex over, we walked downstairs to the administration block. We sat with Mr. Vijay to discuss certain questions over tea and snacks. He informed us about the challenges that KWS has faced since inception; he mentioned that the problem currently lies in not creating sufficient awareness about the children and adults with these special conditions. Mr. Vijay said that monetary contributions are still needed as the average monthly expenditure on each child is quite high. However, he was also appreciative of corporates and individuals, who have played an important role in their contribution of infrastructure equipment and electronic items to the school. We also complemented him on the entire efforts put by KWS team in helping and supporting such children, and added that Asha Austin can proactively support them in their efforts.

Q. We have been supporting the new initiatives teacher and therapist salaries since 2016. It would be good to know how their programs are doing, the schedule of these teachers, and impact on the children. How was the previous year 2018-19 and what plans are there for 2019-20?

A. The programs for new initiatives have been consistent since previous visits by Asha Austin. Equipment installed in rooms (such as computers, audio systems and projector screens) are all functional and utilised during class hours, however some teachers have requested for additional teaching material, especially in classes such as ‘Care Buds’.

Therapeutic services cater to 15-20 cases in a day. To cater to the increasing requirements, KWS has created additional space in room next to multisensory integration room. The room has similar equipment as the main OT room and can cater to 10-15 children in a day. The children have benefitted from the therapies immensely and the therapists are also satisfied with the support by KWS team.

Q. Status of their audiometry lab, staff hires and their roles

A. The audiometry lab has been functioning as reported in previous site visits. The equipment is functional, and the area is well maintained. Their current requirement is sufficient to handle cases.

Q. What are the current hiring needs of KWS?

A. The current staff strength at KWS comprises of 39 members (combined total of special educators, assistants and support staff). There has been a reduction since previous year (when the total strength was 43). KWS has mentioned they are in need of more support staff employees (helpers and nannies), and finding trained candidates is a difficult task.

Mr. Vijay has mentioned that there has been a requirement for a full-time speech therapist, many parents (especially in OPD section) have requested for the same for overall development of the children.

Additionally, Ms. Priyanka (senior physiotherapist) has also requested if two psychologists can be hired by KWS for assistance in therapeutic services. Mr. Vijay has noted this request and his team have been researching on available psychologists in and around Gurugram.

KWS is also considering renewal of the contract for the sports and fitness teacher, since the instructor is a part-time appointee. They have also mentioned there is a vacancy for a Design Teaching expert for the computer lab, since the earlier instructor left due to a better job opportunity.

Q. Would like to know how number of children has changed over the years. What are the current challenges they see in adding more children?

A. As reported in previous site visit, the school has a maximum intake capacity of 200 children. They had total strength of 121 students till July 2019, which has dropped down to 115. The reduction in student strength is primarily due to relocation of the families.

Another set of challenges is transportation. Even though KWS covers almost entire region of Gurugram, they require additional transport fleet to cover newer developing areas of Gurugram.

The biggest challenge that KWS faces is retention of students enrolled in school. He explained in length that the average monthly expenditure of each child in school is very high, and at times parents are reluctant if there is any increment or variation in the fees. Since the therapy is also a lengthy and time consuming process, most parents feel that the cost-to-benefit ratio is not favourable. However, KWS has ensured the drop-out rates are low and they ensure involvement with parents through constant updates on WhatsApp groups and periodic feedback from parents.

Q. What does a typical day look like for kids in each of the sections (from little kids all the way to vocational classes)?

A. The classes have a defined schedule for the week from Monday to Friday. The day care class starts from 09.00 to 12.00 hrs., with educators and parents present in class. For other classes, the morning starts with 30 minutes of yoga and meditative chanting sessions, followed by the classes as per schedule. This is followed by a 30-minute recess period, after which the other classes head for the respective activity classes as per the day/week.

Q. Funding needs for this year 2019-20 and how last year was for their fundraising 2018-19

A. As on date, the following details were provided by Mr. Vijay:

- In the first week of September 2019, KWS has received a confirmation of INR 10 lacs from Oil & Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) India for donation towards school purposes. The same is expected to be disbursed within this month or the next month.
- Another company (Fidelity International) have approved INR 10 lacs towards sponsorship for 10 students at the school.
- Aside from corporate funding, Fluor India has invested in installation of 30kW solar panels (costing INR 15 lacs) for electricity generation purposes.
- A music system (worth INR ~50,000) was sponsored by one of the parents.
- KWS has also sent across proposals to more corporates for donations and are expecting a response from them.

Q. Progress of their residential home project with status

A. As on date, KWS has received a total funding of INR 50 lacs, which has been invested in set up of the boundary walls of the project. Mr. Vijay explained that they have split the overall budget estimate into two phases, and they can complete the project within one-and-half years if the funds are allocated within the coming months.

Q. Can you try to meet or call some of the parents?

▪ We met a few parents in OPD day care and asked about their experience with KWS (the following details below is a verbatim feedback which we received):

- Ms. Hema Arya - mother of Sambhavi (age 4 years 8 months)
 - “It has been over nine months since my daughter was enrolled with Khushboo Welfare Society. I am very pleased and happy to see my daughter progress and that she is more

active socially. I would request that the school hire speech therapists for better improvement.”

- Ms. Anju Kumari – mother of Nirbhay (age 4 years 8 months)
 - *“My son was detected with Down Syndrome. We enrolled him in February 2019 and in this short time span, I see an improvement in him as he has started to socialise with other kids. Moreover, since I am also personally involved I have a better understanding of how I should take care of his needs. Through KWS, my son was also taken for a sports activity in another school and I would recommend more field trips so that he gets more exposure to the real world.”*

Q. Does KWS take a survey of parents?

A. We had reviewed feedback dossier for two students of the school, where parents provide a periodic feedback to school on how their kids have progressed since their admission, and if any improvement area is required, the same is also stated.

For new admissions and brand awareness, KWS holds special awareness camps in different areas to promote their services and expand their reach across the city.

Q. Does KWS take a survey of teachers?

A. KWS conducts performance assessments for the staff on a periodic basis. They one-to-one meetings with the teachers, understand their goals and requirements, and also provide increment as per the relevant industry standards.

Q. Can they help with Asha-Austin's support-a-child program for KWS by reaching out to their well-wishers in US? All of the project specific funds raised that year will be ear-marked for KWS. Helps build a sustainable model before Year 7 when funding from chapter general funds will stop.

A. Mr. Vijay mentioned that he and the team at KWS would interact with their donor base, and through them they would like to assist Asha-Austin in the program.

ACTIVITIES OBSERVED AT KHUSHBOO WELFARE SOCIETY (6TH SEPTEMBER 2019)

- Visit to the Out-patient department (OPD) pre-school.



- Wall painting by Blackrock India on their visit to school on 2nd September 2019



- Visit to 'Blooming Rose' where students were learning how to count numbers using number flash cards



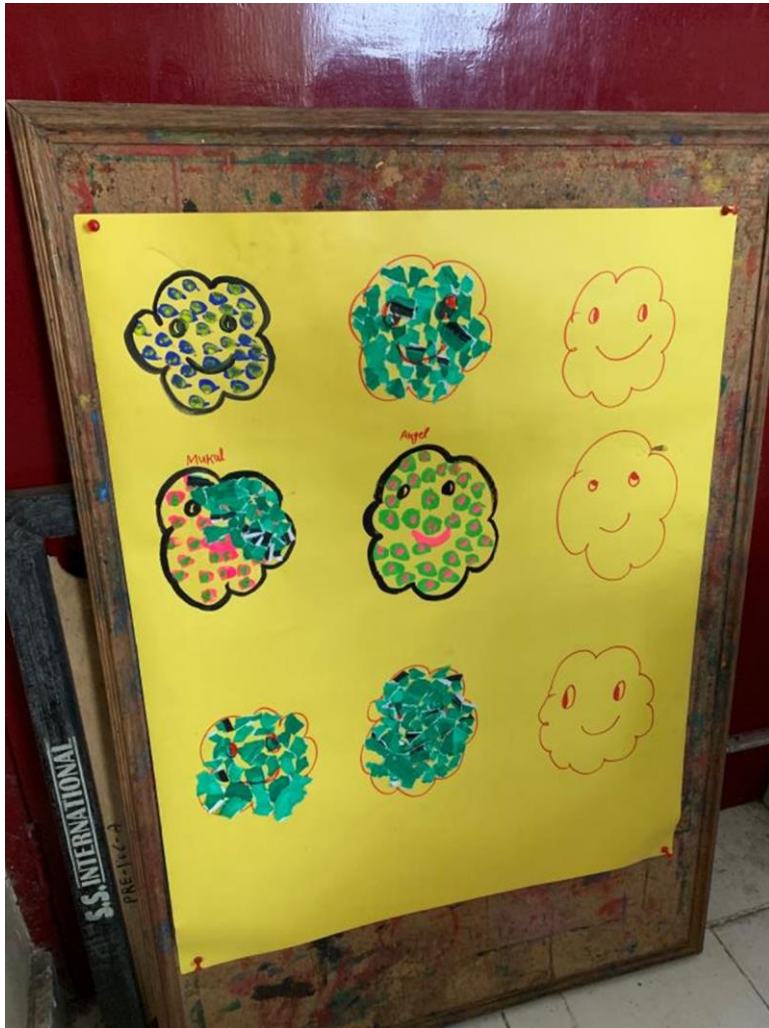
- Therapeutic services and multisensory integration rooms



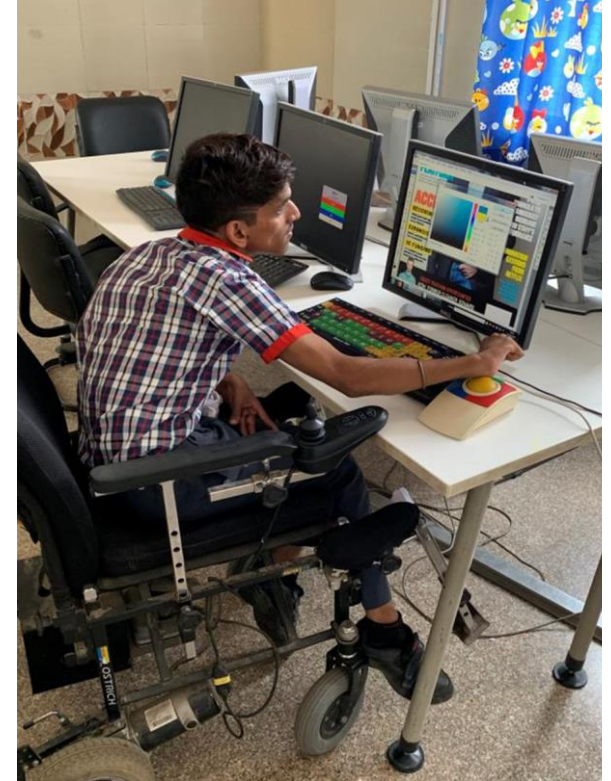
- Rhythm and sound practice at Pre-vocational (B) class



- Glimpses of artistic activities around the school



- Creative works presented by students



- Sports and fitness activities are an integral part of the school's daily routine



- Gifts handed to us by students of pottery class



THANK YOU