

# Staff crunch hits academics at Mysuru ashram schools

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Mysuru: The delay in appointing permanent teachers to ashram schools across Mysuru district has adversely impacted the quality of education for tribal children studying in these institutions.

The tribal welfare department had established 21 ashram residential schools to promote education among vulnerable tribal groups living in dense forests and fringe villages. However, vacancies and dependence on temporary staff have deprived students of consistent academic support, officials and activists said.

Ashram schools are residential institutions, which the state govt has equipped with basic facilities, including solar panels and geysers, UPS, facilities for the supply of clean drinking water, computer labs, and required furniture.

Even though the govt has initiated substantial steps to supply quality nutritious food to pupils at these schools, the general complaint is that it has overlooked the needs of adivasis, such as providing permanent staff, chefs, teachers, wardens, and D Group employees.

The majority of staff at ashram schools were hired by outsourced agencies, with the state govt continuing to outsource its services for the last 20 years.

Wardens were overburdened with work as they were told to maintain at least two ashram schools in every taluk. Every year, nearly 3,000 students take admission in these ashram schools, with around 2,000 opting to avail hostel facilities.

The state govt facilitated admission of children from adivasi communities from class 1-5 to these schools in 2022-23. From 2023-24, it started allowing admission to class 8 as well for these students at ashram schools. In addition, from the 2024-25 academic session, the govt upgraded ashram schools in Mysuru district to enable admissions to pre-university level as well.

However, despite all these measures, the issue of recruitment of permanent staff for ashram schools has been pushed to the back burner.

"As there is no nursing staff, wardens don't stay in the hostels most of the nights. In the absence of care-givers, Adivasi children below the fifth standard are forced to return to their hamlets after attending school every night," said Marikala, a resident of Basavanagiri tribal hamlet of HD Kote taluk.

He also demanded the govt appoint separate wardens for boys and girls as co-education was introduced in ashram schools. Vans to carry sick children to the nearest hospital is also among the charter of demands, he added.

HD Kote taluk tribal welfare officer Mahesh said the department has made efforts to provide the best available service and education to students, utilising the outsourcing staff in ashram schools of their taluk.

Speaking to TOI, district tribal welfare officer Mallesh said the department has alerted officials to adopt adequate measures for the appointment of permanent staff at ashram schools, including teachers and wardens.