

The V-Excel educational trust's school is located at Mandaveli, Chennai. V-excel educational trust runs two schools in Chennai – one in the Mandaveli area and another one in the Shastri Nagar area. The school in Mandaveli hosts their older students and the school in Shastri Nagar is for younger children and also their center for research and rehabilitation. V-excel trust provides 'Special education' facilities (almost at no cost to the parents), to meet the unique needs of special needs children (especially the ones with disabilities such as Autism, mental retardation (different levels), learning disabilities, cognitive impairments, behavioral regulatory problems, ADD, etc.) that includes classroom instruction, pre-vocational training, vocational training, rehabilitation therapy etc.

The school offers the below programs:

1. **Early Intervention group** for infant and toddlers. Approximately 85 children enrolled
2. **School group** for school going children group (6 to 14 years of age). Approximately 72 children enrolled
3. **Pre-vocation group**
4. **Vocation group** for children learning a vocation – 14 to 25 years of age
5. **Remedial group** for group for Regular children with some learning disabilities

The school uses the Waldorf teaching methodology/approach, the protagonist is Rudolf Steiner, an Austrian philosopher. Teaching is based on and oriented towards nature, movements, arts and such. Other than creative arts such as music and drama the school teaches vocations such as these: Paper cup making, tailoring, kitchen work, some art work, screen printing, visiting cards making, bakery work, block printing (more as training not in workshop mode).



Such special needs children respond better and learn well in activities involving movements, creative arts and nature, hence the school's focus on these areas.

While we visited the school recently, we saw the children engrossed in music and we were also served some snacks made by the children (with their teacher's help) in their school kitchen! Every day they have a menu and the children are involved in the preparation of the food. While we visited, a few children also stopped by the school office and made some chitchat with Ajitha Panshikar, (VP of strategic development for the educational trust) which they seemed to enjoy much.



During the visit, we got to see all of the classrooms, the play area, office area, and kitchen and therapy units. We also got to see many of the students of the school, since they had their group singing session of the day, while we were visiting. The music teacher was singing and playing the guitar while the school children joined her as a chorus and they were thoroughly enjoying themselves, there were also other teachers around chaperoning them. All of the students were special needs children with one or other disabilities mentioned above.

Most of the money that ASHA contributes goes towards the school and some towards early intervention/vocational program. Providing therapy, especially, for special needs children is not an especially low cost service in India. Therapists such as the ones working with the children in the V-excel like schools are highly paid specialists and this only adds to the cost of the school, but v-excel thrives on such experts and does not shy away from it, the children need it most. This takes quite a chunk out of the school's



budget, per Ajitha, but it is no doubt that the value they get by seeing some of the special needs children get better and leave school to face the real world outside, makes it totally worth it.

From the time we spent at the school and what we observed, along with the general empathy for all those parents who are blessed with special needs children and struggling to provide a nurturing environment for them, there is no doubt in our minds that the contributions that Asha makes to this educational trust is very well justified and well utilized as well.

For more information about V-Excel please see
<http://www.Ashanet.org/projects/project-view.php?p=845>