



Special Education Policies and Practices at Shikshantar - Vishvas

Integral Education forms the essence of Shikshantar's teaching learning philosophy. Integral because it addresses the totality of the being. Through our experiential pedagogy we seek to educate not only the body, the emotions and the intellect and to facilitate a connect with the inner being. In Shikshantar, children learn by observing, doing and reflecting. Our curriculum is designed to nurture the physical, cognitive and social emotional needs of children in a non- judgmental environment that ultimately has a bearing on the comprehensive development of the child.

Vishvas is the Special Educational Needs team at Shikshantar which works with a conviction that inclusion begins at the heart. It stems from an earnest desire to make every child feel acknowledged and valued. Vishvas, which means 'faith', believes in each child's unique abilities.

Shikshantar facilitates an inclusive environment and is committed to providing equal learning opportunities to all children including those with special educational needs. We acknowledge diversity amongst all learners and endeavour to create a curriculum which addresses varied and individual needs. Children with special needs are a part of regular classrooms and learn along with their peers. The responsibility of all children including those with special needs lies with the group facilitators.

For effective and smooth facilitation of the Special Education programme and for meeting the challenges of inclusion, the Special Education team in consultation with the Core Team and the Special Education Parent Representative have arrived at the following practices and policies:

Special Education Practices:

Individualised Educational Plan (IEP)

The Individualised Educational Plan (IEP) specifies the goals and objectives for a child in context of his/her specific areas of development. IEP is made by the special educator in consultation with the parents, group facilitators, subject facilitators and resource facilitators. Prior to making an IEP this team reflects on the previous IEP to assess its effectiveness and outcome. Suggestions and inputs of the same are incorporated in the new IEP. Group facilitators and special educators and in specific cases support facilitators are equally responsible for the effective implementation of an IEP in the school. Parents are responsible for the reinforcement of the same at home.

a. Period for which IEP s are made:

- April- June
- July- September

- October – December
- January – March

After the IEP has been discussed and closed with the parents (scheduled meeting), a duly acknowledged and signed copy (special educators/parents) of the same is filed in the child's file which is with the school office.

Individualised Lesson Plan (ILP):

An Individualised Lesson plan (ILP) is the modified group lesson plan which addresses and accommodates a child's individual needs. The purpose of making the ILP for each child is conscious integration and synchrony between the group's need and the child's need. The special educator incorporates suggestions and inputs of group facilitators and resource facilitators while creating an ILP. The ILP consciously weaves aspects of art, music and dance keeping the child's needs as well as interest in mind. It is emailed to parents for their suggestions and inputs in the week prior to its transaction in the group.

After implementation of the ILP for a child a reflection of the same is shared with the parents in the next ILP.

Progress Review:

The Progress Review is a documentation of the child's physical, cognitive, social emotional as well as vital development based on specific observations and feedback of the group/ subject /resource facilitator as well as the special educator. The special educator collates the group, subject and resource facilitators' observations and incorporates it in the Progress Review. It is shared with the parents twice in a year.

Open House interactions:

Two 'Vishvas' open house interactions are scheduled in our school calendar in addition to the 'Open House' interactions planned for each grade level. The purpose of these interactions is to assess, review and share our understanding and work in the area of special education. This is also an opportunity for us to understand the parents' perspective and incorporate their suggestions and inputs, wherever possible.

Peer support and collaborative learning in classrooms enable an inclusive environment in Shikshantar. Peer intervention strategies provide ongoing social and academic support to children with special needs. The outcome is increased understanding and acceptance of diversity. Opportunities of collaborative learning exist during project, subject, self study and choice time. Children are divided into small groups to carry out research work and project related activities.

They learn to work in a team respecting and accommodating different perspectives and suggestions.

Special Educational Policies:

- Being regular at school and reaching school on time establishes the connect for each child with the work at school. There is a flow in the IEP and ILP that can be best transacted if a child is regular to school. Therefore, your child is expected to be regular and punctual to school.
- Well being and safety of children is of utmost importance to us. Whenever a child is absent for any reason, the group facilitator and Special Education coordinator needs to be informed of his /her absence.
- Prior permission of long leaves need to be taken from school.

- Any change in the behaviour or routine of a child should be immediately brought to the notice of the group facilitator and special educator.
- Parents need to take a written permission from the respective 'Head /Supervisor of School' and the Core Team in case they need an exceptional arrangement such as shorter duration of stay for their child in school, allowing a support facilitator in the school premises etc.
- During school hours phone calls are made to parents only in case of unavoidable circumstances. Parents are expected to understand the seriousness of these calls and attend to them promptly.
- The special educator and group facilitators are engaged with the children during school hours. We discourage any phone calls or messages sent to them during this time. However, in case of an unavoidable circumstance parents can call the Special Education Coordinator and their message will be passed on to the concerned person.
- If parents feel the need for a meeting with either the group facilitator or the special educator, prior appointment needs to be taken. Communication can be sent through a diary note or an email on the school id.
- Outstation trips are an opportunity for children to strengthen their bond with their friends and facilitators along with building a sense of independence. When such trips are planned by the school, at least one parent must accompany their child for safety and security reasons.
- In specific cases, the school and parents might feel the need of a **support facilitator** for a child. In such situations, the support facilitator will be provided by the parents in consultation with the Special Education team. Permission of the support facilitator's presence in the school premises needs to be taken from the respective 'Head of School' and the Core Team.

The Support facilitator is a resource provided by the parents for their child. Therefore, parents will be accountable for him /her. He/she will not be on the school rolls. However, the school will include the support facilitator's participation in all meeting and training programmes organized for the classes in which the child is enrolled.

- Parents must inform the group facilitators and special educator in case of the support facilitator's absence from school.
- Absence of the support facilitator impacts the facilitation of the ILP goals for the child. If he/she is absent for more than two days, an alternative arrangement needs to be made by the parents.
- To recruit a thoughtful and sensitive support facilitator is of prime importance to avoid any kind of unforeseen incidence. Following steps of recruitment may help in employing a compassionate and able support facilitator.

Recruitment steps at parents' end:

- ⇒ Identifying the person to be recruited
- ⇒ Checking the educational background
- ⇒ Work experience with specially abled children, if any

- ⇒ Recent police verification
- ⇒ Two reference check, one must be from the previous employer
- ⇒ Trial period to be facilitated at home for at least two weeks.

This is to ensure that the facilitator :

- knows about the medical history and the specific needs of the child
- builds a social and emotional connect with the child
- gauges the academic level and the needs of the child

- **Procedures to be followed by the school for recruiting and integrating the support facilitator in the school system:**

- ⇒ Two reference check, one must be from the previous employer
- ⇒ Documents for ID card : Identity proof and two passport size photographs
- ⇒ To ensure that all steps of recruitment process have been undertaken by the parents
- ⇒ Feedback by the parents of the support facilitator in writing (preferably on email) along with his/her educational and work experience details
- ⇒ Orientation session of the recruited facilitator by the Vishvas team
- ⇒ Meeting with the respective group facilitator, curriculum coordinator and the Head of the School
- ⇒ Weekly meetings with the Vishvas facilitator working with the child and sharing the feedback of support facilitator for the first two months with parents.
- ⇒ Familiarising, understanding and signing of the following documents:
 - Roles and responsibilities of the Support Facilitator
 - Child Dignity and Respect Policy
 - Shikshantar Community Dignity and Respect Policy
 - Familiarising with POSH and POCSO Acts

Role of support/shadow facilitator:

- a. to work in harmony with the special educator and the group facilitator in order to enrich the special child's learning experiences in school
- b. support the implementation of ILP and IEP for the child
- c. reinforce the suggested activities for the child in the group so as to maintain the child's connection and involvement within the group.
- d. ensure the child's safety within the school premises
- e. at all times within the school premises the support facilitator is expected to be with the child. The support facilitator is not expected to engage with the functioning of the group.
- f. facilitate proactive planning and implementation of the IEP and ILP under the guidance of the group facilitator and special educator.

- Information regarding the IEP meetings is shared with the parents well in time. Both the parents must be present for all IEP meetings. Input and feedback of the parents is important for effective implementation.
- Regular and consistent follow up on IEPs and ILPs is essential to understand their efficacy and also for the subsequent IEP planning. IEP goals for a child can be achieved only through parental support and consistent follow up at home.
- Attendance of both the parents is mandatory during Open house interactions, Progress Review meetings and all IEP meetings.

Any Special Education programme is forever evolving because each child is different and presents varied challenges for us. There will be new learnings with each experience which will further strengthen the Special Education programme at Shikshantar.

Let us work together to enrich the learning experiences of our children!

Reviewed on: 14th October 2022

