

Site Visit Report

Organization visited:	Rishi Pragatisheel Shikshan Sansthan
Place visited:	Little Stars School located in Nagwa, Varanasi
Dates of visit:	March 30 and 31, 2026
Background:	The relationship of the Princeton Chapter of AfE with Little Stars School (LSS) began through an in-person site visit in 2014. The next site visits were in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2022 and 2024. Reports of the aforementioned visits are available on the ashanet.org website of AfE at https://ashanet.org/project/?pid=1270. This report provides a description of the in-person site visit carried out on March 30th and 31st, 2026.
Details of the visit:	I was accompanied by Samir Biswas, my friend from IIT-Delhi days who lives in New Delhi and Rajendra Singh, who lives in Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh. Samir Biswas has visited Little Stars School with me several times in the past. Rajendra is the founder of Kabir Foundation, an NGO providing after-school enrichment activities to Adivasi children. He was keen to observe first-hand the atmosphere at Little Stars School. On March 28th, Samir and I traveled by Vande Bharat Express from New Delhi to Varanasi and Rajendra traveled by Vande Bharat Express from Khajuraho to Varanasi. Both the trains arrived at Varanasi at about 11 P.M. and all of us then proceeded to BnB by Cocasa, located in Ganga Bagh Colony, for our 3-night stay. After breakfast, the three of us proceeded to Little Stars school (old building) and met Ms. Asha Pandey (Founder and Director) and Ms. Jyotima Sinha (Vice-Principal) in her office. For Rajendra's benefit, Ms. Pandey gave a brief history of the school and also Shantiniketan (hostel for orphan girls). There was an atmosphere of festivity as the Results Declaration and the Prize Distribution Session for Grades 4 to 8 were scheduled to take place at about 10 AM. I excused myself as I was interested in meeting one-on-one (a) Simpe Kumari, the teacher who had traveled to Tiruvallur in December 2025 to attend a

computer science training camp and (b) Ghanshyam Singh, the physics teacher at the school.

Meetings with teachers:

Ms. Simpe Kumari teaches PE and is a source of inspiration for students, especially girls, with her can-do attitude.

In order to promote computer literacy among the students that our projects support, the Princeton Chapter had decided to sponsor one teacher from each of our three projects to the Right Start CS training Camp at Tiruvallur organized by Dr. Rajaraman Krishnan, Chapter coordinator of the Chennai Chapter. Ms. Pandey decided that Simpe would be the representative from Little Stars. In my conversation with Simpe, I was impressed with her enthusiasm to begin implementing the program at Little Stars. I was also struck by her persona. She is a body builder and rides a Bullet motor-bike!

Thereafter, I entered a physics class being taught by Mr. Ghanshyam Singh and was delighted to find that the students were using scientific calculators. In one of my previous visits, I had observed that the students were being taught formulas but didn't have any practice whatsoever in doing even the simplest calculations. During the next visit, I had gifted him 9 scientific calculators and requested him to introduce calculations into the course. We talked one-on-one about pedagogical techniques to make the subject interesting by including ideas from the Conceptual Physics by Paul Hewitt which I had also given to him as I had found it to be an amazing textbook.

Prize distribution:

Students from grades 4 to 8 had gathered in the yard. Some parents were in attendance too. The teachers had decorated the stage in eye-catching colors. My colleagues and I were assigned the task of handing out "diplomas" to the top three students in each grade and also place graduation tassels on their heads. We felt greatly honored. The faces of the children were beaming with happiness. I was asked to say a few words of encouragement. The attached photos sat it all!

Visit on March 31st:

The school was closed on account of Mahavir Jayanti. Therefore, I took the opportunity to spend a couple of hours with Asha ji at the old school building that houses the girls' shelter known as Shantiniketan. Asha ji was proud that despite the numerous challenges in running the school, quality and a joyful atmosphere were being maintained. She treats the eighteen or so girls at the shelter as her daughters and earlier this year performed the wedding of Angela, a long-time resident. She has identified a groom for another girl, Netra and the wedding is likely to happen later this year or early next year! During the course of our meeting, she was almost constantly attending to requests for her help and/or intervention on issues related to the school.

Misc. observations: The numbers of students, teachers and staff have stayed pretty much unchanged from what they were in 2019.

- Pre N to Class 3: 300 students, 13 teachers in orphanage building
- 4th to 8th: 600 students, 29 teachers in main bldg.
- 9th to 12th: 113 students

The school premises were spotlessly clean, the students were in uniforms and, very importantly, had smiles on their faces. The teachers displayed dedication and teamwork.

Amrish Garg



