

**SWAMI BRAHMANAND PRATISHTHAN
CBD, NAVI MUMBAI**

A Report of the School Activities during the Lockdown Period

Swami Brahmanand Pratishthan has been working for children with intellectual disabilities since the last three decades. It has two units in CBD -Disha Special School for children in the age group of 4 to 18 and Falguni vocational centre for the students above the age of 18. The trust runs one unit named seabird special school in the rural area of Uran.

As we aware the Covid 19 Pandemic has disturbed our daily routine and changed our way of working and living completely.

Since our organization works with children with special needs, the Management had to immediately take decisions for keeping the students occupied actively in their home environment. Especially children with Autism find adjusting to the sudden change in routine a challenging task. This change has definitely posed difficult situation to all of us too.

The month of March and April are usually months for evaluation of the learnt skills and assessment of new skills for planning the coming years Academic program. This is usually done at school. But this time teachers had to involve the Parents and students with the use of digital platform. This was helpful to us to gauge the application of the learnt skills in the home environment.

The curriculum of the school includes Activities of daily living, speech & Language, Motor, Functional academic skills, social, occupational and Recreational skills. At the vocational centre the curriculum includes Vocational skills such as Home Science, Housekeeping, Creative Work, Functional Academics, Recreational Activities, etc. The same activities are now being carried out by the students using the digital platform such as WhatsApp for video and audio correspondence.

Every class has their own WhatsApp group. Teachers demonstrate activities for children in the group and parents are asked to post videos of the work carried out by the students at home. It is observed that students are successfully performing the activities assigned to them under the guidance of the parents and family members.

The teachers evaluate every student's video and a feedback is given to the parents with suggestion for improvement in the given task. This strategy was applied since the day lockdown was imposed keeping in mind that special children tend to have behaviour problems if they are not kept occupied in some activity thus disrupting the family routine.

Working from home has no time line. Parents are given regular inputs through phone calls or video demos about how the activity could be performed correctly. Many of the learnt skills are applied in the home situations too that helps us to gauge the functional use of skills learnt in school. Parents are creative and use the materials available at home such as old wedding cards, newspaper, old calendars, etc. for various art and craft activities.

Children do miss coming to school and keep calling teachers to find out when the school is likely to reopen .But presently, it is important for us to continue the use of digital platform for the learning /teaching sessions.

This strategy also increased the involvement of family members in training their child. A feedback was taken from a parent and we were happy to note that some parents were unaware of the abilities of their children.

As quoted by a parent Mrs. Yogita Dhamdere “We saw lot of improvement in Rushi in areas like Reading and Writing. He is always eager to learn anything like domestic activity, academics and other areas. During the lockdown period his class teacher gave us activities daily and our whole family got involved in training him. The online teaching has improved the involvement of every person in the family”

It was also observed that the students of the vocational section were of great help to their family members in carrying out the household activities. Students helped in cooking meals, sweeping, mopping, dusting, washing vessels, washing clothes, drying clothes, folding and ironing clothes etc. They also had fun with their family members by playing games, singing and dancing to their favourite Bollywood music.

The staff members took this opportunity to take up professional online courses and update their knowledge.

We hope that we will come out of this situation soon and life will be back on tracks. Till then, we hope God help us pass through these difficult times with patience and care.

God bless us all.