

## EDITORIAL

### **Clean and Healthy Schools**

The primary years are the most formative years of a child's life. Children are still growing; they need nutritious food and hygiene, and a clean environment for growth and development. Children are generally prone to infections and therefore a clean environment is essential for their wellness and health. Children spend about 5 to 7 hours each day in school; they need safe drinking water, clean toilets and hygienic and healthy food. A clean and healthy school environment is essential to retain children in schools. Absenteeism due to illness can be checked by providing them a clean and healthy school environment.

The existing condition in the majority of government schools is pathetic. Issues of cleanliness, hygiene and sanitation in these schools require immediate attention. During the field visit programme of NCERT, faculty members visited various schools and found that much needs to be done at the school level in matters of cleanliness and health. Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) schools have separate toilets for boys and girls but in many schools these are not functional. In some schools, children do not use 'school toilets' because these are not clean. The Principal of one such primary school said that children must learn to use the toilet and also develop the habit of keeping them clean. Many children studying in these schools do not have toilets at home and need training for proper use and cleanliness. In some schools, the school environment was unhealthy for children. In one government school, the open space (ground) in front of primary classes was like a pool of stagnant water. The stagnating water is a major source of disease. The principal and teachers of this school expressed their inability to change the situation because of paucity of funds. In some schools, the window panes were broken letting the cold air in during winter, making children shiver. In many schools, classrooms and corridors were also dirty. Children often bring eatables such as potato chips, banana, biscuits etc., from home. They throw the wrappers, papers and leftovers in classrooms or veranda. The leftovers of mid-day meal was also seen in school verandas and open ground. Teacher's role is very important here. It is essential that children learn and practice personal hygiene and develop habits of keeping surroundings clean. Children are always ready to learn. It is teachers who need to provide instructions on cleanliness and hygiene. Students should be made responsible for keeping classrooms and school clean. Student teams can be made for supervision of cleanliness. Student teams may be

given incentives for promotion of cleanliness in school. Teachers, students and School Management Committees together may develop a plan for clean and healthy school. Schools have an important role in developing clean and healthy school environment. School management, administration and teachers have the responsibility to maintain school building and to provide clean, healthy school atmosphere.

The spirit of *Swachh Bharat Swachh Vidyalaya* Mission is to provide a clean and healthy school environment to all children. During the *Swachh Bharat Swachh Vidyalaya* Campaign from September 25 to October 31, 2014, Kendriya Vidyalayas and Navodaya Vidyalaya Sangathan conducted activities such as cleaning of the classrooms, laboratories, libraries, toilets, drinking water areas, playground and school gardens. To develop an awareness about cleanliness, hygienic and healthy school environment, essay, debate and painting competitions were organised. To supervise the cleanliness drives, school cabinets were constituted. Such activities should become part of school life. Habits developed in early years get embedded in one's personality. Students should be encouraged consistently to use, operate and maintain the facilities available in the school for drinking water, sanitation and hygiene.

Teachers should be the 'role models' and agents of change for the creation of a clean and healthy atmosphere in schools. Dear teachers, your efforts can make *Swachh Bharat, Swachh Vidyalaya* Mission a success.

— **Academic Editor**