

I visited Swami Vivekananda School in Lodhar run by Jagriti Vikas Samiti with my friend Shiroly Anand in March 2011. One of the school teachers Raju Gaur came to accompany us from IIT Kanpur to the school. The route to the school is through small gallis and kaccha rasta in the villages. We went on bicycle and it took us half an hour to get there. We got there around noon and the children in Kindergarden had finished their school and had already left for the day.

Other students were having their classes when we visited. We first met with the principal Annaporna Dixit who told us the background about the students. She explained to us how every year they would go around to talk to the villagers to encourage them to send their children to their school. Over time they had developed a good relationship with the villagers and had regular parent teacher meetings. She explained that during the month of April when the crops would be harvested parents would stop sending their children to school and make them work in the fields. They tried to schedule their exams during that time so that parents do not take them out of school during that period. The other issue she raised was that since the school only had classes up to eighth standard several of the girls were unable to continue their education after eighth class. The government high school was far from the village and parents did not like to send their daughters that far. We enquired about whether they kept track of their students after they finished schooling and she told us that they did try to do this.

Next we went around the school, the principal showed us around the library and computer room which also served as the teachers room. Every class had time reserved during the week for computers. They had organized it in accordance with the weeks they had electricity and typically two students would share a computer. The teachers were also encouraged to improve their expertise with the computers. She gave us a copy of their monthly magazine which was put together by the teachers and consisted of stories and poems written by the students. I will scan in a copy of the same.

The room next to the computer room doubles as a library and a for any common classes that they had run. The students are encouraged to read from other textbooks and teachers also utilize the library to supplement their teaching material.

Then we went through various classrooms. The children were excited to have visitors and were happy to talk to us. We observed that the students seemed to have a good rapport with their teachers. The principal added that several of the students especially the girls would often ask them for their advice in other matters of life as well.

The students had recently visited Agra on a school trip and one of the teachers was showing them pictures of their trip on the computer. They have a monitor and computer in one of the classrooms which they utilize for showing students educational videos.

We also had an opportunity to look at models built by the students for their social studies project and for science fair. The science teacher explained to us how students from class sixth to eighth were divided into groups of four and were encouraged to come up with their own topics for the model. I will attach pictures of few of these. For instance some students had made a model for automated train crossings in Kanpur, electromagnetic coil to light a small bulb, etc. The teacher explained how the students had lively discussions with him when coming up with these projects.

In conclusion, after visiting the school we were impressed by the teaching techniques and the willingness of the teachers to improvise. Currently the building has two floors and there some area for the students to play. Long term, the school envisions being able to acquire more land and expand classes up to 12th standard eventually.