



shikshantar

a place where I can be 'me'

All children have within themselves  
a special, inherent quality  
and potential that is unique to them.

The true work  
of parents and teachers  
is to recognise that quality,  
nurture it  
and give it space to grow  
so that children can blossom  
and take their special place in this world.

The sapling within the Shikshantar tree  
symbolises the potential that is within each one of us,  
hidden and dormant,  
waiting to be recognised,  
to flower to its maturity...





Imagine a school where...

- . . children are happy to be in school each day
- . . trees, flowers, birds, dogs, fish and the breeze embrace the wonder that each child is
- . . when children have questions, they are not scared to ask their teachers
- . . children discover that humane solutions to personal conflicts are within each child
- . . children learn that people thrive when they co-exist with different natures and strengths
- . . harsh realities of life are better understood through dialogue, patience and courage
- . . children are engaged with projects every day of the week
- . . sciences, languages and mathematics are building blocks for an expansive world of knowledge and debate
- . . art, music and drama are integrated with festivals, annual events and daily classroom experiences
- . . outdoor sports is organised every day to build higher levels of physical strength and stamina
- . . teachers are mentored such that they can be their nurturing selves for each child
- . . parents are guided and counselled about choices in parenting and education for their children
- . . children grow up with all this and do very well in board examinations

“The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. The teacher is not an instructor or taskmaster, he is a helper and a guide. His business is to suggest and not to impose. He does not actually train the pupil's mind, he only shows them how to perfect their instruments of knowledge, helps and encourages them in the process.

He does not impart knowledge to himself, he does not call forth the knowledge that is within; he only shows him where it lies and how it can be habituated to rise to the surface. The distinction that reserves this principle for the teaching of adolescent and adult minds and denies its application to the child, is a conservative and unintelligent doctrine”.



“The second principle is that the mind has to be consulted in its own growth. The idea of hammering the child into the shape desired by the parent or teacher is barbarous and ignorant superstition. ....

To force the nature to abandon its own dharma is to do it permanent harm, mutilate its growth and deface its perfection. It is a selfish tyranny over a human soul and a wound to the nation, which loses the benefit of the best that a man could have given it. ....”

“The third principle of education is to work from the near to the far, from that which is, to that which shall be. .... We must not take up the nature by the roots from the earth in which it must grow or surround the mind with images and ideas of a life which is alien to that in which it must physically move. If anything has to be brought in from outside, it must be offered, not forced on the mind. A free and natural growth is the condition of genuine development”.

# Sri Aurobindo

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## BEST PRACTICES

### WHAT MAKES US WHO WE ARE ?

This represents our commitment and pathways that lead to embracing the holistic development of each and every student.

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## SHIKSHANTAR VISION...

All children inherently love to learn.

They grow by sharing their discoveries with each other, their teachers and parents.

Learning is best guided with love and faith in each child.

Learning is meaningful when it is supported by thoughtfulness towards the learner and the environment.

Learning is enduring when it believes in change and new possibilities.

Learning begins with the self, followed by building relationships with nature and society. Named Shikshantar (shiksha + antar), the vision of the school is to create and nurture a learning culture with students, teachers and parents.

This is the journey of true education and life.

We invite you to be a part of this journey - by learning with us, by contributing in thought and spirit, and by sharing your learning experiences.

## ... AND PHILOSOPHY

The social and emotional well being of each child is considered the foundation of all work in education. We build a curriculum that draws upon children's questions, observations and interpretations.

Children and teachers together discover and construct new and old knowledge wherein the child and the adult are both learners.

Shikshantar recognizes each child as an individual being with their own special set of strengths and talents.

Learning at Shikshantar means recognizing the worth of one's infinite senses and the development of a character that engages with the world with dignity and self-worth.

The Shikshantar philosophy is reflected in the meticulous attention to detail with everything -- from the vision of education and design of the school building to curriculum development, teacher development and classroom processes.



## SHIKSHANTAR

### A COMMITMENT TO CHILDREN AND EDUCATION

The founders' Core Team of Shikshantar is committed to enable and sustain learner-friendly approaches in education. Therefore, all initiatives in Shikshantar have a *raison d'être* – they are thoughtful, simple and enduring. Cultural and pedagogical innovations are introduced in the school's curricular practices to keep the requirements of children and young learners in mind at all times. The requirements of children and young people are understood in terms of the values added to their character, their evolving aspirations, creative selves and endless potential to find confidence and success in life. Cultural and pedagogical innovations in Shikshantar are built on a structure of eight pillars.

- Experiential Education
- Collaborative Learning
- Proficiency in Communication
- Coexistence with Nature
- Ability to Observe, Question, Research & Reflect
- Integrated Learning
- Social-Emotional Care and Development
- Democratic Participation
- Reflective Assessments

# THE SHIKSHANTAR CURRICULUM

The three goals of education in Shikshantar are:

1. Development of the inner and interpersonal self
2. Scholarly development, and
3. Creative expressions

To help each child achieve these goals, the curriculum at Shikshantar follows the principles of integrated education.

Integral education is a method of teaching and a culture. It enables the development of the physical self with the development of the mind, the emotional, social and inner self. Integral education makes overt connections between the questions of the mind and learning experiences such that knowledge is approached as a whole rather than as compartmentalised subjects.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE INNER AND INTERPERSONAL SELF

The goal of balanced development is best achieved when a child lives free of judgement and conformity. This also requires nurturing individual talents and strengths.

Development of the inner self best occurs by recognising one's own nature and that of others. An awareness of the self is necessary for engagement with society and the world of knowledge.



## SCHOLARLY DEVELOPMENT

Every child has a curious mind. The purpose of education is to nurture that curiosity and to establish linkages with the development of knowledge.

Generation of new knowledge can only emerge with courage, sharing and endless inquiry

- Why do some birds fly the way they do?
- Can scientific thinking help us understand historical and social phenomena?
- Why do we learn to build robots from scratch and not from modular kits?

Scholarly development is about making overt linkages with received knowledge and the processes of constructing new knowledge.

*“There is in every child at every stage a new miracle of vigorous unfolding, which constitutes a new hope and a new responsibility for all”.*

**ERIK ERIKSON**



*“The right to education is not only the right to attend schools, it is the right to find in schools all that is necessary to the building of a questioning mind and a dynamic moral conscience.”*

JEAN PIAGET

Scholarly development in Shikshantar is about the development of knowledge, sensorial experience, the ability to question, and integration of creative expressions.

Students are regularly encouraged to conduct research at elementary and advanced levels. The school infrastructure and curriculum enables the active use of school laboratories, the library and activity rooms, and allows adequate time for students and facilitators to read, collect data, construct, discuss, analyse and present their findings to each other on a regular basis.

### **CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS**

Aesthetics establish connections between the self, society, the spiritual and nature. In Shikshantar, the aesthetic sense is evoked in every physical and interpersonal space.

It begins with building a connection with nature, the origin and reservoir of all that is aesthetic.

Aesthetics in the curriculum is enabled through art, music, drama, physical fitness, creative writing, circle time and in asking simple questions about why we do what we do and how it helps us connect with our inner nature and that of all living beings around us.

Students of all classes weave in and out of academic classes and non-academic classes that include the performing arts, the visual arts, the fine arts and sports.

The outcome is the nurturing of the “whole person”, the development of the individual child who is as in tune with their own thinking and creative self as they are with the people and world around them.





## THE CURRICULUM THROUGH THE SCHOOL YEARS

### Sprouting Seeds to Class XII

Learning in Shikshantar is facilitated keeping in mind the specific requirements of the age of the children.

The emphasis points at each age are based on children's readiness, appropriateness of the curriculum and challenges suitable to take them to the next level of education. Read carefully how curricular facilitation progresses through the years.

### VANAR YEARS: SPROUTING SEEDS TO KINDERGARTEN

Years of wonderment, exploration, bonding, smiles, pretend play and stories.

The three and four year olds who walk into Shikshantar are little explorers waiting to find their individual selves. A child seeks love, care and faith which is of paramount importance at this age. Early socialisation with other children helps the self find a connect with their emotions, questions, conflicts and the need to share.

The morning in Shikshantar begins with Outdoor Time – a time to run, to laugh, to cheer, to climb, to hop, to bounce, to dribble, to skip, to try new heights and to say I can!

Circle Time facilitates the fundamental connect between the individual and the group. It helps each child recognize their worth and that of their friends. It helps them know that all people have feelings and that there are gentle ways to share emotions, doubts and conflicts.

Stories are the quintessential building blocks that connect young children with the human mind and with nature through imagination, fantasy, real life scripts and social concerns. Stories are read to the children twice, sometimes three and four times, everyday.

Little wonder that by the first half of being in Shikshantar, our children like to recall and narrate their own stories, real and made-up. Soon enough, they also learn to etch their stories on paper through squiggles and lines that grow in time to become words, phrases and sentences.



Stories come alive in the classrooms and on the Manch through shared writing and group dramatisations.

Project Time in the Vanar Years is often the starting and meeting point of integration of sensorial learning. Further, it addresses the inherent inquisitiveness of each child and the discovery that the world is worth engaging with. Through Project Time, children discover the wonders of water, patterns in flowers and leaves, the lines that make trees become real on paper, and create rakhis for branches that allow them to swing.

Choice Time is the coveted time of the day for all children in Shikshantar. They choose to identify, locate and live the choices that matter to them most – of reading under a tree outside the classroom, playing hide and seek with friends, watching fish in the pond, drawing patterns they see around them, working with clay, talking and resolving interpersonal conflicts.

This and so much more is created by children in everyday experiences that combines music time, art time, library time, outdoor time, project time, choice time and circle time at the start and end of each day – to return the next day with a smile because there is love and faith in our beliefs.

#### **GROUP NAMES**

*The groups are named after the elements - Water, Wind, Earth, Fire and Ether - to help children of all ages build enduring connections with the philosophical, social, historical, poetic and sometimes political understanding and interpretation of the elements. The purpose is to enable children to establish deeper connections with the quintessential energies of nature. And through these connections, we hope children will grow to forge deeper bonds with the environment and Mother Earth.*

## FINDING FEET: CLASSES I TO IV

Years of language play, integrated learning, adventures with friends and guided goal development.

Integrated learning takes new forms in the Primary classes. Children are more vocal, more confident, have many more questions, share their observations with amazing thoughtfulness, can read simple and complex texts and engage as young scientists, writers, singers, poets, sports people, gymnasts, dramatists and nature lovers.

A fine balance is reflected in the eyes of each child in Shikshantar in the Primary years – a balance of having discovered and lived the integration of the physical, mental, emotional and social selves.

Theme-based teaching facilitates a focussed method of inquiry based on children's questions and observations. These could be around the use of measuring tools, angles in the classroom, book covers, comics, trees, forests and domestic animals, relationships, our emotions and festivals.

Projects organised around each theme present opportunities for children to work with specific material, with each other and with knowledge they acquire from books, investigations, record keeping, team sharing and group presentations.

Project work and the presentations that follow are remarkable opportunities for children to develop individual and group strengths. They record data based on their observations and surveys. Presentations are made rich with illustrations, descriptions, analyses, creative layouts and organisation of material that is often witty, informative and reflective.

Language development in the Primary years becomes mature and sophisticated, replete with possibilities where children express themselves with proficiency and confidence in English and Hindi. The vocabulary of the average child in Shikshantar is reflective of a person who reads regularly, listens carefully and articulates their thoughts and feelings with a high level of confidence in knowing the self and the community that they are a part of.





## BOOK NOOK

The Shikshantar family has a deep connect with books. In today's increasingly consumerist and virtual world, Book Nook is an effort to remember the joy of sharing books.

Book Nook is a place where children, parents and teachers can give a book they have already read or take a book that they would like to read. Separate Book Nook corners have been set up in Pre Primary, Primary and Senior School blocks.



## BIRTHDAYS AT SHIKSHANTAR

*Birthday celebrations of children at Shikshantar are very special. A birthday signifies the birth of a soul that is unique and special. The essence of our birthday celebrations is simplicity. It is a time to connect with oneself.*

*Parents and grandparents are invited to join in the birthday celebration of their child in school. A diya is lit to celebrate the beginning of a new life and wishes are shared that the light and brightness of the diya brings happiness all around. Peers, teachers and parents share something about the child.*

*Children get home-cooked sweets such as halwa, laddoo, kheer, fresh fruits or two pieces of dry fruits for each child in their group.*

Through the 'whole language approach' facilitated in Shikshantar, children in Pre Primary and Primary years are immersed in an active and meaningful world of listening, speaking, reading and writing. This approach begins with using stories, texts, songs, poems and drama in inventive ways such that children naturally mature on to a stage of reading and writing with high levels of competency and creative expressions.

The curriculum in the Primary years guides children to create and work towards individual and group goals for higher and maturer learning. Individual goals are integrated by the children and teachers with group goals.

Children in the Primary years share project-related presentations and creative expressions with peers from their own class and the next grade level during regular multi-grade interactions. Multi-grade interaction allows 'older' children to master concepts and skills appropriate for their age and encourages 'younger' children to observe and learn from imitation, experimentation and experiences of older children.

Self-study time is designed to accommodate individual paces of learning and provide a platform for children to revisit and reinforce certain topics/skill areas, and set new goals for the next level of learning. Where required, parents are guided to follow the recommendations made by the education team that includes psychologists, special educators and teachers.





## CLIMBING FEET, FINDING GROUNDS: CLASSES V TO VIII

Years of finding purpose, growing sense of responsibility and understanding relationships

With a positive self-esteem and a foundation that enables each child to approach learning with confidence, children in Shikshantar make an easy transition from Primary to Middle School, an age of gradually increasing academic work and social challenges. Now referred to as students, our children are taller in every sense of the word - physical height, their imagination and confidence in themselves.

The Middle School curriculum enables students to make connections between project-based learning and formal skills development for the impending examination system. Emphasis is on active construction of knowledge where the teacher and the student learn together.

Project Time enables students to work in mixed ability groups, which reinforces the spirit of cooperation rather than competition. Hands-on experiences, research, experiments, field trips, interviews, sharing of personal stories and experiences help learners build a holistic understanding of what they study. These opportunities are provided through worksheets, computer time, library time and small group discussion time.

Rigour takes a new form in Middle School. Students are guided to submit assignments and project tasks that have been through necessary iterations to develop higher standards of performance. Enrichment time accommodates individual paces of learning and provides opportunities for students to strengthen identified skill areas.

The maturity in the work produced by students of Middle School in annual expositions and Hamara Manch exhibits enduring curricular linkages with art, dance, music and theatre. Festival celebrations provide a platform for students to question and build a collective understanding about the relevance of associated customs and traditions.

Students acquire new skills as they participate in a range of intra-school and inter-school activities in sports, debating, design programmes, creative writing, quiz programmes and science expositions. The annual outstation trip provides new courage to the Middle School student in their abilities to visualise a growing sense of independence.

Aware of the sensitivities of the Middle School years, bonding with the teachers and the curriculum helps build the strengths necessary for students to engage with the demands of Senior School with faith in the self and confidence in their abilities.



*“To understand is to discover,  
or reconstruct by discovery,  
and such conditions must  
be complied with if, in the  
future, individuals are to be  
formed who are capable of  
production and creativity and  
not simply repetition.”*

**JEAN PIAGET**

## FINDING SELF, GROWING WINGS: CLASSES IX TO XII

### Years of questioning, finding challenge and hope

Young adulthood, between 15 and 18 years of age, is a time that lays the foundation for the development of a personal and potential professional identity.

In the Senior classes, students acquire new skills as they participate in a range of intra-school and inter-school activities in sports, debating, Model United Nations (MUN), art expositions, design programmes, creative writing, quiz programmes and science expositions.

Academic rigour is essential to build successful pathways for higher education. Curriculum facilitation in Senior classes aims to:

- a) equip students with an ability to think, question, reason and reflect.
- b) encourage a sense of thoroughness in the process of acquiring knowledge.
- c) acquire skills that will help them master evaluation and examination parameters.

To achieve these objectives, students in Senior School are required to demonstrate their learning through portfolios, exhibitions, research and application-based project models. Project presentations and viva voces are essential to demonstrate conceptual mastery and effective communication.

Collaborative learning and democratic decision making experiences work as critical building blocks to nurture leadership skills in individual students and in groups.



## THE STUDENT COUNCIL

The Student Council in Shikshantar provides an opportunity for students of Senior School to visualise, facilitate and participate in a range of intra-school and inter-school activities that blend academic skills with creative pursuits. As young leaders, they also enthuse and guide Middle School students to partake in a range of curricular experiences. The Student Council in Shikshantar, led by students and facilitators, organises a variety of curricular experiences and school events.



Literary Committee plans and facilitates a variety of literary experiences:

- Circle Times, the school e-newsletter
- shik'MUN, the Shikshantar MUN
- creative writing
- debates

IT Committee is actively involved in planning and facilitating:

- robotics programme
- programming workshops for Animation and Game Design

Science Committee promotes Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) educational programmes through:

- quizzes
- educational games and videos

Sports Committee works towards advocating fitness and organising:

- athletic meet
- intra-school and inter-school matches

Visual and Performing Arts Committees provide cultural exposure by organising:

- art expositions
- creative workshops
- music and dance performances

Environment Committee plans and organises :

- field excursions
- tree plantation
- vegetable farming in school campus
- awareness programmes

Family, Society and I Committee works towards sensitising the student community by planning and facilitating a variety of meaningful experiences:

- Unlearn, a newsletter covering topics related to social and emotional wellbeing
- fundraising initiatives like Bake Sale
- awareness workshops
- collaboration with NGOs
- drives against negative stereotyping





## PATH AHEAD

In order to equip young people to make informed choices, Shikshantar initiates Path Ahead, a programme for reflection and planning, for students of Classes IX to XII. Path Ahead aims to enable young people to identify their interests, determine the connect between interests and aptitude, and become familiar with options available for higher education. Path Ahead comprises the following components:

- panel discussions: panellists comprising professionals, educators and alumni from diverse backgrounds participate in discussions with senior students
- presentations by universities / colleges: invited organisations share about departments, courses and admission process
- reflection exercises to explore individual interests and aptitudes
- exhibition to familiarise students with the subjects facilitated in Classes XI & XII, related higher education options and indicative career possibilities

The result is a young person who . . .

. . . knows their interests

. . . is willing to work hard to pursue their interest

. . . thinks before they make their choices

. . . is an active creator of their own future

## Seamlessness in Subject Pathways for Senior School

Young adulthood, between 15 and 18 years of age, is a period of churning, questioning and intense search for purpose and challenge. It is a time that lays the foundation for the development of a personal and potential professional identity. Shikshantar visualizes this period of transition from childhood to adulthood as one that requires sensitive thinking and engagement.

To create opportunities for a wide variety of career-oriented paths, Shikshantar offers a range of subjects for students to choose for the Indian School Certificate Examination conducted at the end of Class XII. Students go through self-reflection exercises and counselling to choose subjects and implied higher education options on the basis of their aptitude and interests. The choices are not restricted to fall in the same category and students are free to choose subjects across streams as long as they align with their higher education plans. Students are required to pursue 5 subjects and Socially Useful Productive Work for ISC Examination. The registration for the subjects is carried out in Class XI.



## STEM

STEM Education programme is an essential component of the Middle School curriculum. STEM, which stands for science, technology, engineering and mathematics, attempts to provide young children with a comprehensive understanding of these interwoven subjects through hands-on skill development. The curriculum is specifically curated to promote critical thinking, analytical reasoning, technical problem-solving, and creative thinking abilities. Our students explore the fundamental ideas pertaining to mechanics, electricity, sound, light and material qualities through a variety of practical exercises and projects. We ensure an enriching learning experience through ENTECRES® Labs to conduct all the sessions. For each project, they offer a hands-on take-away kit, so that students can participate in practical learning activities.

The projects allow students to develop a thorough understanding of the subject matter since they are carefully integrated with pertinent scientific and math principles from the curricula.

We emphasize the importance of reinforcing practical learning with academic work related to the projects. By doing so, students not only gain practical experience but also strengthen their theoretical understanding of the concepts explored.



## Social, Emotional and Ethical Learning

Social, Emotional and Ethical Learning (SEE Learning) is a K-12 education programme developed by Emory University (GA, USA) and His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. It is the culmination of an academic collaboration that began in 1998. Guided by a shared vision for an education of heart and mind, the programme conveys a universal, non-sectarian, and science-based approach to bringing the ethical development of the whole child into education—an approach long advocated by His Holiness. Within our team, over 12 facilitators have received training in the foundation course and 5 of them have received advanced Cognitively Based Compassion Training (CBCT). They have taken it ahead by training other facilitators. SEE Learning provides educators with the tools they need for students and themselves. It also represents state of the art education with key additional components of:

- attention training
- compassion and ethical discernment
- systems thinking

We incorporate SEE Learning into our educational practices by creating peace corners and engaging students in classroom activities around nature and inner awareness. This approach cultivates compassion and creates a happy space for everyone involved.

For children in the elementary years, we recognise their eagerness to explore their physical surroundings and develop self-awareness through their senses. We utilise stories as a fundamental tool for their emotional and social growth. Children connect with characters in the stories, relating to their feelings and expressing themselves through art, songs and words.

In the Primary School years, SEE Learning experiences seamlessly integrate into the curriculum. Through storytelling, meditative practices, discussions, visualisations and thematic exploration, students are encouraged to develop inner awareness and emotional resilience. These practices enable children to understand their own emotions and empathize with others, promoting effective communication, conflict resolution and healthy relationships. This holistic approach empowers them to thrive in an interconnected world.

In Middle and Senior School, our integrated curriculum provides extensive opportunities for students to explore their emotions and gain awareness of various mental states. Through first-hand experiences and mental models presented in the "map of the mind", students enhance their emotional intelligence and effectively manage their own emotional lives. Developing ethical decision-making skills in today's complex world requires discernment, love and compassion. By using systems thinking, students gain a broader understanding of the world and learn to evaluate and respond to diverse situations. Reflective practices, individual projects, case studies and role plays further promote systems thinking, inner awareness and empathy, serving as the foundations for ethical judgement and decision-making.



# ARTS

Art is an integral part of the Shikshantar curriculum and culture. All children explore art forms through multiple disciplines- Visual Arts, Performing Arts and Literary Experiences.

## **VISUAL ARTS**

Whether they are dipping their little fingers in paints or in the sand, the little children in Shikshantar express. They tell stories... about their friends, toys, pets and family. Art opens windows into the world of children and that is where the connection begins.

Children explore various mediums and techniques through the years in Shikshantar, opening up diverse channels of self-expression. Art experiences in Shikshantar range from dripping paints, sand art, recycling, printing, clay modelling and water colours to paper sculpture, pottery, life study, animation, photography and more!

Students of Senior classes study art as an academic subject. The art curriculum of ICSE and ISC includes still life study and applied art. Carrying out an original creative project is an integral part of the curriculum. An annual Art Portfolio Exposition is held to showcase the work of these students.

Each and every event in the school becomes an aesthetic experience through displays, posters, installations and backdrops that are original works by children.

## **PERFORMING ARTS**

Performing arts include music, dance, drama and an integration of all three.

Music is instilled in the very being of Shikshantar children from the Pre Primary level.

Music is heard in the classrooms and corridors of Shikshantar. The children spontaneously break into songs while doing their artwork or bond in little groups with guitars strumming!

Explorations in project work with creation of musical instruments in Primary School leads to spontaneous improvisations on buckets and pans and later in the understanding of concepts in Physics.



## HAMARA MANCH

*A culmination of the experiences through the year, Hamara Manch is presented in a world of theatre, dance and music. Through the process of discussing ideas, writing scripts, choosing characters, creating dance movements, visualising the backdrops and developing their presentations, children eagerly share their labour of love with their parents, grandparents, siblings and friends.*



*“When the day came,  
we were all set  
We knew we would do well.  
There was a thumping  
in my heart,  
A lurch in my stomach,  
But I knew it would be fine.  
I had practised so much...”*

The Senior School has multiple bands playing western, Indian classical and fusion, nurtured by sensitive and passionate teachers.

Through the Primary years, boys and girls in Shikshantar are ingrained with rhythm, movement, expression, coordination and grace through Indian dance styles like Bharatnatyam, Odissi, Kathak, Manipuri and folk dances. In Middle School, they go on to create their own choreographies as they grow in understanding and skill.

Drama is central to curricular experiences in the classroom and on the Manch. It is introduced in its fundamental form through story dramatisations as early as Kindergarten. In the Primary years, the love for story telling takes on a maturer form where children enact stories by writers they admire.

In Middle School, the young dramatists take on challenges of script writing and production of their own short plays. With support from experienced theatre facilitators, students of Senior classes produce plays based on the works of Shakespeare, Sherlock Holmes, Premchand, as well as original scripts.

Because theatre, music and dance are living art forms, Shikshantar students are regularly exposed to relevant and enriching art performances and exhibitions in school and outside school.

## **LITERARY EXPERIENCES**

Verbal and written articulation that is creative, original and of a high standard comes naturally to children of Shikshantar.

Writing emerges in Shikshantar from the stories children hear, create, enact and undertake as project work. Literary experiences in Shikshantar begin with sharing stories about their artwork in the early years, writing simple stories and poems on themes, and evolve to descriptive and analytical writing forms. Debates, creative writing competitions and participation in the Model United Nations (MUN) come naturally to many of our students from Middle and Senior classes.

Not surprisingly, in the early years of participation in inter-school events, Shikshantar students from Senior classes have returned with awards and accolades that recognise their creativity, thoughtfulness and oratorical skills.



## SPORTS

Shikshantar accords special importance to children's physical fitness and health. To achieve this goal, sports is a central part of the school curriculum. Children have a dedicated Outdoor Time everyday till Class VII, whereafter it reduces to 2-3 times a week.

Sports consists of athletics and team games like basketball, badminton, chess, cricket, football, gymnastics, table tennis and volleyball. Well-equipped infrastructure and grounds are provided for athletics and team games.

A detailed and extensive curriculum in sports is reflected in the organisation of different sports events for Pre Primary School, Primary School, Middle & Senior Schools. This helps to ensure participation of each child in the processes that lead up to the sports day and the development of the child's goals for physical health. Specific objectives in sports for the respective age groups are shared below:

### SPORTS IN PRE PRIMARY SCHOOL

The emphasis on physical development in the early years is on large motor development and fun. The focus in these years is to help children overcome their fears. Trained, gentle and sensitive sports teachers guide children to find courage in their bodies to climb, roll, balance and achieve new levels without hesitation.

Vanar Vatika, the play space in pre-school with tunnels, swings and climbers, becomes the favourite space for young children in Shikshantar right from the first day.





### **SPORTS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL**

In the Primary years, children are introduced to yoga, gymnastics, badminton, basketball, football, cricket and table tennis. In every child, there is a willing participant because the curriculum is non-competitive and children partake without fear of failure.

Shikshantar views non-competitive sports as the foundation for instilling enduring love for the outdoors in children. As they reach Classes IV and V, children are ready to play team games with rules, leading to the formation of Under-10 and 12 teams in football, cricket and table tennis. This age group witnesses the transition to more organised competitive sports at intra- and inter-school levels.

### **SPORTS IN MIDDLE AND SENIOR SCHOOL**

Athletics includes track events (100m sprint, 200m sprint, 400m, 800m, relay races, obstacle races), long jump and high jump.

Team games include basketball, badminton, chess, cricket, football, gymnastics, table tennis and volleyball. Well-equipped infrastructure and grounds are provided for athletics and team games.

The emphasis in sports at this level is on the development of individual and group standards of excellence.

Students are placed in Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced levels in a specific sport and game for a year at a time. This helps them to recognize their abilities and work beyond their existing benchmarks. Parameters for evaluation in sports include strength, endurance, stamina, flexibility and game-specific skills.

Shikshantar has two or more teams for most games. The school participates in sports at the zonal, state and national levels organised by the government and CISCE (Council for Indian School Certificate Examinations) at inter-school tournaments in Delhi-NCR region. Awards in individual and team events are now a part of every inter-school participation.



# EXAMINATIONS AND EVALUATIONS

Evaluation in Shikshantar is about understanding, enabling and recording the progress made by each child. It is about giving due importance to the processes of learning and the relationships that emerge from educational experiences – be it with books, friends, the content of what is studied, music, art, science, the teacher and the ability to question further.

Like the myriad influences of the school, evaluation at Shikshantar is also a source of inspiration and learning, and not a time for judgement and fear.

Evaluation practices in Shikshantar grow in complexity, thought and engagement of all key partners (the child, the teacher and the parents) with class and age levels.

Evaluation involves six key steps. At each step, students, teachers and parents share the progress made and work as partners to develop goals for the next semester.

The six key steps are illustrated in the chart below:

	Teachers' Observations	Project Work	Assessment of worksheets, class and home assignments	Student reflections with teachers' and parents' guidance	Goal development with teachers and parents	Unit, Term and Final Assessments
S.Seeds, Nursery, KG						
Classes I - III						
Classes IV - V						
Classes VI - VIII						
Classes IX - X						
Classes XI - XII						

SHIKSHANTAR EVALUATION PROCESS CHART



*“To be able to classify the children, one must find out about their nature by observing their habits and reactions. The teacher must not be a machine for reciting lessons, he must be a psychologist and an observer”.*

## TEACHERS’ OBSERVATIONS

Teachers’ observations are critical in every classroom setting at every age level. Teachers observe children’s interest areas, group participation, interpersonal dynamics, development of skills, completion of work, regularity in submissions and desire for continued learning. These observations inform curricular transactions and help formulate evolving goals for the group and each child.

## PROJECT WORK

Project work is central to the experiential curriculum facilitated in Shikshantar. Project work is about asking questions, finding answers, making connections, data organisation, thinking open-endedly and drawing inferences. Teachers enable these processes and use these as tools to assess children’s engagement and knowledge development.

## ASSESSMENTS OF WORKSHEETS, CLASS AND HOME ASSIGNMENTS

Development of formal skills are just as necessary for academic progress as it is to engage with open-ended educational experiences. Shikshantar works to strike a thoughtful balance between enabling education with its true meaning of inquiry and discovery with abilities to read, write, calculate, create, record, analyse and organise.

As worksheets, class and home assignments mature, children’s abilities to engage with gradually emerging skill sets also become more sophisticated. Teachers’ assessments of informal and formal work guides students to determine their own readiness with greater ease and sense of organisation.

Students’ reflections with teacher and parent guidance: From Class IV onwards, Shikshantar facilitates students to reflect upon and record individual strengths, what works in what situations and why. It helps young people develop their own methods to organise their priorities, time and study methods. Reflections, when shared with parents and teachers without a fear of judgement, allow children to chart their own directions for further development and self-growth.



Unit, Term and Final Assessments are the tools used from Classes VI to XII with increasing complexity to guide young people to know their own yardsticks better and to measure their progress in the context of larger social groups. Term and final assessments provide new challenges that Shikshantar children are confident to work with. Practice, research, articulation and accuracy are important attributes for academic training in Senior classes. Opportunities are provided for students to orient themselves to national and international level competitive examinations. Students are guided to determine individual levels of mastery and potential for growth. By this age, each student is broadly aware of developed and emerging interests, and is ready to engage with the future with an ability to reflect, prepare, excel and develop goals that are truly theirs to nurture in adult life.

## BOARD AFFILIATION

Shikshantar is affiliated to the Council for Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE), one of the three recognised and approved national boards of examination for secondary education in India. This choice has enabled us in creating a balanced curricular plan for students of Senior classes to develop an application-based, conceptual understanding of the subjects they study in school.

The CISCE conducts examinations at the end of Class X and Class XII, referred to as the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE) and the Indian School Certificate (ISC) respectively.

## COEXISTENCE WITH NATURE

*When children are free to play, their first choice is often to flee to the nearest wild place whether it's a big tree, open grass, water course or woodland nearby. The green ecology of the school campus inspires children, facilitators and parents to build direct connections with nature in many different ways. Children's curiosity with the natural world kindles discovery and exploratory learning.*

## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Shikshantar facilitates, in spirit and action, an inclusive environment for all children with varying abilities and from different socio-economic backgrounds. Inclusion is a moral and social responsibility about accepting and valuing diversity.

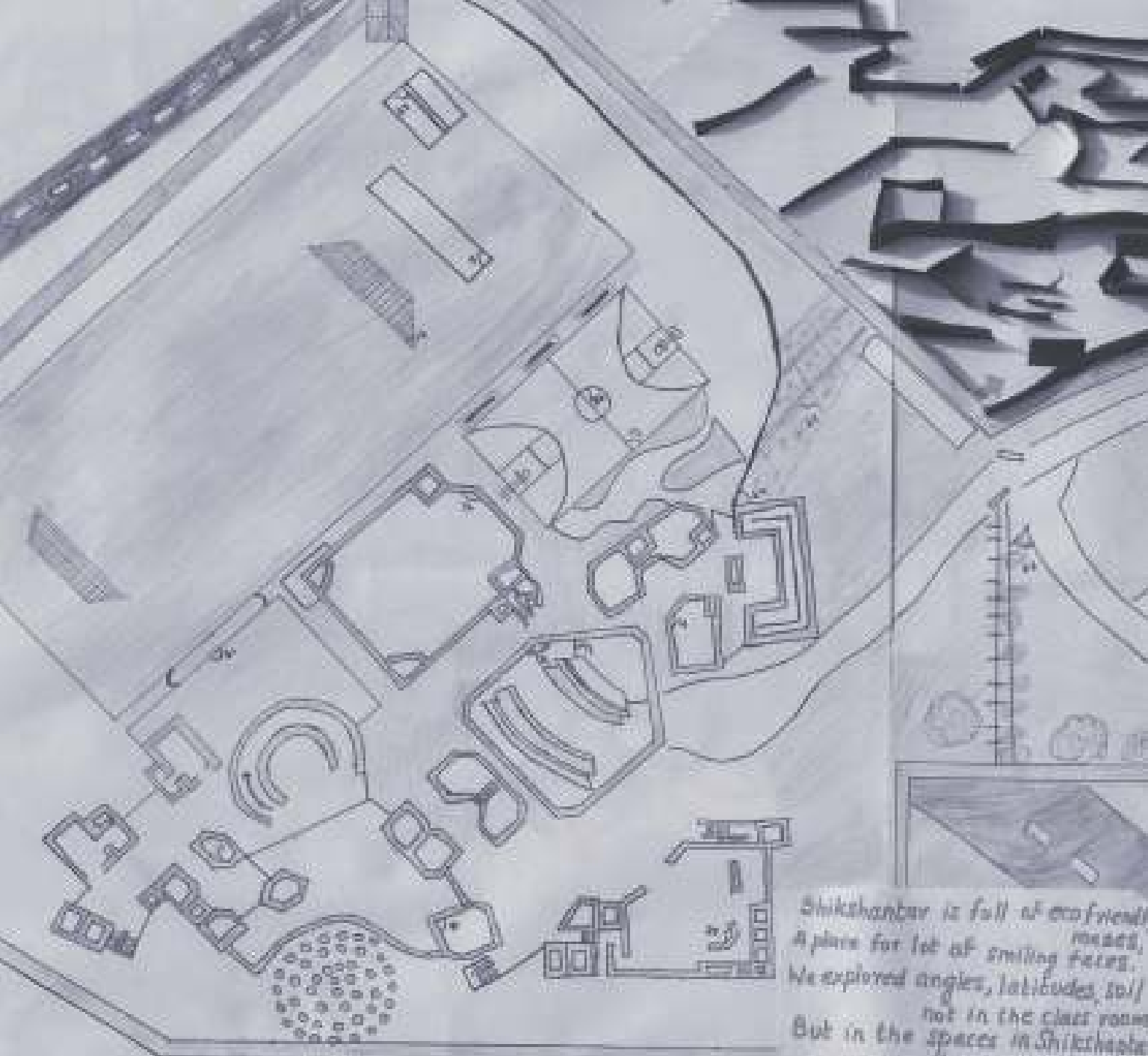
Inclusion in Shikshantar is guided by philosophical, sociological as well as educational perspectives. The school facilitates a curriculum that addresses developmental requirements of children identified with special needs.

Children with special educational needs are an integral part of the classroom where they engage with group experiences along with their peers. An Individualised Educational Plan (IEP) is prepared through an interdisciplinary team that consists of a child psychologist, special educator, group teachers and parents. The special education team also works in close association with the Senior School to enable readiness of children with special needs for the ICSE or NIOS examination as per team consultations.

Inclusive education is made real and sustainable through sensitisation of students, parents and teachers about social justice and equity for all. In a culture that encourages collaborative learning and questioning of social practices, peer learning emerges as the most reliable experience for all children, with or without special needs. Parent interactions include thematic workshops and dialogues on parents' experiences towards enabling inclusion in home spaces, children's play areas and in society in general.

Since children from diverse backgrounds bond with each other from the Nursery level, they develop interests together and discover the nuanced meaning of social acceptance. Integration and inclusion as practised in Shikshantar has the power to alter barriers inherited by society and to create new hope for children and families.





Shikshantar is full of ecofriendly  
meets,  
A place for lot of smiling faces.  
We explored angles, latitudes, soil  
not in the class room  
But in the spaces in Shikshantar  
where we bloom.

# EARTH - जगित के ANGLES और PATTERNS

(Class - 11)

# THE PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Visualised as a "school for learning" for children, teachers and parents, the physical space of Shikshantar reflects beauty, thoughtfulness and interaction with the elements. For a child, it represents a place where a variety of modes are available to weave in and out of large and small groups and individual places of learning; a space where children feel a sense of belonging.

Well-ventilated and well-lit, classrooms with large windows are designed for comfort in varying weather conditions of North India. The positioning of the rooms allows breeze to blow through the east-west and north-south air corridors.

Shikshantar is situated on two separate plots of land separated by a distance of fifty metres. The infrastructure for each site is self-contained and as per the requirements of the specific age group.

The Pre Primary School is built on 1.2 acres of land and houses Sprouting Seeds, Nursery and Kindergarten, art and music rooms, a central hub for various school activities, Nachiketa - the Pre Primary library, Vanar Vatika, sandpits outside every group, Nandanam - the large front lawns, turtle and fish ponds and a hugely attractive slide.

The large school campus is built on 6.2 acres of land and contains the Primary School, Middle School, Senior School, playgrounds and extensive infrastructure.

The Primary School houses Classes I to IV, Trinachiketa - the Primary School library, playgrounds, open terraces for group activities, an art area, a dance area, a music room and the children's favourite, a big slide.

The Middle and Senior School houses Classes V to XII; well-equipped laboratories for Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Home Science, Geography and Computers; Jigyasa - a large library, art and pottery rooms, Indian and Western music rooms, dance rooms, AV room, meditation room, resource room, medical room, dining hall and a large amphitheatre. Sports facilities include a multipurpose hall with badminton courts, a football field, cricket nets, basketball courts, table tennis, volleyball court, equipment and floor space for gymnastics.

Balconies and terraces are used extensively in the Shikshantar campus for Circle Time, project work, small and large group interactions. A diverse ecosystem that houses many trees, bushes and plants, a large snakes and ladders floor, rock garden, butterfly garden and vegetable garden – all contribute to creating spaces that evoke enduring sensory and interactive experiences.

The school landscape has been extensively redesigned to match the ethos so as to allow outdoor spaces to also become age-appropriate learning spaces ("living laboratories"), whether it is in the fields of sensory motor perception or for older children - geography, mathematics and physics.

“She cared more about me  
than about page 53”

A poem to a teacher by Anne Dakis

## TEACHER SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Teacher support and development is considered to be the backbone of the work at Shikshantar. For a teacher to be effective, it is imperative that we recognize the factors that permit teachers to perform their roles effectively and those that do not.

Careful selection of trained teachers is followed by a strong teacher development and support programme. A well-designed in-service training programme provides opportunities for teachers to

- be informed about the latest research findings in education
- be in touch with their inner self and professional development
- develop interpersonal skills necessary for meaningful interaction with school-age children
- learn from the strengths of experienced teachers in schools in India and abroad
- upgrade their skills and knowledge levels as teachers of an integrated educational curriculum

In order to address the needs of the teachers at Shikshantar, members of the core team regularly conduct training and professional support workshops. In addition, workshops are also conducted by resource persons from accomplished schools of learning and universities of higher education. Intense in-service workshops are conducted around each vacation of the school calendar. These are supported by fortnightly workshops where everyday situations are discussed, analysed and resolved to create enriching environments for both teachers and children.

### PUPIL-TEACHER RATIO

*To address the changing educational and interpersonal needs of all children, Shikshantar is led and managed through six class groups- S. Seeds, Nursery and Kindergarten, Classes I - IV, Classes V - VI, Classes VII - VIII, Classes IX - X and Classes XI - XII.*

*Each class has 5 sections with 27 - 28 students in each section. For Sprouting Seeds to Class III, two teachers are provided for each section. Each section of Sprouting Seeds to KG has an individual helper.*

*With several activity and subject teachers, the school's teacher-pupil ratio varies between 1:8 and 1:10. This favourable ratio, a luxury even by international standards, is because of the school's commitment to the development of each student.*

## PARENT INTERACTION

Parent involvement and education is a central part of the school calendar. Parent involvement with Shikshantar begins from the day a parent seeks admission in the school and continues in significant ways through each year for all classes.

For new parents, the key experiences include reflection about why and how Shikshantar will support the development of their child, understanding the school's philosophy and educational approaches through a school tour, school counselling sessions and familiarisation sessions with the children who are expected to be enrolled in the school.

With enrolled parents, the following experiences encourage involvement and participation:

- Parent Orientation Session for new parents before start of school year
- Interactive Parent Open House Interactions for each class three times a year
- Parent-Facilitator Meetings and Progress Review meetings to share and reflect upon the progress of each child
- Parent-Teacher Association Meetings to share institutional progress, concerns and suggestions
- Parent representation and involvement in the School Managing Committee
- Parent volunteers to support field trips and school events such as Hamara Manch and Hamara Mela
- Parent representation for talks and workshops for students on specific areas of expertise
- Parent representatives work with school committees on specific areas that include transport management outside the school during arrival and departure, and recommendations for safety and security of children
- Parent volunteers for substitution during long absence of teachers
- Parents are invited to be a part of their child's birthday celebration in school

A team of more than 200 dedicated teachers work closely with the core team to design and execute a unique learning program. We are proud to say that many of them have been with us from the inception of the school.



### PARENT OPEN HOUSE INTERACTIONS

*Open House interactions are facilitated for parents in each class three times a year. The purpose of these interactions is to enable a stronger connect between the home and school, and for parents to reflect upon their evolving parenting roles. Each session is organised as a workshop to understand and learn from multiple perspectives and experiences.*

# POLICY MATTERS

## THE SCHOOL YEAR

The school follows the annual calendar of the Department of Education, Haryana.

The school session begins at the end of March/April and closes in March of the coming year.

Summer vacation is usually in the months of May and June.

Short breaks are provided around Dussehra, Diwali, Christmas and New Year. Dates for vacations vary each year and must be verified from the school almanac. Gazetted holidays are followed as per government rules. Details about school events are also listed in the school almanac.

Keeping the need of a young child in mind, we stagger the school timings. As children reflect increased readiness to spend longer hours in school, we increase their time in Shikshantar. This is applicable to Sprouting Seeds and Class I only.

## SCHOOL TIMINGS

Class	Day of week	School Timings	
Sprouting Seeds	Mon-Fri	09:00 am - 12:00 pm	Till 1st week of August
		08:15 am – 12:15 pm	From 2nd week of August
Nursery - KG	Mon-Fri	08:15 am – 12:15 pm	
Class I	Mon-Fri	08:00 am – 01:30 pm	Till 1st week of August
		08:00 am – 02:45 pm	From 2nd week of August
Classes II - XII	Mon-Fri	08:00 am – 02:45 pm	

## SCHOOL CLOTHING

In harmony with its philosophy, Shikshantar has chosen not to promote a uniform clothing policy. Students are to come to school in simple, comfortable clothing of their choice. A flexible, individual choice of clothing allows children to express themselves as individuals with the onus of responsibility on them to select dressing that is appropriate to their lifestyle in school.



### BOOKS AND STATIONERY

The school takes special care to select and identify books that support our educational philosophy and simultaneously equip our students to be at par with desirable scholarly levels. An annual sale of recommended reading material for students and parents, required textbooks, notebooks and stationery is held at school at the beginning of the school year.

### SCHOOL TRANSPORT

Travel to & from school is a significant social & emotional experience for children. It is a space where a lot of exchanges take place across different age groups. The bus fee is calculated for eleven months of the year, as per the number of users each year. The school provides transport to students on official request.



## LEADERSHIP TEAM IN SHIKSHANTAR

Shikshantar was initiated and is guided by a Core Team of three members who have been involved with innovative school education as teachers, trainers, counsellor, school leaders and designers for more than two decades.

The Core Team works with a strong team of school heads, supervisors, coordinators and teachers.

The school follows a leadership model that relies on individual strengths and team perspectives. Education supervisors in Shikshantar have taught in Shikshantar and have grown with the school as individuals and as professionals. They take on the roles of mentors and supervisors with ease and competency.

The team of Education Heads and Supervisors in Shikshantar is mentored and guided by the Core Team.

Shikshantar receives significant moral support from a Governing Council that consists of professionals who are equally committed to nurturing a new attitude towards children and to the development of progressive learning environments.

Shikshantar is owned and run by Gandharv Shiksharth Educational Charitable Trust (GSECT). GSECT is committed to encouraging research and development of the self via innovative school educational practices and a robust teacher development program.



## THE CORE TEAM

The Core Team of Shikshantar consisted of the Chairperson, Minoti Bahri, the Team Director, Sanjay Prakash, and the Education Director, Sunil Batra. Sunil Batra was actively involved till 2016. The three of them came together to take forward an integrated vision.

### **Minoti Bahri**

Minoti Bahri, Founder & Managing Trustee, Shikshantar School, Gurgaon. Hospitality Management (IHM, Pusa, Delhi). Former family counsellor at Sanjivini Society for Mental Health, New Delhi. Former Facilitator at Mirambika - A Free Progress School, New Delhi.

Progressive Education Practitioner with over 30 years of experience in related pedagogical practices. Practitioner of Principles of Integral Education and Human Values.

Currently engaged in areas of Curriculum Development, Innovative Evaluation Systems, Teacher Development Programs, Parent Education and Systems Design for schools. Minoti has established a viable learning culture that is progressive, guided by an inner faith in the learner, sensitive to environmental needs and all beings.

Inculcating an Aesthetic Consciousness and Humour are her tools as she works towards creating learning environments that are simple, real, thoughtful and meaningful for children, parents, educational leaders and teachers.

Over the years she has found purpose in Buddhist Studies and is currently pursuing a 6-year Nalanda Masters Course (NMC) in Buddhist Philosophy from Tibet House - Cultural Centre of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, under guidance of its Director Geshe Dorji Damdul.

### **Sanjay Prakash**

B. Arch., A.I.I.A., is a Principal Consultant of his design firm, SHiFt: Studio for Habitat Futures ([www.shift.org.in](http://www.shift.org.in)) with a commitment to energy-conscious architecture, eco-friendly design, people's participation in planning, music and production design. Over the years, he has integrated all his work with the practice of new urbanism and sustainability

in his professional and personal life. His area of practice and research over the last four decades includes passive and low energy architecture and planning, hybrid air-conditioning, autonomous energy and water systems, bamboo and earth construction, community-based design of common property, and computer-aided design. Under his guidance, hundreds of persons have developed capabilities in performing design, conceptual or management work in these areas.

Mr. Prakash's participative and community managed architecture work includes rural schools in Rajasthan (Lok Jumbish), Andhra Pradesh, Haryana and Orissa. His architectural work in the field of education includes a research center cum school (Mirambika), an ashram hostel (Tapasya), children's home for juvenile justice (Prayas), large engineering campuses and higher secondary schools, a hotel management college, and various other building projects. Mr. Prakash also worked on distance education and rural connectivity for TARAhaat (<https://www.devalt.org/newsletter/jun00/lead.htm>). He was on the managing committee of Mirambika Free Progress School and on the advisory board of Deepayan Vidya Niketan. Mr. Prakash has planned/designed a number of public engineering Institutes, such as IIT Jodhpur, IIIT Delhi, Delhi Technological University, Delhi. His name and work is mentioned in the twentieth edition of one of the main reference works in architectural history, A History of Architecture by Sir. R. Bannister Fletcher.

### **Sunil Batra**

M.A., Child Psychology and Education (Erikson Institute, Chicago) facilitated learner-friendly education for more than two decades as a practitioner, academic and researcher, specialising in nurturing institutional practices from Nursery to Class XII.

Sunil was also the Founder Director Education of Deepayan Vidya Niketan in North Delhi. As an advisor, he engaged in restructuring low fee paying and high income aided and unaided schools.

Sunil was instrumental in designing and teaching courses on Education Leadership at three universities in India – Delhi University, TISS Mumbai and Ambedkar University, Delhi where he was Adjunct Faculty.

Sunil was also a Mentor for the National Centre for School Leadership initiated by the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA).

Sunil was a resource person for multilateral funding agencies, government programmes and NGOs at various state and central levels. He presented papers with wide appreciation at various national and international conferences. He has a few publications to his credit including newspaper editorials. He was an active core team member of Shikshantar till 2016.

## GOVERNING COUNCIL



**Dr. Bindu Prasad:** Clinical psychologist and special educator, Dr. Prasad is a consultant to Sardar Patel Vidhyalay and a board member of the Indian Association for Family Therapy in India. She has been a planner and trainer of orientation courses in family therapy. Dr. Prasad has also been the founder-director, Child Guidance Centre, Dr Zakir Hussain Memorial Welfare Society, Jamia Millia Islamia. She has presented academic papers and conducted workshops on learning disabilities and family therapy in India, USA, Norway, Finland and Israel.

Audio visuals by her include Special Children, a film illustrating cases of autism, dyslexia and sensory neural hearing loss and School Ka Ek Din, made in collaboration with Jamia Millia Islamia.

**Isar:** Studies the Two Year Tibetan Language Course at Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo Translator Program and Nalanda Master's Course at Tibet House - Cultural Centre for His Holiness the Dalai Lama... Isar previously supported as a Primary School co-facilitator at Shikshantar. He also coached football in Valencia, Spain and South Carolina, USA and served as a Residential Karma Yogi at Jamyang London Buddhist Centre.

Isar holds a Bachelor of Arts from Sarah Lawrence College, New York, where he was a student-athlete and focused on philosophy, psychology, Spanish, and sport. Isar completed the Nalanda Diploma Course in Buddhist Philosophy from Tibet House - Cultural Centre of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and SEE 101 (online) from the Centre for Contemplative Science and Compassion-Based Ethics at Emory University.

Isar was a Gurukul fellow under the Foundation for the Universal Responsibility of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He attended Mirambika - A Free Progress School. His hobbies include to explore the city and spend time with his two legged and four legged family.

**Dr. Kamala Menon:** She has been actively involved in curriculum coordination and research in elementary and secondary pedagogy in a Free Progress system. A practitioner of Integral education, she is closely associated with Mirambika Free Progress School.

Currently involved with evolving a curriculum for skill training of teachers, she passionately pursues her interest in teacher education in the school and with the SCERT Delhi.

She works with the Delhi Science Forum for popularising astronomy and scientific temper.

**Madhu Sahi:** Different influences and motivations lead us to act, volunteer or advocate for something. For Madhu, this motivation comes from her experience of growing up in a large philanthropic family and her love for working with children whose hearts are untainted and whose thoughts are unbridled. She believes education and vocational training is a basic human right and she serves to usher our youth to attain this right.

Madhu has been a pioneer in the catering industry and was responsible for introducing Delhi to its first Chinese food truck. When most people her age were ready to retire, she again showed ingenuity by bringing together capable educators and social workers to establish NavAbhiyan that has now become a lifeline for the less fortunate children and youth of the Jangpura area.

When she is not jumping off planes while skydiving (60th B'day celebration) or deep-sea diving in Dubai, Madhu passionately spoils her grandchildren. She is an ardent traveller. Madhu is also an innovative cook and is currently developing a line of vegan delicacies. She loves creating handmade products that can be duplicated by the students of Navya.

**Meeta Mastani:** An internationally renowned print/natural dye artist and community development advocate, Meeta works at the intersection of sustainable development, culture, craft, design, arts and retail, expressing herself through different media and helping to generate livelihoods for marginalized communities. She has done collaborative work in different parts of the world, and has taught as an artist in residence at UW Madison in the U.S. Her work has individually or collectively been part of art shows at The National Museum New Delhi, The V&A London, The Dutch Costume Museum Netherlands, amongst others.

She has co-founded and set up offline and online retail outfits for craft and design, and consults in the area of retail merchandising and craft marketing. Inspired by Indian folk traditions, she has been teaching in the last few years. She enjoys collaborating with other artists and has done projects with several artists in India & overseas. She has been an artist in residence at institutions in Maine, USA, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic.

**Paro Anand:** Best known for her writings for children and young adults, she has always challenged preconceived notions of the limits of writings for young people. She has used literature as a creative outlet for young people in difficult circumstances, especially with children in difficult circumstances.

She won the Sahitya Akademi Bal Sahitya award for her book, 'Like Smoke', besides several other awards. The Russian Centre for Science and Culture awarded her for her contribution to children's literature. She won the Karubaki Award for her fearless writing. She was on the IBBY Honor List. She delivered a lecture at Harvard University. Paro Anand has headed the National Centre for Children's Literature. She is a renowned performance storyteller and has performed her stories all over India and in UK, USA, Germany, France, Switzerland, Sweden, Singapore, Bangladesh and Bhutan. She was writer in Residence at the Winterline Foundation and won the Srijanjan Peeth Fellowship. She runs a program, Literature in Action, empowering young people through stories and runs a podcast by the same name.

**Sohail Hashmi:** B.A. (Hons) in Geography and M.A. and M.Phil. In Regional Development, Sohail has worked extensively among slum dwellers, unorganised workers and shop hands of old Delhi. He began working as a script writer at PTI TV, in 1991, and continues to work as writer and filmmaker. He was a media consultant to the national literacy mission. He is founding trustee of SAHMAT, writes about Delhi and on issues of communalism, culture and identity. He conducts heritage walks, loves to listen to music and to cook.

**Usha Srinivasan:** B.Sc. (Hons) and M.Ed. She is the founder member of The Civil Services Society, Sanskriti School and a member of the Commission on Education and Communication (IUCN). As a member of the senior management team of Development Alternatives, Ms. Usha Srinivasan has managed the Nationwide CLEAN-India network and coordinated the Earth Charter programme and ZERI Education programme. With over 30 years of experience, she has authored papers, training manuals and books on Science, Astronomy and Environment. She is the recipient of National Science talent scholarship and National award for Innovative Science teaching. With a diploma in fine arts, she has interests in pottery, sculpture, painting, classical, carnatic music, classical dance, films, reading, travelling and gardening. Trained as a volunteer guide, she volunteers for guided tours at the National Museum, Janpath, New Delhi.

**Dr. Vidya Gupta:** After graduating from the Armed Forces Medical College, Pune, Dr. Gupta trained in Paediatrics and Neonatology in the UK. She was awarded the Fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. She is currently working as a Senior Consultant Neonatologist in Indraprastha Apollo Hospital, New Delhi.

**Vijay Bharti:** An educationist at heart, she started her formal Journey in Integral Education in 1982 with Mirambika, a Free Progress School, run by Sri Aurobindo Educational Society, at the premises of Sri Aurobindo Ashram-Delhi Branch, where she was trained as a teacher educator in Integral Education. Since then, she has facilitated understanding and deepening the process of education and self-development in the light of Integral Education. At present, she is living and working in Sri Aurobindo Ashram-Delhi Branch and is passionately involved in the Vocational Training Programme where she is practising her understanding of Integral Education and Integral yoga with young adults who come for vocational training in the Ashram.

## PARENTS SPEAK

Shikshantar was our first and only choice for school for our daughter Mira. We applied and the thorough process the school followed for admission made us more certain of our correct choice. Mira is in the 3rd year of school (KG) and she willingly and happily goes to school and looks forward to it. We can see her developing as an individual who has her own opinion and at the same time very empathetic to others and the surroundings.

The Teachers live the ideology of the school and are really the didi and bhaiya that they are called as, by the kids.

We highly recommend the school for parents who look to have a child with a well rounded personality.

N Parvathi & Challoyu Kiran,  
Parents of Mira Parvathi Kiran, Prospective batch of 2036

Albert Einstein said, 'Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school'. Shikshantar is a school which offers more than just education - It recognizes that a child is a whole being and aims to nurture their overall growth and development. Their holistic methodology enables children to become well-rounded individuals who are curious, self-aware, emotionally intelligent, and capable of adapting to the complexities of life. The value system instilled in them right from the start makes them stand out in a crowd. It gives space to students to reflect on their experiences, meet challenges without stress, stand up for their perspectives, analyse their successes and challenges, and work together as one big family.

Deepti Chhabra,  
Mother of Devyana Chhabra, Prospective batch of 2036  
Vannia Chhabra, batch of 2025  
Subjects: English, Psychology, Commerce,  
Economics and Political Science



Destiny got us into Shikshantar in 2012. We always wanted our children to begin school in a very comfortable and completely stress-free environment. And since then, we have seen this fabulous journey unfold - from Primary to Middle and then to Senior School - full of exploration, enthusiasm, finding your space in an environment that fosters self-belief and yet, by one's own definition and not guided by any comparison, the silent pursuit of excellence. The insightful progress reviews were a delightful experience to read together with the children. Somewhere between the timely feedback of the Didis and Bhaiyas and our keenness to offer the best possible nurturing environment, time flew, and we now see the completion of school for our elder son – confident, humble and ready to take the next steps

Shankar Laskar  
Father of Archit Laskar, batch of 2026

As parents, what we value most about Shikshantar is that learning here seems to begin with wonder — in the quiet of nature, in meaningful dialogue, and in giving children the freedom to simply be themselves. There is something deeply reassuring about seeing children treated with such respect, gentle guidance, and trust in their individuality as the future minds that will shape the world. We also greatly admire the way education here appears to focus on conceptual understanding and application, while encouraging freedom of creative expression, curiosity, and independent thought. It is especially inspiring to see children receive early exposure to reflective spaces and conversations, including interactions with Buddhist monks and teachings on mindfulness, compassion, and awareness. These experiences nurture not just intellect, but also sensitivity, curiosity, and inner balance — qualities that feel increasingly important today. As Rabindranath Tagore beautifully wrote, “The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence.” This is where Shikshantar truly stands out for us — in nurturing children who grow not only in knowledge, but also in awareness, balance, and humanity. We are truly grateful to be a part of the Shikshantar family!

Surabhi Sinha  
Mother of Amita Sinha, Prospective batch of 2030



Shikshantar not only enables the child to stand tall academically but also nurtures the children's emotional requirements. Sensitivity for self and the society is embedded in a Shikshantar child at a grassroots level by inculcating simple thoughts in their daily regime like calling all the staff members didis or bhaiyas or by meeting their favourite Kaaju - Kishmish or Marsh and Mellow. Today, by the virtue of technology, we all are drifting apart from nature. Shikshantar puts efforts and gives an environment to bring the child close to nature and learn things in the most organic ways.

Isha Sachdeva,  
Mother of Agastya Sachdeva, Prospective batch of 2032

When my wife, son and I were in Mumbai, and Saad was studying in Billabong International High School, we had heard of the unconventional education that Shikshantar offers and the thought line fitted very well with ours. We were very clear that in case Saad gets through Shikshantar, then we will shift cities from Mumbai to Gurgaon. When the three of us came down from Mumbai to Gurgaon for a day for the Interview, we just fell in love with the school and our prayers were answered very soon and that gave us a motive to make a permanent shift to Gurgaon. We are very happy with the way Shikshantar has shaped Saad into a confident boy with compassion and love for the environment. Thank you so much Shikshantar for imparting such a good education and looking after our children so well.

Major ( Dr.) Mohommed Ali Shah (Veteran)  
Father of Saad, Prospective batch of 2030

As a homeschooled child, it was only Shikshantar that accepted and embraced him with open arms. I still remember the long chat that Minoti didi had with a ten year old before he joined school! Shikshantar truly gives children the independence and warmth to build relationships and connection with teachers as much as with peers. Since grade six and now as parents of a high schooler, we have experienced the compassion, understanding and closeness of the teachers to our child much like that offered by parents. The teachers are more than willing to go out of the way for each child to ensure they find their feet and focus on finding their interest. Many times, they have turned first to the teacher, their 'didi' before they reach their parents. I am honored that each child and their success matters to the teachers. There is not a single other school in Gurugram which gives the atmosphere and experience better than ours.

Smriti Lamech  
Mother of Aviv Lamech, batch of 2022  
Amara Lamech, batch of 2024



# “creating change with and through education”

In more than two decades of existence,  
Shikshantar has made a notable impact in the way . . .

- . . schools and families perceive children and their development
- . . families recognise progressive education as benefitting their children in the long term
- . . progressive education leads and creates pathways for excellence in board examinations
- . . parents recognise their own involvement as nurturers of their children
- . . society's understanding about children and their development is deepening
- . . inclusive practices in education are being visualised and acknowledged

AND a woman who held a babe against her bosom said,  
Speak to us of Children. And he said:  
Your children are not your children.  
They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.  
They come through you but not from you,  
And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.  
You may give them your love but not your thoughts,  
For they have their own thoughts.  
You may house their bodies but not their souls,  
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,  
Which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.  
You may strive to be like them, but seek not  
to make them like you.  
For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.  
You are the bows from which your children  
as living arrows are sent forth.

THE PROPHET

Kahlil Gibran



