

Asha Silicon Valley

Swami Vivekananda Vidyalaya Site Visit

School Location: Lodhar village, near Kanpur, U.P.

Date of Visit: January 21, 2026

Asha SV visitor: Vijay Poduri (vpoduri@yahoo.com)

Accompanied by: Annapurna Dixit (School Principal), Raju Gaur (Jagriti Bal Vikas Samiti), and Mahesh Pandey (Asha Trust Kanpur and Asha SV Fellow)



I arrived at the school shortly after 10 AM, accompanied by Raju Gaur of Jagriti Bal Vikas Samiti and Asha SV Fellow Mahesh Pandey. The school is small, but well-designed. The classrooms are on two floors of the L-shaped building, which leaves an open area for school assembly. The overall feel is of an airy, well-lit, and welcoming compound.

I met with Annapurna ji, the school principal, in her office. We talked about school enrollment, school activities and current challenges.



My conversation with Annapurna Dixit and Raju Gaur

There are a total of 246 children in the school with about two-thirds being girls. The total enrollment is smaller than in previous years, because admitting children in the middle classes has a new government requirement: they need a transfer certificate from their previous school. Apparently, some parents were enrolling their kids in government schools simultaneously, which is no longer possible.

One of the highlights of the way the school operates is parental involvement. Scheduled meetings are held with all parents three times a year after exams and occasional other meetings also take place. Demand for the school among parents in the village continues to be high. In this academic year, they have 34 children in the 6th grade, and had to turn away 18 children. Similarly, lower grades are also at capacity. The school is only up to the eighth grade, but parents have been requesting that 9th and 10th grades be added. This request cannot be met because of large upfront investment that will be required - maybe ₹3 to 4 crores.

The school has 11 full-time and 3 part-time teachers, with the part-time teachers employed for the after-school programs (Taekwondo, Kathak and Music) supported by Asha SV. All full-time teachers at the school have Bachelor of Education ([B.Ed.](#)) degrees.

The school is charging a nominal fee of ₹100 per month for girls and ₹150 per month for boys from kindergarten to fifth grade. These amounts go up to ₹150 per month for girls, ₹200 per month for boys for children in grades six through eight. No fees are charged for the month of June. This fee level can be compared with other private schools in the area, which charge a minimum of ₹500 per month.

Mahesh Pandey suggested that the school could apply for funds under the Right to Education (RTE) Act. The provisions of the act require that private schools reserve 25% of their admissions for poor and disadvantaged children. Almost all children attending the school would qualify under the criteria. The Uttar Pradesh government pays fees up to ₹450 per month per such admission, and the parents of the children do not have to pay anything. Mahesh ji noted that this could help with the school operating budget. Later that evening, I brought this up with Jagriti Bal Vikas Samiti office bearers Madhav Narayanan and Aditya Medury. They thought it was an idea worth pursuing.

After the meeting with the principal, I was taken on a tour of the school, and I visited several classrooms from first grade all the way through eighth grade. I also went to the library, the computer lab, and the science lab. As the selected pictures below show, the rooms are bright, well-equipped, and cheerful.

In several of the classes, the children demonstrated their skills - reading from Hindi textbooks, discussing science concepts, or solving algebra problems on the board. My observation was that these individual students (who may well have been selected for the purpose) were proficient at the subject at hand.



First grade children



Children in grade 3



Seventh grade student solving an algebra problem



Students in the school computer lab

I also had a meeting with the teachers in the library. The teachers generally agreed that private schools in the area were charging high fees while providing low quality education. No concerns were raised about the school itself.

I brought up the idea of designing a set of modules for the children around basic health and financial literacy with the science teacher, Sanjay Awasthi, and the computer teacher Uday Pratap Singh. They were supportive of the idea, but it remains to be seen if it will be implemented.

I mentioned that the after-school computer classes for girls who have graduated from the school have been well-received by Asha SV volunteers. I was told that this faces some hurdles due to timing issues - girls who finish their school or college classes at 3 PM find it difficult to attend evening classes. There is also the idea that the classes should be made available to boys as well. Some planning and implementation are required for this to happen.



Meeting with the school's teachers

Summary

I felt that my visit was a successful one. I met students in virtually every class, visited the computer room, science lab, and library, and had productive conversations with the principal and teachers. I came away with the impression that the school is well-run, the teachers are dedicated and enthusiastic, and the students are energetic and happy. The school continues to be a model of how high standards can be achieved with a relatively modest level of investment.

I strongly recommend that Asha SV continue to support Swami Vivekananda Vidyalaya - both the after-school program and the operational budget.