

### CHAPTER 9 – PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

The Integrated Scheme for School Education envisages the ‘school’ as a continuum from Pre-School to Senior Secondary levels. These would cover preschools referred to by all nomenclatures such as Anganwadi, Balwadi, nursery, preschool, preparatory, pre-school, LKG, UKG, play centres, crèches, Bal Vatikas etc.

9.1 Section 11 of the RTE Act, 2009 states that “with a view to prepare children above the age of three years for elementary education and to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years, the appropriate government may make necessary arrangements for pre-school education for such children.”

9.2 Research and experience have repeatedly demonstrated that Early Childhood Development and Education not only increases the progress and achievement of children in primary schools and lay the foundation for future growth, learning and development, but also develop positive attitudes and the desire to learn. Therefore, it becomes imperative to provide quality pre-school experiences to children.

9.3 The preschool programme may be of upto 2 years duration that is for children of the age group 4-6 years.

9.4 States and UTs have been asked to examine the possibility of shifting the Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) to the campus of the nearby primary schools located in the habitation of AWCs catchment with a view to improve child preparedness for going to school and to ensure smooth transition from preschool to formal schooling. **States and UTs have taken steps to locate the ICDS centers within the school complex (wherever feasible) to ensure smooth transition of children from Pre-school in the Anganwadi Centre to the formal school.** Nationally, 41.3 percent of government primary schools have a co-located Anganwadi Centre (UDISE-2015-16). **It is important to emphasize that co- location of Anganwadis run under ICDS programme should lead to greater convergence with the school. The school and the Anganwadi should work as part of each other so that co- location of anganwadies in schools does not only remain physical co location. The Principal of the Primary School should look after and help to develop the educational component of the anganwadi centre. S/he should ensure that the teachers of Primary school and the anganwadi workers work in a collaborative manner. The child centered pedagogies should also be extended to early grades i.e. classes 1 and 2. District education officers (DEO) and Child Development Project officers (CDPO) will organize joint meetings of the Principals/headmaster and anganwadi workers/supervisors and work out strategies to bring about convergence at the local level.**

The NPE gives importance to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as a crucial input for human resource development, as a feeder and support programme for primary education and as a support service for working women of the disadvantaged sections of society. It has also taken into account the holistic nature of ECCE and has pointed out the need for early care and stimulation of children belonging to the vulnerable sector. The potential of ECCE is recognised as an intervention for lifelong education. It is widely acknowledged as an essential input for girls' education in freeing girls from sibling care responsibilities, leading to their regular attendance in school and in providing school readiness skills to pre-school children. With the RTE in place the preschool segment of education has become all the more important.

9.5 Wherever the State Government is desirous of providing pre-school education in the formal primary school, the scheme will provide support to enable the co-located Anganwadi centre to enrich and sustain its preschool and school preparedness component. Support may also be given for providing pre-school education in uncovered areas.

9.6 **Pre-School Campus:** The physical environment of the school campus aligned to the primary/elementary school will be such that children feel safe, secure, comfortable and at ease and can enjoy exploring and learning. The teachers and helpers and other support staff should be well trained to supervise and look after the young children. There must be adequate staff to maintain hygiene, sanitation, ensures safety, security of children in the school.

9.7 **Sanitary Facilities:** The preschool will be equipped with basic sanitation facilities such as healthy, safe and nutritious meals, safe drinking water facility, and cleanliness in and around the school. Toilets in the schools must have appropriate accessories and adaptations for children with special needs.

- Separate toilets for boys and girls, suitable for small children.
- Toilets should be safe and have regular water supply.
- Soap/hand wash and clean towel should be made available.
- Bathroom fixtures and sinks may be provided at the level children can reach easily.
- Garbage bin with a lid should be provided in each class and in outdoor area.

9.8 **Safety Precautions:** Keeping in view that the young children have recently learnt some motor skills like running; some additional safety precautions will have to be observed:

- The classroom should have adequate space for movement; the play space should ensure safety of children i.e. prevent children from running out and getting hurt from grievous injury.

- The furniture and toys need to be child –friendly and free from any sharp edges.
- Doors should be light in weight and should not be of self locking or swinging type.
- There should be mesh in all the windows to prevent mosquitoes coming in.
- No toxic paint should be used for play material/ equipment. The equipment should not have any sharp corners, jutting nails etc. and should be sturdy.
- Play material should not have any loose parts which children may swallow by mistake.
- Maintenance of outdoor equipment should be regularly attended to, in order to protect children from injury.
- Electric outlets which are accessible to the children must have protective caps when outlets are not in use.
- Any arrangement made by the school for transporting children should be safe, comfortable and convenient.
- Items of potential danger or cleaners like: flammable liquids, toxic material, soaps and detergent etc. must be kept in original container with original label. These should be stored in an area not in use by the children and is away from the kitchen.
- During cleaning, daily inspection of indoor and outdoor area must be done to search for sharp objects (needle, pins, branches), poisonous foliage and mushrooms, bee or wasp nest and depth of area under swings.
- In a pre-school, it essential to provide some time for rest/ nap during the day’s program. A clean mattress with sheet along with a comfortable pillow may be provided for this purpose.
- Every centre must have clearly written procedure to be followed in the event of emergency. Further emergency numbers (ambulance, fire safety, Police, doctor) should be kept handy.

### **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION of SIKKIM**

Pre-primary education is an integral part of school education system in Sikkim. The Pre-Primary Education is provided by both the government departments like Human Resource Development Department, Social Justice, Empowerment and Welfare Department.

#### **Pre-Primary Education managed by the Social Justice, Empowerment and Welfare Department**

The Women and Child Division of Social Justice, Empowerment and Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim provides Early Childhood Education through ICDS centres. These centres provide both care and education to pre-school children. However, the education imparted by these centres was not considered as formal education i.e. qualifying for the admission in class I (first grade) in the Government Schools.

#### **Pre-Primary Education managed by the Human Resource Development Department**

The Human Resource Development Department is the largest agency catering to pre-primary education in the State. The pre-primary education is provided in the formal school and is under direct control of the Human Resource Development Department, which is a unique

feature in the school education system in Sikkim. All the government schools are provided with pre-primary teachers who were called school mothers prior to 2013. There was the system of enrolling children when they attain 5 years of age and they enter into class I at the age of 6 years after passing one year Pre-primary Class. However, after the enactment of RTE Act 2009 in the State in 2010, the State started giving admission to the children in age specific classes.

In 2015, the State government decided to introduce two years of Kindergarten system i.e. LKG and UKG in all government schools vide Notification No. 74/DIR/HRDD/PE dated 24/12/2015. The age of admission in LKG is 4 years and UKG is 5 years. As decided, the State identified 31 schools to initiate the project as pilot for 2016.

- Supply of uniform different from other classes of government schools
- Supply of TLMs (Picture reading books, games material, flash cards, zigzag puzzle, worksheets and other teaching aids to develop early reading and arithmetical skills, play corners, reading corners, etc.
- The curriculum of kindergarten has been framed by the State as per NCERT guidelines
- Two series called “Get Set Go” have been developed for development of early language skills and early arithmetical skills, writing letters and numbers, fine motor skills, etc.
- Games and activities have been developed to develop socio-emotional skills
- Pre-primary teachers of pilot schools have been trained on pedagogical approaches to be adopted in the kindergarten

After its one year of implementation, many parents have withdrawn their children from private school and sought admission in government schools.

**9.9 Facilities for CWSN:** To accommodate children with special needs following facilities have to be ensured:

- Construction of ramps with rails and stationary bridges. These will facilitate such children approach the indoor and outdoor area and access play equipments.
- Equipments, play learning material, furniture and other facilities have to be suitable and easily available for children with disabilities.
- Toilets should have appropriate accessories and adaptations for children with special needs.

**9.10 Child Abuse and Rights:** Special care will have to be taken that there is no child abuse:

- No physical, verbal or emotional abuse.
- No harsh discipline and No corporal punishment.
- Children should not be neglected.
- All boys and girls to be treated equally
- All teachers must be trained to identify, understand and respond appropriately in case they observe any signs of child abuse /neglect.

- Teachers should be trained in promotion of tolerance and unity and respect for diversity in line with the quality standards.
- All teachers to be trained in accommodating CWSN children with compassion.

### 9.11 **Location of Pre-school:**

Pre-school being co-located on the campus of primary or elementary school should be easily accessible to the children. Transportation facilities available in the area may also be utilised in case the distance is more than 1 KM. Following are the points for the location of the school

- Away from heavy traffic, ponds, well, ditches, *nallahs*, *pollution*, heaps of garbage, cattle shed/animal shelter, slush, stagnant water and uncovered drains.
- The building must be surrounded with boundary wall or a fence to mark the safe area.
- The pre-school may be located on the ground floor.

### 9.12 **Curriculum:** Based on the understanding of insights and philosophies of different practitioners and thinkers, the following basic principles of curriculum are visualised:

- Play as the basis for learning
- Art as the basis for education
- Blend of the textual (basic literacy and numeracy) and the cultural
- Mix of formal and informal interaction
- Experience of both familiarity and challenge in everyday routines
- Primacy of experience rather than expertise
- Developmentally appropriate practice and flexibility
- Use of local materials, arts, and knowledge
- Integration of health and well-being based on healthy habits.

### 9.13 **Duration of Pre-school**

- The duration of the school timings will be 4 hours. However, when children have to be accompanied by older sibling/children of the primary school the timings of the pre-school section should coincide with the timings of the primary classes.
- The program should provide for some rest period during the day. A program which is of longer durations should provide facilities for nap time also.
- The teacher should come 15 minutes earlier than the children and leave 30-45 minutes after them so that s/he can make preparations for the next day.

### 9.14 **Learning Activities:** The learning centres/learning corners will be created in the classrooms so that children get opportunities to engage in free play and the teacher is able to handle multi age groups for providing age appropriate activities thereby ensuring safety of children.

- **The library and literacy area:** This area should have a variety of age appropriate children's magazines, information books, picture books, story books, big books, local folk tales, thematic books and comics.

- **Doll's area/ dramatic play corner:** The materials here can include: various kinds of dolls, doll-sized furniture and clothes, doll-sized cooking utensils (pots, dishes, spoons etc), pretend food (vegetables or fruits made of clay), dress- up clothes (scarf, cap, stole, jacket, small sari, long pieces of cloth etc.), combs and a mirror.
- **Discovery/ science area:** It should be equipped with materials like: ramps and wheels, magnifying glass, shells, plants, seeds, weighing scales and weights, measuring tapes, or any other locally available materials.
- **Block building/ manipulative area:** This area should have blocks of different colours, shapes and sizes; puzzles; matching cards; lacing strings/lacing cards; threading strings and beads; small toys such as cars, trucks, animals, people figures; and other objects from the environment.
- **Art Area/ creative corner:** The material in this area should include different types of papers, crayons, pencils, washable markers, slates, different coloured chalks, pieces of fabric, paints, brushes, tape, play dough/clay, rolling pins and boards, old newspaper and magazines for collage and ice-cream sticks.
- **Music area:** The music area may be equipped with a dhapali, bell, bowls, flutes, tambourines, string instruments, other local musical instruments, tape recorder and a variety of DVDs of songs and rhymes. This corner may have material such as ribbons or scarves for the children to use to promote creative movement.

9.15 **Content, Pedagogy, Practices and Assessment:** The pre-school program will be holistic in nature. It has to be child centered, developmentally appropriate and process oriented. Play-based early learning activities have to be planned in ways that would expose children to a variety of experiences. The content of the program will include activities for

- Physical Well-Being, Health, and Motor Development
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Creative, and Aesthetic Development
- Language, Communication and Literacy Skills
- Environmental Awareness, Development of Scientific Temper and developing Mathematical thinking and Reasoning.
- A record of the children's progress should be maintained. Assessment of children should be continuous and comprehensive. There should not be any formal tests or end term exams for children in Preschools.

9.16 **Well being of the Children:** The Pre-school program will provide for:

- Regular medical check-up of children and provide follow-up and referral services wherever necessary
- Growth monitoring through maintenance of height and weight records through monthly/bi-monthly records.
- Snack time; daily provision of supplementary nutrition in accordance with the nutritional status of children

### 9.17 **Outdoor activities**

- Commercially available or improvised equipments for providing experiences like climbing, jumping, balancing, swinging, swaying, cycling etc. will be provided.
- Large and small balls, old tyres and rings etc. will be provided for throwing rolling, catching and kicking experiences.
- Sandpit/sandbox, trays, plastic strainer, sievers, containers, plastic mugs, katoris etc. will be provided.
- A big tub, bucket, mugs and cups of different sizes, sieves and floating toys for water play will be provided
- Various outdoor games may be organised for children even without any equipment. It is important to provide experiences for both gross and fine motor development
- In schools where there is no provision for a playground for outdoor activities the teacher should plan for activities for gross motor development within the classroom.

9.18 **Age for Admission:** A child is ready to enter in an organized Pre-school program on completion of 4 years of age at the beginning of the session/academic year, when, s/he is able to tackle separation anxiety from family; has developed some verbal competence and can communicate basic needs and has become toilet trained.

9.19 **Professional Development of Teachers:** The professional preparation of teachers calls for thoughtful planning of training sequences relevant to the developmental needs of early childhood. Continuous training of teachers of the Pre-school program will be carried out by regular refresher courses, workshops, visit to other schools; self-evaluation techniques etc. for the teachers and helpers so that they can update their knowledge and enhance their efficiency.

9.20 **Community Awareness and Partnership:** There has to be partnership with parents, families and the community wherein children's interest and choices are taken care of.

- Teachers will involve parents/ guardian of children in the activities of the pre-school so that they are able to replicate the same or similar activities at home.
- S/he will involve them in the development of Teaching Learning Material (TLM) like *toys, puppets, story chart, story box, flash cards, doll's and masks etc.*
- Parents or guardians will also be involved in the preparation of food items and serving meal.
- Parents will be involved in organising cultural activities, field trips, excursions and visit to the fair etc.
- Parents or guardians will be continuously counselled regarding behavior problems of children.

9.21 **Action points for States and UTs**

- States may like to consider including/co-locating one or two years of pre-school education in primary/elementary school and implement a developmentally appropriate curriculum and focus on school readiness for children.
- There will be need for teachers specially trained in child development/Early childhood development for the pre-school classes for which the States will need to make provision for training and capacity building, etc.
- Various Universities are offering Early Childhood Education courses under Vocational Programmes. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) offers one year diploma in Early Childhood Education. Home Science Colleges of various Universities are offering Diploma courses on ECCE. Many state SCERTs like Nagaland, Delhi are also offering Diploma courses in Preschool Education. The states will develop mechanisms for providing preschool training to a large number of candidates.
- States will need to develop appropriate curriculum and teaching learning material for preschool education. The curriculum must have a linkage to the curriculum for classes in primary level of schooling.

9.22 **Coordination and Convergence:** Effective implementation of Pre-school program requires coordination and convergence among different departments, and sections within departments, dealing with different components of health, care and early education.

- a. Convergence with MoWCD:** The Scheme emphasizes the strengthening of convergence with the ICDS programme of Ministry of Women & Child Development to promote pre-school education. The department would strive to achieve effective synergy with the ICDS through the following:
- i. Instructions to be issued by State Education Departments in concurrence with ICDS Department.
  - ii. Regular inter departmental meetings to be held at the State, district and block level between School Education officials and the ICDS programme and coming out with action points to bring about convergence at the ground.
  - iii. Making the Principal/headmaster of Primary School responsible for education component of anganwadis. Designating one of the existing primary school teachers as incharge of Preschool to plan convergence with the co-located anganwadi centre.
  - iv. Representative of ICDS programme will be on the State Level Executive Committee of school education and District Implementation Committee.
  - v. Location of *Anganwadi* centers in or close proximity to primary school campus and synchronization of the timings of the Anganwadi centers with the primary schools.
  - vi. Joint efforts for curriculum renewal of Pre-school teacher training and conduct of trainings of *Anganwadi* workers, primary teachers and health workers for a convergent understanding of links between learning and development in pre-school and primary school.



## DRAFT DOCUMENT

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- vii. Use of infrastructure of DIETs, BRCs and CRCs for training of *Anganwadi* workers and other functionaries of ICDS.
- viii. Strengthening of training of Anganwadi workers in pre-school activities in both existing and new projects/*Anganwadi* centers.
- ix. Training Primary School teachers in the pedagogy of Early Childhood Education.
- x. Augmentation of pre-school kits/ materials in *Anganwadis*, where such materials are required.