

An amazing school in Assam that accepts fees in the form of plastic waste!



Akshar accepts plastic packets as school fees. The plastic is recycled for construction

Schools around India and the world are teaching kids about plastic pollution and the need to recycle, but one school in Assam has gone a step further. The **Akshar School** in Pamohi village, Assam, **allows students to pay fees by handing in around 25 plastic items per week and pledging not to burn any plastic.**

Founded by Parmita Sarma and Mazin Mukhtar in June 2016, the school was setup to provide formal education to underprivileged children. Most of the students are children of labourers who help their families earn between Rs. 150 to Rs. 200 per day at the stone quarries. To help support the families and get the children educated, the school designed a curriculum that was socially, economically and environmentally relevant.

Shocked by the amount of plastic being burned all over to create bonfires to fight the cold, Parmita and Mazin decided to create awareness about the dangers of plastic pollution. Every day when students bring in their quota of waste plastic, they are taught how to recycle and reuse the products. The school teaches students to take responsibility for their environment

and to work towards improving it. It also gives the underprivileged students the skills they need to become productive members of society. Its revolutionary model trains every student to become a teacher, and pays older students to teach the younger ones. Poor students continue to stay in school and earn rather than doing hard manual labour in the stone quarries. By teaching younger students or working in the school's own recycling centre, kids earn toy currency that can be used to buy snacks, toys, shoes and clothes.



Older students teaching younger ones at Akshar School.jpg

Through these efforts, the school strives to break the cycle of poverty and empower students to help their communities. Learning here sounds like a lot of fun - there are classes on singing, dancing, solar panels, embroidery, cosmetology, carpentry, gardening, organic farming, electronics, etc. By learning some of these practical skills in school, the kids find it much easier to find jobs after graduating.

As if that wasn't cool enough, the school also has an animal shelter that houses 20 injured and abandoned dogs where students and staff take care of all their medical needs and care.



Teens employed at the Akshar Animal Shelter keep puppies healthy and shiny, so they can find good homes

The school founders have plans to expand their model throughout India. They have already successfully replicated their model in a government school in Delhi and plan to expand to five more schools. Their dream is to reform 100 government schools in 5 years.

Learn more about Akshar School by watching this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gW1xTOhXG2M>

Note: All images taken from <https://www.aksharfoundation.org>



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