



SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY

Given its social context and mission, Akal management is committed to make education equitable and accessible for all.

Our beliefs:

At Akal Academy, we believe, that each student is a unique individual, and has a unique life trajectory. We also believe that each student has some strengths and needs. The school is a microcosm of the society and as such, represents the society. Diversity is finding greater visibility and expression within the society and so it must in schools as well. School is also a catalyst of social change and as such, must also function to acknowledge, embrace and nurture this diversity. Therefore, to create an inclusive society, we must be an inclusive school. Teachers are well-intentioned but they need support, guidance and resources to be able to identify, accommodate and celebrate this diversity. We firmly believe in the axiom - 'If I cannot learn how you teach, can you teach me how I learn.'

'Inclusion is an "organizational paradigm" that involves change. It is an unending process of increasing learning and participation for all students. It is an ideal to which schools can aspire, but which is never fully reached.' (Learning diversity in the International Baccalaureate programmes: Special educational needs within the International Baccalaureate programmes, Pg. 3)

AKAL ADMISSION POLICY

At Akal Academy Baru Sahib, no student is denied admission on the basis of his physical, cognitive or neurological profile. Other than an age-appropriate literacy and numeracy test, students previous school records and medical reports are reviewed and, if found necessary, the School Counselor conducts further screening and testing. Based on this a detailed note is prepared for the prospective homeroom teacher and PYPC.

Typically, students at Akal who need accommodations, modifications and alternative plans are of two kinds -

- ELL / ESL students who have had inadequate exposure to English.
- Students who have development disorganizations/disorders that interfere with age/grade appropriate functioning/learning.

Identification & Assessment

- ELL - For new students, the admission test is a fair first step for identifying level of language proficiency. During the course of the school year, most teachers are

also trained to use checklists to identify students who may begin show language delays of some sort. These students are then referred Counseling Cell and Guidance for further assessment to ascertain whether it is a developmental delay or just inadequate exposure to English.

Developmental disorders - Historically, the school has been getting students assessed and diagnosed by a Chandigarh-based certified psychologist. Full time clinical psychologist was hired from the Government College to establish department of counseling and guidance. While the school has six counselors on its roll and one is exclusively for PYP under the leadership of the clinical psychologist. The school has begun transitioning towards internal testing using standardized tools and test batteries, as deemed appropriate. These are then referred to qualified special education professionals, including Counselors, within the school, for further psycho-educational assessment and programming.

Programming for Students

‘Inclusion is an ongoing process that aims to increase access and engagement in learning for all students by identifying and removing barriers.’ (Learning diversity in the International Baccalaureate programmes: Special educational needs within the International Baccalaureate programmes, Pg. 3)

- Programming for ELL students, includes collaboration among Special Educator, homeroom teachers, assistant teachers, PYP Library resource teacher and others who are part of a student’s education in the learning continuum. At Akal, ELL students are provided individualized and specialized support, through the assistant teachers, within the mainstream class. If required, students may also be sent for more focused support in the Language Support Lab once a week. Using principles of UDL and Differentiation, teachers differentiate content, process, product or environment of learning. There may be Individualized Language Plans(ILP) depending on how severely the language gap impedes the learning of the individual student. Parents are given a copy of the ILP during PTM and updated about progress at every reporting period.
- Programming for students with developmental disorders, includes collaboration among Special Educator, homeroom teachers, assistant teachers and PYP Library resource teacher. At Akal, such students are provided individualized and specialized support, through the assistant teachers, within the mainstream class. Using principles of UDL and Differentiation, teachers differentiate content, process, product or environment of learning using it both for instruction and assessment. There may be Individualized Education Plans(IEP) including accommodations, modifications and alternative program, as necessary. Recent research has found that “certain individuals or groups of children may benefit from adaptations to general teaching approaches, but in general pupils with SEN do not need qualitatively different pedagogy.” (Kershner 2007: 486)Parents are

given a copy of the IEP during PTM and updated about progress at every reporting period.

Reporting

Reporting for ELL will be on the regular Akal Academy report card for all subject and as per the student's ILP for English only, if there is one.

Reporting for students with developmental disorders will be on the regular Akal Academy report card for those who do not have an IEP. For students who have an IEP, there will be a separate report card that will be aligned with his/her IEP.

At Akal Academy, Baru Sahib we value the four principles of good practice identified by the International Baccalaureate that promote equal access for all learners across the curriculum:

- Affirming identity and building self-esteem
- Valuing prior knowledge
- Scaffolding
- Extended learning

Based on these pillars, we plan and implement the following to meet learning needs of all students:

Universal Design of Learning

During annual, horizontal and vertical planning meetings, teachers evaluated their plan along the 3 principles of UDL:

- Engagement - The **Why** of Learning - does the plan stimulate interest and motivation for learning?
- Representation - The **What** of Learning - does the plan present information and content in different ways?
- Action & Expression - The **How** of Learning - does the plan differentiate the ways that students can express what they know?

This evaluation of the plan is carried out using a checklist that must be attached and submitted along with the plan.

Differentiation

However, inclusion happens as soon as the process of increasing participation is started (Booth and Ainscow 2002). Thus, differentiation is inclusion in practice.

In education, differentiation is necessary for some and good for all. Therefore, at Akal Academy Baru Sahib, all teachers will differentiate content, process, assessment and environment of learning, to maximize students' learning and remove barriers to learning.

Through collaborative planning, teachers will ensure that all students, both in trans disciplinary and disciplinary units of learning, have fair access to the curriculum. There must be adequate evidence of this in UOI and stand-alone planners, transaction of teaching-learning, inquiry journals, assessment folders and student portfolios.

Tiered Approach to Learning Intervention (or RTI)

'Mainstream education will not always be appropriate for every student all of the time. Equally, just because mainstream education may not be appropriate at a particular stage, it does not prevent the student from being included successfully at any other stage. (Learning diversity in the International Baccalaureate programmes: Special educational needs within the International Baccalaureate programmes, Pg. 3)

Using the Tiered Approach to Intervention (Response to Intervention), Akal teachers teach all student in their classrooms using sound, evidence-based teaching practices designed to allow all students to succeed in Tier 1 (Universal Programming). If students fail to learn a particular concept, or struggle to learn it, they may be moved to Tier 2 (Targeted Group Intervention), which is intense and focused small group instruction with the help of Assistant Teachers. If a student grasps the concept, they can return to the general Tier 1 learning environment, but students who continue to fail to make progress are moved to Tier 3 (Intensive Individualized Intervention). Tier 3 is typically comprised of individual instruction, "which may be special education in some areas" (Mastropieri, Scruggs, Hauth, & Allen-Bronaugh, 2012, p. 231)

Assessment Tools

At Akal Academy, we use a number of tools for evaluating children at entry level and thereafter, as per subsequent assessment of students by the teachers during the course of regular class room teaching.

Raven's Progressive Matrices and Color Progressive Matrices along with Malin's Intelligence Scale for Indian Children (Verbal) are considered powerful and ideal tools for assessing the students at Akal Academy and for subsequent assessment. The following tests are currently used-

1. Raven's Progressive Matrices

It is a widely used non-verbal test of observation and clear thinking for 5-65 years of age people. It measures ability to form perceptual relations, reasoning independent of language and formal schooling. It consists of 5 sets of 12 items each. □ Each item contains a figure with a missing piece. Indian norms are available.

2. Colored Progressive Matrices

It is a simple, easy to administer, rapid non-verbal test which can be used to assess students to obtain a measure related with linguistic, visuo-perceptual, verbal memory and cognitive functioning. It is used in Cerebral Palsy, Spectrum disorder, Learning disability, Mental Retardation, language and psycho-neurological disorders and educability.

It is designed for children aged 5.5 through 11 years-of-age, the elderly, and mentally and physically impaired individuals. This test contains sets A and B from the standard matrices, with a further set of 12 items inserted between the two, as set Ab. Most items are presented on a colored background to make the test visually stimulating for participants. However the very last few items in set B are presented as black-on-white.

3. Malin's Intelligence Scale for Indian Children (MISIC)

It is a standardized psychological tool, which is an Indian adaptation of the WISC. It is mainly used younger children. This battery comprises sub-tests, 6 of which form the verbal scale and 5 the performance scale. The tests in the verbal scale include information, comprehension, analogies, arithmetic, vocabulary and digit span. The tests on the performance scale include picture completion, block design, object assembly, mazes and coding. The neuropsychological functions tapped by the various sub-tests include attention, concentration, working memory, vigilance, recall, mathematical reasoning, judgment, visuo-spatial construction and visual integration.

4. Seguin Form Board: This is very simple standardized test for very young students. Indian norms are provided. It provides measurement of one's ability.

5. The DST-J^{INDIA} is a standardized tool with Indian norms and consists of subtests that focus to evaluate accuracy and fluency in reading, writing, and spelling. These subtests also assess motor coordination, attention span, reasoning ability and vocabulary skill that is vital for attainment of literacy skills.

6. Questionnaire for ADHD as Assessment Performa

It consists of items and teacher is required to fill-in the same on the basis of adequate information about the child.

Created and Adopted – March 2017

Next Review – March 2018