

Vishvas: Special Educational Needs Team at Shikshantar

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 and facilitates an inclusive environment for all children, in spirit and action.

Children identified with specific developmental needs or diverse learning trajectories are supported through interventions by Vishvas. Readiness of children who get enrolled with Vishvas for school experiences, is enabled through a development-oriented approach which accommodates their physical, cognitive, and social-emotional needs. Special Educators and Occupational Therapists work in collaboration with classroom facilitators and resource facilitators to ensure their holistic development and well-being.

Inclusion being a pivot of our learning experiences, compassionate and all-embracing classrooms for varied learners are created through experiential learning processes. We facilitate our curriculum by integrating visual, auditory and kinaesthetic (tactile) learning styles to address the individual needs of children. Story narrations, hands-on activities, nature-walks, small-group discussions and creative write-ups constitute children's participation. We make conscious efforts to involve parents in every level of our work, starting from planning to execution of plans as their support plays an imperative role in our work. Vishvas team provides a scaffold to children with special needs throughout these experiences, to make them feel nurtured in this dynamic journey of learning.

Shikshantar encourages applications under the special needs category for children up to Primary School Years. However, the admission is subject to availability of seats and

the specific nature of the child's learning needs. Inclusion is beyond simply the physical inclusion of the child in a classroom. It is the inclusion of the cognitive, social and emotional and specific special needs of the child. In a situation where we feel that we would not be able to address the developmental needs of a child due to requirement of specific expertise or infrastructure, and that the child will not benefit, we might be unable to consider the admission. This would otherwise defeat and dilute the larger purpose of inclusion and lead to exclusion of a child's learning needs.