

Standards and Accreditation Procedure for Sathya Sai Schools

A school should not be considered just a common place arrangement designed for teaching and learning. It is the place where consciousness is aroused and illumined, purified and strengthened, the place where the seeds of discipline, duty and devotion are planted and fostered into fruition.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Introduction

Sathya Sai Schools are expected to serve as models of excellence in education which combine academic excellence with character development and foster an ethos in which human values are actively practiced. With some notable exceptions, the majority of Sathya Sai Schools outside India were established in the late nineties or even later. Yet, within a relatively short span of time these schools have made a mark in the local educational scene, and some have attracted the attention of educationists at national and international levels.

The early experience with Sathya Sai Schools clearly demonstrates the immense promise that Sathya Sai Education holds to nurture the spiritual and academic development of children in diverse cultural settings and to motivate them towards virtuous and competent living in society. To fulfil this promise, the Sathya Sai Schools must apply the spiritual teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba underlying education in an authentic manner and uphold the highest standards in the delivery of educational services.

The Standards and the Accreditation Procedure for Sathya Sai Schools prescribed in the following sections are expected to ensure that all schools bearing the name of Sri Sathya Sai Baba fulfil this promise.

Standards for Sathya Sai Schools

I. Environment of Love

“You must also create the environment which will be conducive to the practice of human values”

SSS XIX, 9 March 1986

“There is a language of the heart, which all can understand and all would like to hear. That is the language which I speak, the language that goes from My heart to yours. When heart speaks to heart, it is love that is transmitted, without any reservation.”

SSS IX, 15 May 1969

1. School Mission

The School has established a mission statement (See SSSWF Guidelines for Sathya Sai Schools) that clearly reflects the philosophy of *Sathya Sai Educare* and promotes the practice of human values.

2. Language of the Heart

The principal, every teacher and every support staff member practice the language of the heart, transmitting unconditional love,

3. School climate

The school climate is permeated with an atmosphere of peace and love and provides students with a cheerful and joyful environment, encouraging the practice of human values in all activities within the school and outside.

4. Vegetarian Food

The School management encourages the value of non-violence, health and well-being and only vegetarian food is consumed in the school.

5. Clean School Environment

The school management and the student community work together to maintain the school environment clean and attractive.

II. Loving Teachers and Responsible Parents: Exemplars of Human Values

“The teachers have to be life-long students, engaged not in mere study, but immersed in practice too. Only a lamp that burns can light other lamps. How can a flame that has long been off light other wicks?”

SSSXV, 31 August 1981

“The parents and teachers must be examples of lives led in the light of Atmic consciousness. Then we can have a balanced education. Then we can have a generation of students wedded to the service of society, for each student will see in every other person a replica of the divine itself.”

SSSXIV, 13 May 1997

6. Teacher as Exemplar

The teacher exemplifies by

- practicing human values both within the school and outside;
- demonstrating good character traits (e.g. the unity of thought, word, and deed);
- being a person full of love and speaking the language of the heart;
- becoming a role model to students and an exemplar of human values.

7. Inspiring School Leadership

The school leadership

- is inspirational and leads by example;
- contributes to the creation of a school climate and ethos permeated by love and a commitment to discipline and right conduct;
- asks not only to inform and conform but helps to transform;
- evaluates performance as an opportunity to guide and support rather than condemn and correct;
- demonstrates a commitment to work in unity and harmony with the school governing body and the parents community.

8. Partnership with Parents and the Community

The school works unitedly with the parents and the community to create and sustain a loving and mutually reinforcing partnership characterized by

- a shared vision of the goals to be achieved;
- a shared commitment for cooperation;
- clearly defined responsibilities;
- open communication that allows parents and the community to express their views, expectations and aspirations to the school leadership.

III. Sathya Sai Educare: Information to Transformation

“Education must endow man with this compassion and this spirit of service – intelligent, timely and full. That is to say, education must not only inform, it must also transform.”

SSSXIV, 30 August 1978

“Education does not end with the accumulation of information; it must result in transformation of habits, character, and aspirations of the individual. Knowledge has to be tested in daily action”

SSS XIV, 7 December 1978

9. The Pedagogy of Integral Education

The school combines spiritual and secular education by

- eliciting the five human values in the school curriculum by integrating human values in all subjects and in all activities;
- using the five teaching techniques (storytelling, prayer or quotations, silent sitting, group singing and group activities);
- by employing other compatible instructional approaches that are experiential in nature, relating to life's experiences and intuitive knowledge;
- emphasizing the simultaneous development of "head, heart and hand" (3HV)
- fostering self-confidence, self-discipline, self-sacrifice and selfless service to the community;

10. Daily School Assembly

A daily School assembly attended by students, teachers and the principal begins the school day with silent sitting and prayer permeated with love and other human values.

11. Special Events

Special events are observed to promote among students a universal outlook and for deepening the understanding of themes such as: Unity of All Faiths, Unity of Head, Heart, and Hands (3HV), Unity in Diversity, Ceiling on Desires, and Selfless Service.

12. Cultural integration

The School integrates local cultural traditions in extra- and co- curricular activities, and, where appropriate, in the curriculum.

IV. Outcome: Character as the End of Education

*The end of wisdom is freedom.
The end of culture is perfection.
The end of knowledge is love.
The end of education is character.*

SSSXI, 29 March 1972

"Students have to imbibe the nine important qualities, which are as precious as nine gems. These are: spirit of sacrifice; humility; spirit of selfless service to society; friendliness, discipline, commitment to integrity, truth, love, non-violence and faith in God"

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

13. Character Development

Students demonstrate steady progress towards developing

- the harmony of head, heart and hands;
- soft and sweet speech and respect towards parents and teachers;

- truthful behaviour and trustworthiness;
- capacity to distinguish good from bad and right from wrong through fundamental discrimination (acting for the highest good of all);
- respect for other people's feelings, values, beliefs, and property;
- self-reliance and a willingness to take responsibility;
- eagerness to address their own shortcomings rather than finding faults with others;
- interest in their work and sustaining concentration;
- respect for the environment and not being wasteful of resources (e.g. money, energy, time etc).

14. Academic Achievement

- Students' academic achievement meets or exceeds national standards and sustains this achievement.
- Students with special educational needs, progress as well as others.

Accreditation of Sathya Sai Schools

Regulation is the very essence of creation. The oceans observe their limits. Wind and fire respect their limits and bonds. The human body has to maintain its warmth of 98.4 degrees F. in order to be healthy, and the heart has to beat a definite number of times.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

I. Why Accreditation?

Accreditation of a Sathya Sai School signifies that the School meets the Standards for Sathya Sai Schools¹ in a manner deemed satisfactory by SSSWF to bear the name of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. A Sathya Sai School's accreditation status is a clear means to communicate educational quality within the School community, to the Sri Sathya Sai Organization (SSSO) which provides support to the school, and to state or district educational authorities when such information is requested.

The accreditation process also encourages school improvement through self-review and through the development of a time-bound, school improvement plan, where necessary.

II. The Accreditation Process

The proposal for accreditation of a Sathya Sai School should be initiated by an existing or a newly established Sathya Sai School and should be formally submitted to an Institute of Sathya Sai Education which has been specifically designated by SSSWF to provide professional guidance, support and oversight to the school (hereafter referred to as the designated ISSE²).

Upon the receipt of a proposal for accreditation, the designated ISSE will conduct a preliminary enquiry (including a short visit to the school, where considered necessary) into the preparedness of the school to undergo a full accreditation process. The designated ISSE will then submit its report with recommendations to SSSWF. The accreditation process will commence only after a case by case approval by SSSWF.

Following the approval by SSSWF to commence accreditation, the school will be granted the status of a "Candidate for Accreditation", signifying that the school has achieved initial recognition and is proceeding towards, but has not achieved yet, the status of accreditation.

The accreditation of a Sathya Sai School will follow three sequential steps:

1. A self-review conducted by the school leadership with full participation of the school community (comprising teachers, staff, parents and students);
2. An external-review conducted by the designated ISSE; and
3. Final Decision regarding accreditation by SSSWF.

¹ See draft Standards for Sathya Sai Schools

² See draft Guidelines for Sathya Sai Schools

1. Self-Review

The self-review is a process in which the school community, led by the principal and the teachers, but with the active participation of the parents and students, engages in a reflective process to assess the quality of the school in relation to its mission statement and the SSSWF Standards for Sathya Sai Schools.

The entire school staff and representatives of the student body and parents should be involved in the preparation of the self-review that is accomplished over a period of time. During this process, all staff members candidly assess the school's strengths and areas needing improvement with respect to its mission statement and the prescribed Standards,

The findings of the self-review process are summarized by the School Principal, made into a self-review report on forms provided by the designated ISSE. The self-review report must be submitted to the designated ISSE.

Self-review: Basic Steps

The basic steps of the self-review are to:

1. Understand the Standards, Guidelines, relevant government inspection results, and the school improvement purpose of the self-review;
2. Compare the school programme with the
 - a) SSSWF Standards for Sathya Sai Schools,
 - b) SSSWF Guidelines for Sathya Sai Schools
 - c) Findings from a prior government inspection process that the designated ISSE indicates should be included in the self-review, and
 - d) School improvement goals identified in previous accreditation reviews, if any.
3. In the comparison process,
 - a) Collect and analyze relevant information;
 - b) Deliberate on the conclusions of the analysis;
 - c) Agree on the extent to which Standards and the Guidelines have been met,
 - d) Identify strengths and areas for improvement.
4. Develop school improvement goals to increase effectiveness:
 - a) Decide on priorities based on self-review findings;
 - b) Discuss possible solutions;
 - c) Agree on the action to be taken, by whom and when; and
 - d) Agree on ways to monitor and assess progress.

A thorough and deliberative self-review process involving parents and students may take an extended period of time, especially if changes needed in school operations are identified. The self-review duration should be spread out so that the normal school duties of the principal and teachers are not overly affected. The completed self-review report should be provided by the designated ISSE to members of the external-review team four weeks ahead of the proposed visit.

2. The External-Review

An external-review provides an objective assessment of the school – the quality of the school environment and its key resources, the delivery of integral education and its outcome in terms of character and academic achievement.

The designated ISSE should identify an external-review team of at least three professional educationists, conversant with local language and culture as well as knowledgeable about Sathya Sai Education. Team members may include the ISSE Director and other senior members of the ISSE staff. A senior educationist specifically nominated by SSSWF, may be added to the external-review team if considered necessary.

The designated ISSE should plan the external-review visit in consultation with the School Principal so as to allow the school adequate time to prepare for the visit well.

Planning for an External Review Visit – Basic Steps

1. The designated ISSE identifies an external-review team in consultation with SSSWF.
2. A copy of the school self-review report is made available to the external-review team, with clearly identified areas of focus for the visit;
3. A 3 - 5 day schedule for the external-review visit is arranged in consultation with the School Principal so that the team members may observe a representative sample of all school activities;
4. A lead team member is designated who will be the primary contact with the school and who will be responsible for compiling the external-review team report;
5. The following interactions of the external-review team are arranged in advance by the School Principal:
 - a. interviews with parent representatives
 - b. interviews with representatives of teachers and other school staff
 - c. an interview with the School principal
 - d. an interview with the governing body

External-Review Visit

The external review team spends 3 - 5 days at the school reviewing existing records, observing classrooms, and interviewing members of the school community.

During the external-review visit the team members, guided by the lead team member, should:

1. Observe a representative sample of all school activities so that a full picture of school is gained;
2. Interact with students through focus group interviews, and impromptu questions to individual students, as appropriate;
3. Conduct previously arranged interviews;
4. Begin work on the external-review report;
5. Arrange a brief, joint meeting on the last day of the visit with the school leadership, representative parents and board members, so as to allow the school community to bring to the attention of the visiting team any issue(s) not yet covered during the visit.

External Review Report

The findings of the External Review should be reported in accordance with the General Guidance for Review and Reporting, to be issued by SSSWF from time to time³.

External-Review Visit Follow-up

The designated ISSE will ensure completion of the following tasks after the external-review visit:

1. Completion of the external-review report by the external-review team;
2. Sharing of a copy of the external-review report in draft shape with SSSWF so that SSSWF may provide guidance, if necessary, to ensure that the report is complete and effective;
3. Finalization of the report in the light of advice, if any, provided by SSSWF;
4. Transmittal of a copy of the final external-review report to the School principal, to the Zone Chair/Central Coordinator of SSSO and to SSSWF.

³ General Guidance for Inspection and Reporting of Sathya Sai Schools, to be issued by SSSWF from time to time.

Structure of an External Review Report

1. Context and Overview

- a. Does the School fulfill the characteristic and distinguishing features of a Sathya Sai School?
- b. Has the School established a mission statement that clearly reflects the philosophy of *Sathya Sai Educare*?
- c. How conducive is the school environment to the implementation of *Integral Education*?

2. Quality of School Resources

- a. How well do the teachers fulfill their roles as exemplars of Human Values?
- b. How well is the school led and managed?
- c. How well does the school work in partnership with parents and local community?

3. Implementation of Integral Education

- a. How effectively does the school combine spiritual with secular education in curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities?
- b. How well are local cultural traditions integrated in co- and extra-curricular activities?

4. Outcomes

- a. How well has the school achieved its character-related goals?
- b. How well has the school achieved its academic goals?

3. Accreditation Decision

The decision for according accreditation to a Sathya Sai School rests with SSSWF. After completion of the self-review and external-review, the designated ISSE will submit its recommendation to SSSWF.

The accreditation status is provided for a specified length of time (hereinafter referred to as the Accreditation Term). The more competently a school meets the Standards, the longer will be the accreditation term granted before requiring a re-accreditation process. The less competently a School meets the Standards, the shorter will be the accreditation term granted. Schools with shorter accreditation terms will also be required to develop an improvement plan and to implement it for specified improvements to occur (including specific training to be provided by the designated ISSE).

4. Accreditation Term Periods

Accreditation terms may range from two to four years and may be contingent upon the school working during the term to meet school improvement goals identified in the self-review, external-review, and/or accreditation deliberation process.

A four-year accreditation term indicates that the school has achieved the Standards with ratings of “consistent implementation” as indicated in the self-review, external-review, and accreditation decision process, and that a school improvement plan is already in place.

A two-year accreditation term indicates that the school has achieved “consistent implementation” ratings in some areas while other areas are rated as “developing practice”. The school will be required to develop an improvement plan under the guidance of the designated ISSE and to implement it before a re-accreditation process is considered.

Should an external review results in a decision that the school is still not ready for accreditation then the school’s status of “Candidate for Accreditation” may be extended by SSSWF for a specified period of time. The school will then be expected to develop an improvement plan and implement it under the guidance of the designated ISSE within the specified period before a fresh accreditation process is considered.