

About life and other demons

FEEL FREE The churn in society has encouraged schools to let their children speak up about their problems in open fora without fear of judgement



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Being young isn't easy. Academic goals have to be set — and met. Co-curricular activities have to be pursued — and enjoyed. Social service skills have to be developed for social good. Students today know and accept all of this. But what is arising as a big area of negotiation is whether they have the ultimate control over their childhood.

How are schools managing this new challenge? Teachers said parents have it even tougher than them these days. Students, however, said parents 'don't understand'; the latter said, 'they won't listen'. In the increasingly barricaded world of children versus authority figures, schools have emerged as the platform where both sides have called a truce.

"The school helps create the balanced kid. When society itself is undergoing a churn, how can we expect our children to remain unaffected?" said Suman Kumar, principal, Bluebells International, ranked second again among south-east Delhi schools in the HT-C fore Top Schools Survey 2013.

The emphasis on academics notwithstanding, social service and extra-curricular activities are channels through which children can 'work out' emotional baggage, principals feel. Counsellors talked of sixteen-year-olds on antidepressants, of Class III students attending psychological counselling classes.

"Empathising with other people helps a child to deal with his or her own problems," said Minakshi Kushwaha, principal, Birla Vidya Niketan. The school

is ranked seventh in this year's survey. Several south-east Delhi schools have, in fact, started life-skills assemblies where issues such as cyberbullying, gender equality and homophobia are being discussed threadbare in the form of panel discussions and, even, plays.

Luvdiya, a Class 11 student at the Indian School, said he has just participated in a workshop "to make parents the new best friend." The surprise achiever of this year is this school: from ninth place, it has moved to third place in 2013.

ALL UNIQUE, ALL GIFTED

School life, said experts, can make children feel successful, if there are various avenues to excel. Mothers International, which has topped again, has done best in academic rigour, infrastructure and facilities and individual attention to students; Bluebells in extra-curricular activities and innovative teaching; Don Bosco in value-for-money categories.

"Each child is gifted in their own way," said Tania Joshi, principal, the Indian School. "Our children conceptualise and bring out magazines, we encourage them to take responsibility" she added. Most students seemed to demand that elders respect that they had come of age. Manas, class 11 student, Bluebells International, however, said he has no issue with the school "giving direction to information." Toufiq, a class 12 student, also brought attention to the school being a place where "questions and counter-questions" are allowed. Joyee, a Class 11 student, certainly had several of her own: "We could be surfing the internet for fun facts, literary facts, scientific facts. Why restrict us? Won't it whet our curiosity?"

moreonweb

For parameter-wise rankings of the Top schools in south-east Delhi, log on to: www.hindustantimes.com/topschools2013

TOMORROW

Will DPS, Dwarka once again top the charts among west Delhi's schools?

they say

POST-2006, THE NCERT BOOKS ON HINDI HAVE DILUTED CONTENT. THERE ARE NO QUALITY ESSAYS... STUDENTS THESE DAYS FEEL IT'S ENOUGH TO 'READ' ON FB, TWITTER

RASHMI SINGH, Hindi teacher-coordinator, Bluebells

MY PARENTS WERE UPSET AS I'D CHOSEN HUMANITIES. I HAD TO TALK THEM OUT OF IT. IN OUR SCHOOL, THE WORKSHOPS HELP US COMMUNICATE BETTER

ISHAN, Class XII, The Indian School

THEY TOO MAKE THE GRADE...

They may not have made it to the Top Ten, but they hold as much promise as their crowned counterparts. Here is a list of other options in south-east Delhi.

DON BOSCO SCHOOL

Alaknanda
Established in the year 1980, the school has mathematics and economics clubs which aim to broaden the horizon of the regular curriculum. A unique initiative by the school called 'Ankur Don Bosco' engages students and teachers in extending education to the underprivileged children of the neighbourhood.

TAGORE INTERNATIONAL

East of Kailash
There are 12,000 books in the school library on various subjects, such as science, commerce, literature, language, fiction as well as reference books. They organise special events and workshops for the tiny tots. The school kitchen has a cooking range and cooking vessels where students learn to prepare and present snacks that are healthy under the guidance of teachers.

APEEJAY SCHOOL

Saket
The school has spacious and well-equipped labs for biology, chemistry, computers, electronics, home science, mathematics and physics. The library has a rich collection (more than 14,000) of latest books in different fields. The school also has an audio-visual room to enhance teaching through the use of technology with the aid of a LCD Projector.

KR MANGALAM WORLD

Greater Kailash-2
In keeping with the growing need for IT proficiency, there is a TV and computer in every classroom. The school has modern language labs. The school recognises the importance of international culture and customs. The school also provides world-class sports facilities including a state-of-the-art football ground, basketball ground, tennis court etc.

CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL

Srinivaspuri
The school is situated on a 4.75 acre site and provides extensive grounds and diverse play areas, including tennis court, volley ball, football, cricket pitch and basketball unit. A large fully air conditioned auditorium-cum-multi-purpose hall is available for a variety of activities and programmes. The average teacher student ratio is 1: 40.



JASJEET PLAHA / HT PHOTO

TOP TEN SCHOOLS

The 2013 Hindustan Times-C fore Top Schools Survey gave scores to each school across 14 parameters, from academic rigour to sports. Here is a list of schools ranked in the Top Ten in south-east Delhi



1 MOTHER'S INTERNATIONAL*

Sri Aurobindo Marg

The school was founded in 1956; the school building is divided into junior and senior blocks. With a planned space for every activity, co-curricular work is encouraged here. The school organises work experience for its students.

RATINGS: Topped competence of teachers, academic rigour, infrastructure & facilities, value for money etc

WEBSITE: <http://themis.in>

PRE-PRIMARY FEE: ₹60,960 per annum



2 BLUE BELLS INTERNATIONAL

Kailash Colony

The school has 90 class rooms, 4 multi-purpose halls, an AV room and a well-designed auditorium. The average teacher student ratio is 1: 35. The school promotes an inclusive learning environment for those with special needs.

RATINGS: Topped extra-curricular activities, innovative teaching and life skills education parameters

WEBSITE: bluebellsinternational.com

NURSERY FEE: ₹61,800 per annum



3 THE INDIAN SCHOOL

JB Tito Marg

Forest camps as well as heritage trips are organised for students', right from nursery. There are specially designed play areas with splash pools for the little ones. The school also organises various inter-school competitions.

RATINGS: Topped the parental participation, safety & hygiene parameters, ranked second on innovative teaching

WEBSITE: <http://theindianschool.in>

NURSERY FEE: ₹50,330 per annum



4 AMITY INTERNATIONAL*

Saket

Besides over 50 classrooms in the school, dedicated rooms are designed for indoor activities such as art, vocal music, theatre, clay modelling, western music etc. The school has a well-stocked and well managed library with 23,600 books.

RATINGS: Second highest academic rigour score, does well on extra-curricular activities, parental participation

WEBSITE: www.amity.edu/ais/aiss/

NURSERY FEE: Not Available



5 GYAN BHARATI SCHOOL

Saket

Gyan Bharati School was established in 1980. It has a sprawling 7.29 acre campus with 4 playgrounds, 2 auditoriums, and 5 labs. The school has a child counsellor to advise students on issues related to career or personal problems.

RATINGS: Topped safety and hygiene parameter; second highest rank in infrastructure & facilities category

WEBSITE: www.gyanbharatischool.net

NURSERY FEE: ₹42,800 per annum



6 LAXMAN PUBLIC SCHOOL

Hauz Khas enclave

To develop academic excellence, the school offers a wide syllabus with careful planning and guidance. The school has hostel facilities for both boys and girls in the premises. Special attention is paid to the food served at the canteen.

RATINGS: Second highest parental participation and social accountability scores; does well on teacher care

WEBSITE: laxmanpublicschool.com

NURSERY FEE: ₹76,620 per annum



7 BIRLA VIDYA NIKETAN

Pushp Vihar

There are 32 clubs for children to pursue various activities. The school has a full time professional counselor to advise student. The sports facilities here include cricket ground, swimming pool, a gym and badminton courts, among others.

RATINGS: Second-highest academic rigour score; does well in sports, infrastructure and facilities categories

WEBSITE: <http://birla.ac.in>

NURSERY FEE: ₹53,820 per annum



8 APEEJAY SCHOOL

Sheikh Sarai

It is equipped with 6 computer labs housing 160 computers with multimedia facilities. A skating rink, swimming pool and 2 badminton courts are among the many sports amenities at Apeejay. Each class has a maximum of 20 students.

RATINGS: The school does well on sports, academic rigour and social accountability parameters.

WEBSITE: <http://www.apeejay.edu/>

NURSERY FEE: Not Available



9 ST GEORGE'S SCHOOL

Alaknanda

The teacher student ratio here is 1:40. Right from pre-school to senior classes, there is a wide range of co-curricular activities that include sports, art, music, dance, drama, quiz, storytelling and nature walks.

RATINGS: Second-highest score on sports; does well on value for money and social accountability parameters

WEBSITE: www.sgs.edu.in

NURSERY FEE: ₹48,692 per annum



10 AMITY INTERNATIONAL

Pushp Vihar

The importance of giving back to the society is inculcated in the students through social outreach programmes such as working for the physically handicapped. The teacher-student ratio is 1:17.

RATINGS: Ranked second in innovative teaching; does well on the value system/integration parameter

WEBSITE: www.amity.edu/ais/aispv

NURSERY FEE: ₹94,386 per annum

METHODOLOGY: The survey was conducted in three phases. Broadly, Central Delhi is represented by the area falling inside the Inner Ring Road. South-East Delhi is separated from South-West Delhi by Aurobindo Marg. In phase-1, schools were invited to provide information on academic and

non-academic facilities, performance of students and profile of teachers. Then, research agency C fore shortlisted schools for the second round, in which a perceptual survey was carried out with a sample of 3,000 parents and teachers across the city's six zones. They were asked to assess schools

they were aware of on a scale of 10 against 14 parameters. Results of the perceptual survey were combined with objective data from the first round to rank schools. In phase-3, C fore researchers visited the schools to conduct an audit and finalise rankings. Perceptual data scores were extrapolated

for schools that did not participate. Nursery fee figures, provided to HT by the schools, are approximate. They include annual fee, development charges and admission fees in many cases (transport fee is variable). For the total fee amount,

please contact the schools. * These schools did not participate in the survey. Their scores are based on the perceptual survey conducted among parents and teachers as mentioned in the methodology.