

A School that Helps a Homebound Student



It is a very calm and quiet small school situated in a village several kilometers away from a suburban area in Kurunegala district. Since it is an isolated school, the number of students studying there is low.

We met a motivated principal who leads the inclusive education programme in the school diligently. She provides leadership, and the school annual implementation plan also states that the school will promote inclusive education programs.

Twenty children of an orphanage situated nearby attend this school. The principal said, "Some of them are under probation due to multiple reasons. None of them are from this area. This is the nearest school to their children's home. They are warmly welcomed by this school."

The principal told us that there are four children with physical and intellectual disabilities. The school has neither a Special Education Unit nor any teacher trained in special education. However, since their parents cannot afford to send them to a faraway school with a Special Education Unit, this school helps them. "Therefore we try to work together with the schools that have Special Education Units and get their support," the principal said.

One student who requires support for mobility does not attend the school because he is suffering from a genetic condition that causes muscle weakness. Last year, this student sat for the Grade 5 scholarship examination and passed it. The principal said. "He had not attended school directly for one and a half years then. His elder sister was studying in the Grade 11 of this school and we liaised with him mainly through her. Teachers visited him as much as possible. The lessons were sent to him by way of his sister. His exercise books were brought to the school and teachers scrutinized them. Instructions were noted on books. School provided him with text books and

other facilities. Examination Department provided him with extra facilities in an examination center.”

“This student is now in Grade 6, but still cannot attend school. Yet, we need to guarantee his right to education. We have no mobile teachers here. But we must try to provide him with education. Now, his sister has left our school. She studies for Advanced Level examination in another school. Therefore, it is quite difficult to liaise with him now. However, we have already sent him the school text books and instructions. We are looking for ways to help him,” the principal further said.

The school is trying to use a mixed approach of home-schooling and distance learning for this student.

Principal has also reached out to the community in order to get supportive devices such as a wheelchair for this student. The school has improved accessibility in the school premises under the previous principal. A by-road has been constructed to improve access of the students with disability to the primary classes. After that, a student can come in a vehicle right to the door of the primary classroom.

Students with different special needs learn together in the same classroom. Teachers try their best to pay individual attention to students with special educational needs.

“We have taught the students to treat all peers equally and we don’t see discrimination of bullying among the students now,” the teacher who coordinates inclusive education told. She was individually assisting an Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) boy with special needs to improve his reading and writing skills by the time we went to meet her.

This small school is doing whatever it can to make education inclusive for all. The principal is highly motivated and directs the teaching staff, students and the school community to understand and implement inclusive education policies in the school.