

# Akanksha Foundation - The School Project 2019 – 2022

## Impact Assessment Report



*SoStakes*  
Driving Social Value

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# Executive Summary

Private English school enrolment have been increasing while enrolment in Government schools are in decline since several years as parents aspire to send their children to English medium schools. Akanksha Foundation's (AF) project responds to the insufficient number of government English medium schools providing quality education in underserved communities.

Under the project, AF has been partnering with municipal bodies in Pune, Mumbai and Nagpur to operate English medium schools under the PPP model. AF's approach is three-pronged – developing *academic skills*, focusing on *socio-emotional development of children*, and *engaging with parents and community*.

Mphasis partnered with AF to support their 'School Project' in July 2019. A CSR grant of 5.42 Cr was provided by Mphasis F1 Foundation ) to implement the School Project for period 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 (3 years). The grant was specifically used to support the project interventions in Chatrapati Shahuji Maharaj English Medium School (CSMEMS) in Kasarwadi, and Pujya Kasturba Gandhi English Medium School (PKGEMS) in Koregaon, in Pune.

The objective of this Impact Assessment study is to understand the contributions made by the project towards targeted beneficiaries and community. The study has used a mixed method approach relying on both quantitative and qualitative data from beneficiaries and stakeholders. For quantitative data, an online survey was administered online amongst sample beneficiaries (students). SoStakes team visited CSMEMS and PKGEMS for qualitative data collection via in-person interviews and focus group discussions with school leadership team, students, teachers and staff, parents and SMC members.

The study has been analysed and presented using the DAC-OECD framework that includes Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, and Equity.

In the first year of project implementation, CSMEMS focused on improving children's reading proficiency as part of their academic goals. They introduced a levelled reading intervention programme for different grade levels. This was along with DEAR – 'Drop Everything and Read', a 20-minute reading exercise to cultivate a love for books. Weekly, monthly, and bi-monthly teachers development initiatives were undertaken. In the second year and third year (AY20-21 to AY21-22), both CSMEMS and PKGEMS focused on blended learning to cope with the challenges of COVID-9 pandemic and school closure. The focus was on maintaining learning levels and remedial education via both online and offline teaching. The principal pedagogy was levelled teaching, especially for Math and English with targeted lessons for different grade-level students. Beginning of year, mid year and end-year assessments were conducted for both schools in AY21-22 and students have showed improvement in both Math and English writing for almost all grades. However, English reading scores are low, most students are at the lowest reading level or 'Early Emergent Reader' level.

Socio-emotional development of children - their second pillar, included various activity clubs that focused on the 4C's – collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and communication. Activity clubs targeted confidence building, teamwork, and instill a sense of responsibility amongst the children. During the pandemic years, Socio Emotional Ethical (SEE) learning was introduced to maintain a connect with parents and children. The focus was to ensure their well-being while also assisting the families in helping support their child's learning.

Community engagement is their third important pillar and includes regular meetings with the social

worker of the school, and education programmes on topics such as personal safety and nutrition. The school supported parents through check-in calls, ration support, and home visits. During COVID-19 pandemic, parents had a new role as educators, and AF ensured adequate support to parents via instruction and materials to support their children's learning.

Attention to innovative pedagogy (including levelled or differentiated grade level learning in reading, math and English), having teachers as guides beyond the classroom, and engaging with parents as partners has helped the school address challenges both in and outside of the school. AF has successfully created a safe, encouraging, and child-focused learning environment that is working towards all-rounded development of students. Both schools have recorded high average attendance levels (except during the pandemic months), more than 95% student retention rate (100% during the pandemic years), and high average teacher retention rate at 100% for all three years.

The assessment presents the following recommendations:

- **Learning gap:** All parents interviewed reported learning gaps caused during the COVID-19 pandemic and shared the need to have additional classes to bridge this gap.
- **Reporting:** Reading level assessments, that reflect individual student grade-level progress from beginning of year to end of year, could be maintained and shared to view progress and development of students.
- **Regular computer classes:** Regular computer classes could be added in the curriculum instead of computers as a club activity which is limited to a few sessions a week. The students expressed interest in learning more about computers and having practical sessions.
- **Sustainability:** While new AF schools have financial support from the Government (up to 55% funding approx.) for school management, similar arrangement for the older schools could be explored.
- **Partnership:** Partnership with other organisations and resources could be explored for student development activities and teacher training.

# Key highlights:

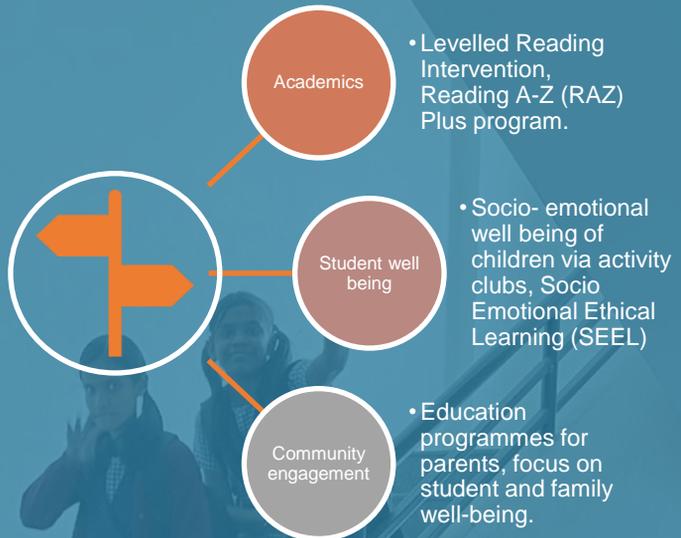
## The School Project



2 Schools in Pune  
CSMEMS, Kasarwadi –  
647 students  
PKGEMS, Koregaon  
Park- 798 students.



PPP model – in  
partnership with Pimpri  
Chinchwadi Municipal  
Corporation and Pune  
Municipal Corporation.



## IMPACT

### Average student attendance:

AY19 –20: CSMEMS - **93%**, PKGEMS – 81%  
Average student attendance during pandemic year AY21-22: CSMEMS – 72%, PKGEMS – 43% (virtual learning).

### Average student retention:

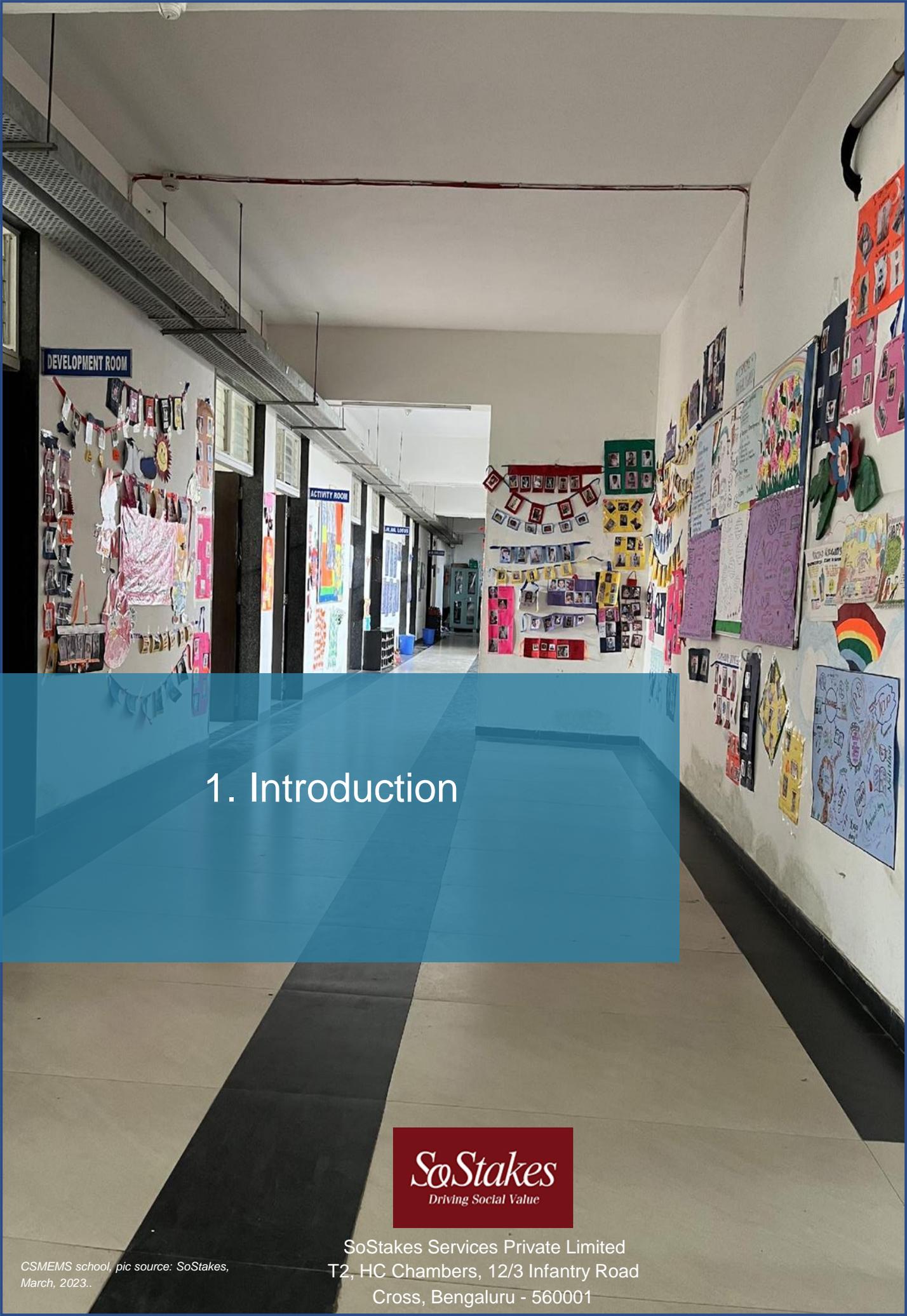
More than 95% retention rate in both CSMEMS and PKGEMS for the reporting period, including the pandemic years.

### Average teacher retention:

100% teacher retention in both CSMEMS and PKGEMS throughout the reporting period of 3 years.

### End – of –Year Assessment:

Improvement in Math scores across grades for both schools (CSMEMS and PKGEMS).  
Improvement in English writing scores for all grades (except Grade 1 and 2 in CSMEMS, and Grade 8 in PKGEMS).  
Most students at lowest or 'Early Emergent Readers' level.



# 1. Introduction

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background

The Census of India, 2011 has pegged the average literacy in India at 74% - 82.14 for males and 65.46 for females. According to the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) report, 32 million Indian children of age up to 13 years have never attended any school, most of them belonging to the socially disadvantaged class<sup>1</sup>. As per Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) Plus 2021-22 report the dropout rate at the primary level (Classes 1 to 5) is at 1.5 percent in the academic year 2021-22 (up from 0.8 percent in 2020-21). At the upper primary level (Classes 6-8), the dropout rate increased to 3 percent in 2021-22, compared to 1.9 percent in the year 2020-21. Foundational reading and arithmetic skills has continued to remain low. According to ASER 2018, only 20.9% Std 3 students in government schools and 40.6% in private schools could read std 2 level text. The arithmetic test indicated that all India figure for children in class 3 who can do at least subtraction was 28.1% in 2018 and for government school children, this figure was 20.9%. Average student attendance was recorded at 72%, and teacher attendance at 85%.

Children from low-income communities in India largely rely on public school for formal education. Government schools are faced with several challenges. The Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) 2019-20 reveals that only 12% of all government schools had internet facilities and only 30% had computers. About 42% of these schools were without furniture, 23% without functional electricity, and 15% without WASH facilities (which include drinking water, toilets and hand wash basins).

It is also well established that children, especially from economically weaker backgrounds have lower learning outcomes<sup>2</sup>. This could be attributed to several factors - less educated parents who are not able to support their children with their homework; their lack of understanding of the importance of education could discourage children to focus on schoolwork, their inability to provide supplementary resources (tutors) or time and attention.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasis the need for quality early childcare and education for all children, new pedagogical structure, integration of arts and sciences, curricular and extra-curricular activities.

The PPP model is advocated on the premise that it will ease government's financial constraints, as the private sector makes investments on its own under PPP and may bring in specialized skills that may not be available with the government. This could lead to improved access and quality of education. As Pritha Gopalan (2013) observed, paradoxically, public education, which is an essential service, to remain public "needs partners outside the government to keep it up-to-date, efficient, transparent and engaging."<sup>3</sup>

The Akanksha School Project, based on the PPP model aims to improve the quality of school education in municipal schools and addresses some of these challenges faced by children from underserved backgrounds. The project is focused on retaining students and improving attendance while creating a system which not only focuses on academic skills, but also on socio-emotional development of children, and importantly community/parental engagement.

## 1.2. Corporate Social Responsibility of Mphasis:

Mphasis Ltd. carries out its Corporate Social Responsibility through Mphasis F1 Foundation - an independent charitable trust established in 1998 to support innovative programs that work towards

the inclusive development of society. The Foundation supports socially excluded and economically disadvantaged groups in areas of education, livelihood creation, inclusion, and sustainability. AF's 'School Project' is being supported by the Foundation as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

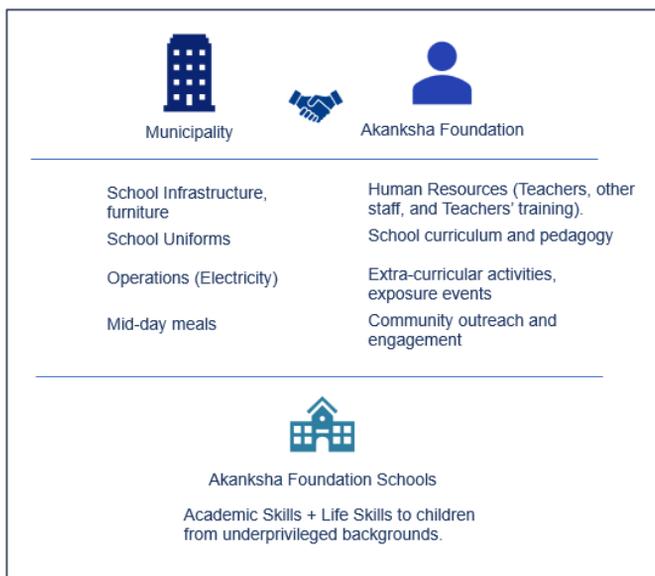
### 1.3. Akanksha Foundation (AF):

Akanksha Foundation (AF), established in 1991, is a non-profit organisation working to provide children from low-income communities with high-quality education through a network of innovative schools in Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur. Initially established to provide after-school academic support to students, the organisation started the 'School project' in 2007 wherein they partnered with Pune Municipal corporation to adopt their first municipal school. They have since adopted around 26 municipal schools and are providing free education and support to more than 13000 children. Their PPE model involves partnership with the municipal bodies - costs such as infrastructure and furniture, school uniforms, electricity is paid by the municipal body, and operations including resources (teachers), developing school curriculum and activities, parent engagement event, training of teachers is taken care by AF.

#### AF's school project implementation model:

### 1.4. The School Project:

AF entered into an agreement with Mphasis F1 Foundation on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019, whereby Mphasis provided CSR grant (INR 98.13 lakhs) to support AF's 'School Project'. The grant was utilized to implement the project in one of AF's schools - Chatrapati Shahuji Maharaj English Medium School (CSMEMS) in Kasarwadi, Pune for period 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020. Under the project, AF took care of school operations and all academic and non-academic programmes related to learning, and child and parents' welfare. Admissions are based on lottery system for students residing within 1km radius of the school.



The project was extended for period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 (with grant support of INR 98.13 lakhs). In the same year, a part of this grant – 11% (INR 21 lakhs) was also utilized to support operations of another school - Pujya Kasturba Gandhi English Medium School (PKGEMS) in Koregaon, Pune (via addendum for period 1<sup>st</sup> January – 31<sup>st</sup>, March 2021) for period of 3 months.

Mphasis continued to support the school project for the third year – 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 with grant support of 1.5 Cr for operations of both CSMEMS and PKGEMS (INR 1 Cr approx. to CSMEMS and INR 50 lakhs to PKGEMS).

**CSMEMS:** The Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) was running a Marathi school in Kasarwadi and had reached out to AF to set up the English medium wing in 2013. AF started CSMEMS with Grade 1 in 2013, followed by consecutive grades in the following years in the building provided by PCMC. In 2019-20, the school started Grade 5, followed by Grade 6 in 2020-21, and Grade 7 in 2021-22. AF hired teachers, managed operations, instruction and curriculum, teachers' training and child welfare activities in the school.



CSMEMS staff, 2019, source: AF

**PKGEMS:** A part of PKGEM school

management was handed over to AF in 2016 after an agreement with Pune Municipal Corporation. During the period of Mphasis' support, AF was managing grades Kg – 5, and grades 8-10. The grant was mostly utilized to support virtual learning sessions during the second wave of the pandemic during Jan – March 2021. In the FY22, the grant was utilized to support overall operations of the school.

#### The School Project supported by Mphasis F1 Foundation:

**Project period:** July, 2019 – 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2022 (3 years)

**Grant Amount:** Total INR 5.42 Cr (INR 98.13 lakhs in FY20, INR 98.13 lakhs in FY21, and INR 1.5 Cr in FY22)



#### 1. Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj English Medium School (CSMEMS), Kasarwadi Pune, Maharashtra.

- ❑ **Project Period:** 3 Years
  - July 2019 - March 2020 (1<sup>st</sup> Year)
  - April 2020 - March 2021 (2<sup>nd</sup> Year)
  - April 2021 – March 2022 (3<sup>rd</sup> Year)
- ❑ **No. of students:**
  - AY 2019-20 (Grades Kg -5): **501 students**
  - AY 2020-21 (Grades Kg – 6): **575 students**
  - AY 2021-22 (Grades Kg – 7): **647 students**
- ❑ **No. of Teachers:**
  - AY 2019 - 20: **25 teachers**
  - AY 2020 – 21: **19 teachers**
  - AY 2021 – 22: **30 teachers**

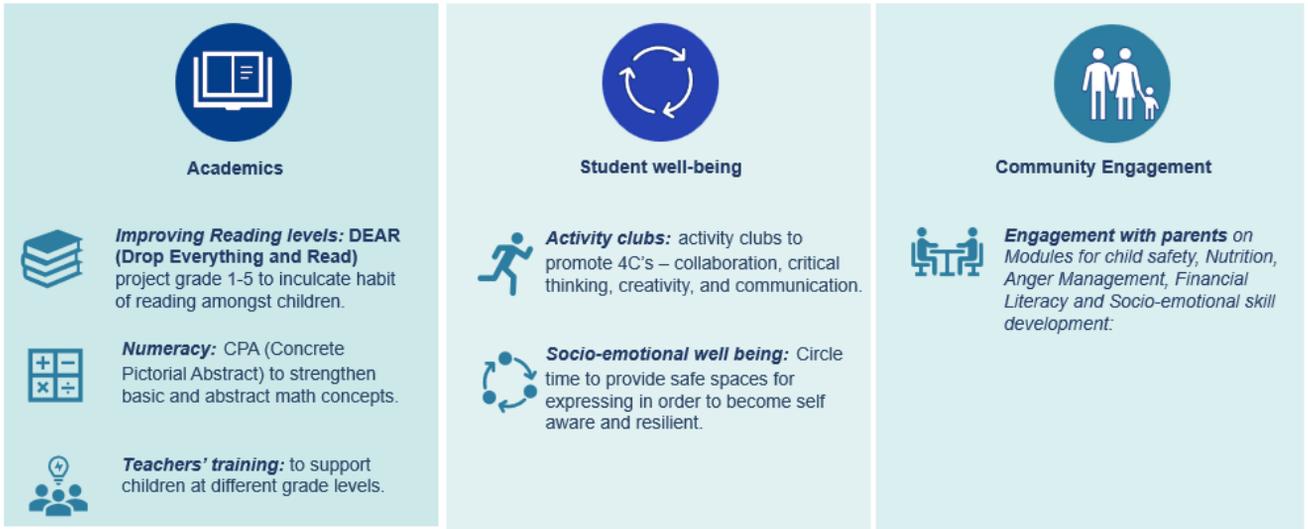


#### 2. Pujya Kasturba Gandhi English Medium School (PKGEMS), Koregaon Park, Pune, Maharashtra.

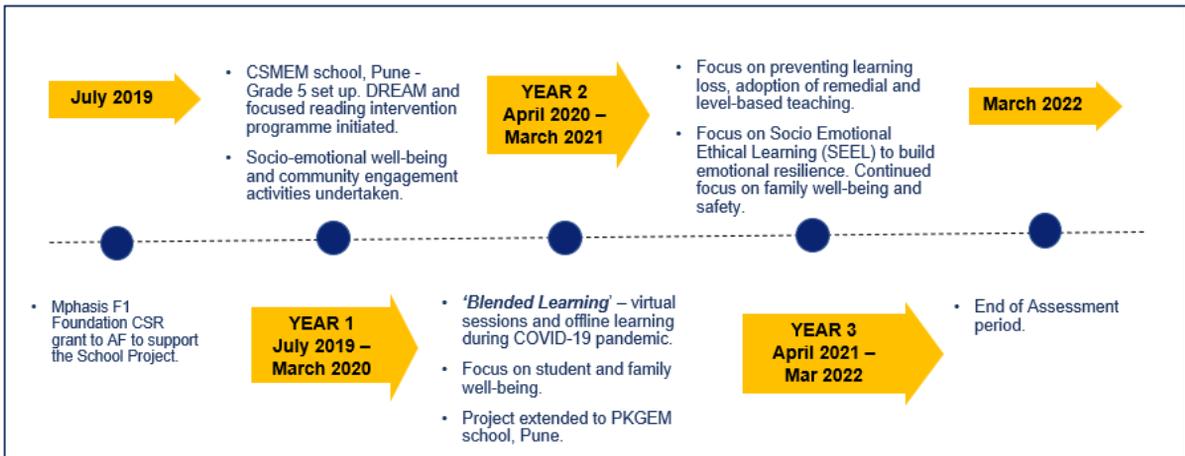
- ❑ **Project Period:**
  - Jan 2021 - March 2021 (3 months)
  - April 2021 – March 2022
- ❑ **No. of students:**
  - AY 2020-21: **700 students**
  - AY 2021-22: **798 students**
- ❑ **No. of teachers:**
  - AY 2021 – 22: **37 teachers**
  - AY 2021 – 22: **36 teachers**

**Note:** In FY20-21, Mphasis' grant to PKGEMS was for operations for January-March 2021 (3 months) during which time the school was closed (the school building was used as COVID-19 centre), and the project was focused on virtual learning. Therefore, this assessment covers mostly CSMEMS activities and PKGEMS where relevant, for that year.

## The School Project – core activities.



### Project timeline:





## 2. Approach and Methodology

## 2. Approach and Methodology:

### 2.1. Objective:

The IA study is being to meet the following objectives:

- To assess the contribution of the project towards targeted beneficiaries and community;
- To provide critical insights and learnings that can support future programme implementation.

### 2.2. Approach and methodology:

SoStakes has adopted a descriptive study design in order to capture the implementation, outcomes and impact of project from key stakeholders and beneficiaries. A mixed method approach has been used for data collection where both qualitative and quantitative data have been collected and analysed.



### 2.3. Sources of data and stakeholders:



## Stakeholders:

Sl. No.	Beneficiaries/Stakeholders	Nos.	Mode of collection
1	Students	118, 10	Survey, FGD
2	Teachers	10	In-depth interview
3	AF Central network team member	1	In-depth interview
4	CSMEM and PKGEMS School leadership and staff	7	In-depth interview
5	School helpers (parents)	2	In-depth interview
6	School Management Committee members	2	In-depth interview
7	Parents in the community	6	In-depth interview

**Mode of data collection:** all primary data was collected online and on-field.

## 2.4. Framework for the study:

We have relied on the DAC/OECD standards of Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability and Impact for this evaluation. The OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) standards are aimed to improve the quality and strengthen the evaluation process.

OECD criteria	Description	Indicators
Relevance	Is the project adequately responding to needs of intended beneficiaries?	Alignment of project design and objectives with beneficiary needs.
Coherence	Does the intervention fit with other interventions/policies in the sector?	Cohesion of the project with existing policies and trends in the sector.
Effectiveness	Have the target outputs and outcomes been achieved, and to what extent?	Academic: Improvement in reading levels, average 75% across subjects, assessment, teachers training and development, and learning during COVID19. Student well-being: Activity clubs, socio-emotion well being activities. Community: engagement with parents.
Efficiency	How efficiently have the projects been managed, and resources utilized?	Pedagogy and curriculum design, teachers and parent engagement.
Impact	What are the contributions, in terms of social value, for the beneficiaries?	Holistic development of children, student attendance and retention in school, community development.
Equity	Is the project being fairly accessed by disadvantaged groups?	Demographic information of beneficiaries.



### 3. Findings

## Beneficiary survey highlights:



**100%** students love their school and enjoy going to school.



**42%** students picked 'Activity Clubs' as their most liked school activity'; **39%** students liked 'Teachers' the most.



**Math** was ranked as the most liked subject by **47%** students, followed by **English** and **Science**.

**92%** students said they understood and enjoyed Math classes.



**94%** students said they had been part of the school reading programme – DEAR.

**34%** students read more than 20 story books in a year.



During COVID19 pandemic, CSMS continued reaching students through phone/online modes. More than **90%** of students continued learning via WhatsApp worksheets and zoom sessions.



**Computer club** was the most popular club ( liked by **28%** students), followed by **Dancing** (**23%** students), **Art, Craft & painting** (**19%** students), and **Music** (**18%** students).

Note: The above-mentioned highlights are extracted from questionnaire survey responses of 118 students of grade 7 and 8 of CSMEMS, Kasarwadi, Pune.

## 3. Findings

### 3.1. Relevance:

Increase in private school enrolment and drop in Government school enrolment has been a trend across the country. According to ASER Report 2018, between 2006 and 2014 private school enrolment increased steadily from 18.7% to 30.9% in 2018. In Pune, the education department's data reveals the drop in enrolment levels in municipality schools since the past four years<sup>4</sup>. This has been attributed to several factors. Most government schools are Marathi medium schools, while parents, including low-income families, prefer to send their children to English medium schools. Thus, parents end up sending children to private schools, even if that means paying fees.

CSMEMS is in Kasarwadi locality of Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC), in Pune district, 16 Km north-west of Pune city. The corporation covers an area of 177 sq. km, population of 1.72 million (2011 census) and covers 30 villages<sup>5</sup>. Pimpri Chinchwad is one of the fastest growing cities in Maharashtra, with rapid urbanisation and the need for basic amenities. PCMC runs only 2 English medium schools in the area (apart from two schools run in collaboration with AF). Similarly, PKGEMS is in Koregaon Park under Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC). PMC runs around 287 municipal schools of which only 46 are English medium schools up to grade 7. Problems related to students not being accepted in other English schools after clearing grade 7 from municipal schools have been widely reported. PMC has therefore appealed to corporate bodies and NGOs to support them to run English medium schools up to grade 10.

AF school models are an acknowledgement of the insufficient supply of English-medium schools by the municipal corporation. Their partnership with PCMC to run English medium schools addresses several needs of parents and students. Parents interviewed during this study shared that they aspired to send their children to English medium schools but were unsure if they could afford the fees at private schools. They were immensely grateful that AF school was providing not only free education for their children, but also English medium, quality education that was at par with (high paying) private schools. According to the parents, all other children and parents in their communities aspired to send their children to AF schools.

AF believes that they have been able to create an innovative education model that is replicable and scalable. The school team believes that their three key pillars of action – academic achievement; youth well-being and development, and community engagement are the distinguishing features of an AF school. Their approach to improving reading levels and learning outcomes in Math, Science and languages, and reading is exploratory and innovative. They stress on children's emotional well-being and focus on the parents' role in nurturing and caring for their children which is a key differentiator to other education programmes.

### 3.2. Coherence:

AF's 'School project' is based on the private-public partnership model. The PPP Policy of Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM), one of AF's earliest Government partners, outlines the objective of the PPP model 'to provide high quality education to children from the most economically underprivileged communities. This, the policy states, is consistent with the Right to Education Act (RTE), and in line with the design inputs of the World Bank and Department of International Development (DFID), UK on effective partnerships in public school systems<sup>6</sup>. The Policy provides

that the partners' (NGOs) expertise be leveraged through its pedagogy, teacher training and development plan, education activities, and third-party assessments.

The Akanksha School Project model is based on a similar PPP policy of PMC and responds directly to the needs outlined therein. While infrastructure, students' uniforms, and electricity costs are taken care of by the municipal bodies, AF focuses on pedagogy, teachers and teachers' training, children's development activities, parents learning and engagement. This model<sup>7</sup> promotes efficiency, innovation, and accountability which is much needed in the education sector.

The project is designed to address all aspects of a child's need at the same cost as the Government's spend per child, thus presenting a model for quality education within the Government system that could potentially be scaled up for impact on a greater scale.

### 3.3. Effectiveness:

#### 3.3.i. Academic Achievement:

**a. Reading levels:** Improving reading level was a focus in the first year of support. CSMEMS undertook a Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI) assessment to test four core fundamental language skills – Reading, Listening, Speaking and Writing. Students were assigned a grade level based on their proficiency in each skill. A reading intervention was initiated for grades 1 to 5 where every child was provided with focused instruction and practice for 45 minutes every day depending on their own reading levels. Children who struggled were clubbed in smaller groups so that they got more time and attention from the teachers.

In addition to this intervention, CSMEMS also started 'DEAR– Drop Everything and Read'- where students and teachers spent 20 minutes reading a book of their choice from the classroom library three days a week. This was to promote a love and habit for reading books. CSMEMS also

#### Goal for Academic Achievement:

- 1) Two-level increase in reading comprehension for all children not at grade level,
- 2) One level increase in reading comprehension for all children at grade level,
- 3) 75% class average scores In mathematics, science and languages in the end of year assessment.

integrated CPA (Concrete Pictorial Abstract) approach in the math curriculum. Navnirmiti books that use pictorials to strengthen basic and abstract math concepts were used, and the focus was on strengthening basic level math to prepare Grade 5 students for Grade 6 level concepts like algebra and linear equations.

#### b. Learning during COVID19 pandemic:

Both CSMEMS and PKGEMS aligned their priorities to meet the challenges posed by the pandemic through most of 2020 and 2021.

During this period, the schools employed a blended learning that focused on preventing learning loss through remedial teaching with an emphasis



Children during their reading session, CSMEMS, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

blended learning that focused on preventing learning loss through remedial teaching with an emphasis

on numeracy and literacy skills. The strategy was to explore and adopt technology that would serve to meet the schools' goals. While students started with lessons on WhatsApp and worksheets, the schools raised funds (other donors) and provided tablets in 2020-21. From data maintained by AF, only 16 of 647 in CSMEMS students did not receive tablets due to them relocating to their native places during the pandemic. For PKGEMS, all students, of grades 8, 9 and 10 had received tablets in 2021, while junior grades continued virtual learning through their family members' mobile phones.

The schools had a blended model that included synchronous learning – online face-to-face learning via Zoom calls, and asynchronous – self-learning with help of learning resources provided by the school for grades 3-7. Math and English learning was structured on differentiated and level-based approach (below grade level, grade level, above grade level, and special group within the same class ) to support variable learning needs. As part of asynchronous learning, teachers shared targeted worksheets messages and voice notes for each group daily via WhatsApp and Edmodo. English, Hindi, and Marathi Teachers shared reading passages with 4/5 comprehension questions daily for each language subject. Both CSMEMS and PKGEMS also adopted RAZ Plus – a literacy programme that provides levelled teaching resources to strengthen reading proficiency for Grades 3 and above. For Math, the schools integrated Khan Academy sessions for Grades 5 and above once a week to strengthen basic and foundational skills.

However, parents interviewed during the assessment reported that their children still needed to recover from the learning loss caused by school closure, and that additional classes by the school would be helpful for the students.

### c. Assessment:

AF has shared the End of Year Assessment for 2020-21 for CSMEMS (the school did not have assessment for 2019-20 due to COVID-19 pandemic).

**CSMEMS End of Year Assessment Class-wise number of students and grades scored**

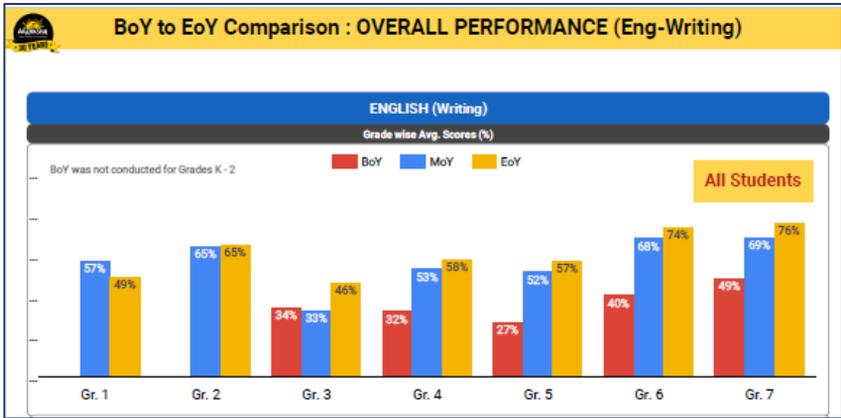
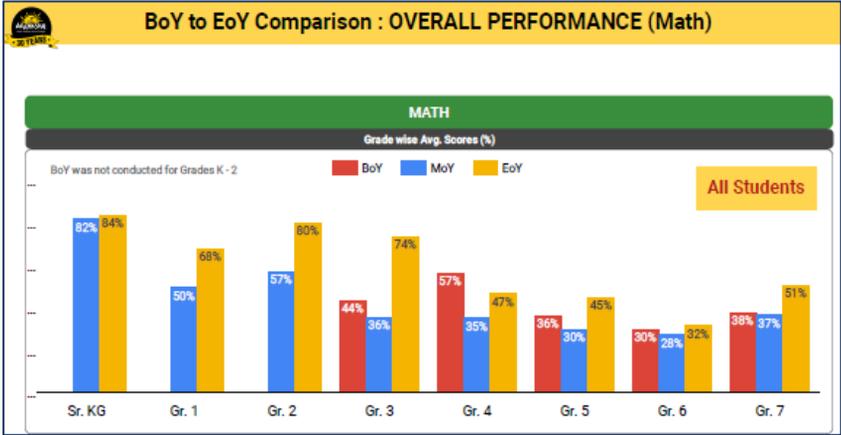
Grades scored	Class 3				Class 4				Class 5				Class 6			
	Eng	Math	Hindi	Marathi												
A	47	37	57	63	35	44	47	48	32	38	49	52	31	21	23	50
B	12	10	7	2	18	21	19	10	19	27	16	7	24	26	23	16
C	11	18	3	3	11	2	0	4	16	5	4	7	11	18	13	0
D	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	3	4	3	1
Absent	1	5	5	4	8	5	6	10	3	1	3	5	2	2	9	4
Total	72	72	72	72	72	72	72	72	72	72	72	72	71	71	71	71
% of students who scored A	65	51	79	88	49	61	65	67	44	53	68	72	44	30	32	70

Grade key: A 80-100 B 60-80 C 60-80 D Blew 40

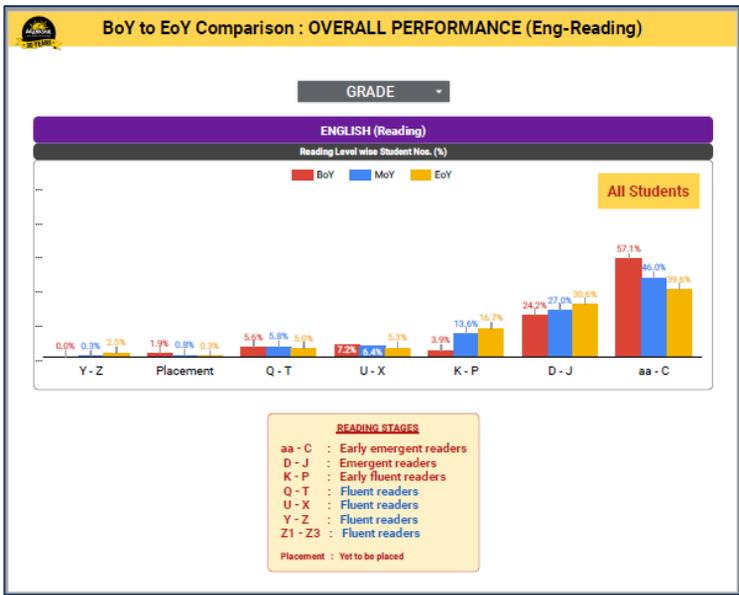
Most students across grades 3-5 have scored grade A across subjects. Comparatively, fewer students in Grade 6 have scored A and even B for English, Math and Hindi. This assessment report does not include progress in students' reading levels (informal assessments and reported positive results after the introduction of the reading intervention). AF has also undertaken an external benchmarking study for Math and English. Please see Annexure for details.

**CSMEMS Assessment AY21-22:** beginning of year assessment (BoY), mid-year (MoY) and End of Year (EoY) assessments were conducted for the academic year (June '21 – March '22).

The results show that Math scores have improved for all grades from BoY to EoY assessment. It also shows that the scores have gradually declined as we move up the grades, especially for Grade 5, 6, and 7.

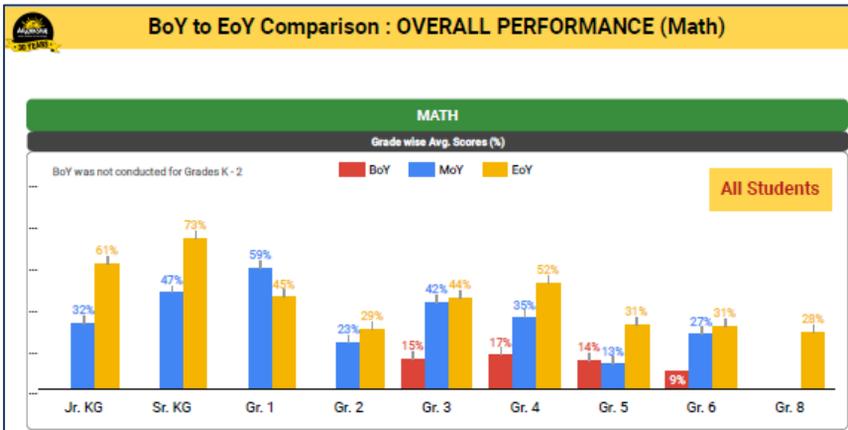


English writing scores have improved for all grades excepting grades 1 and 2, although the increase has been minimal. This has been attributed to the fact that children had limited writing practice when schools were closed.

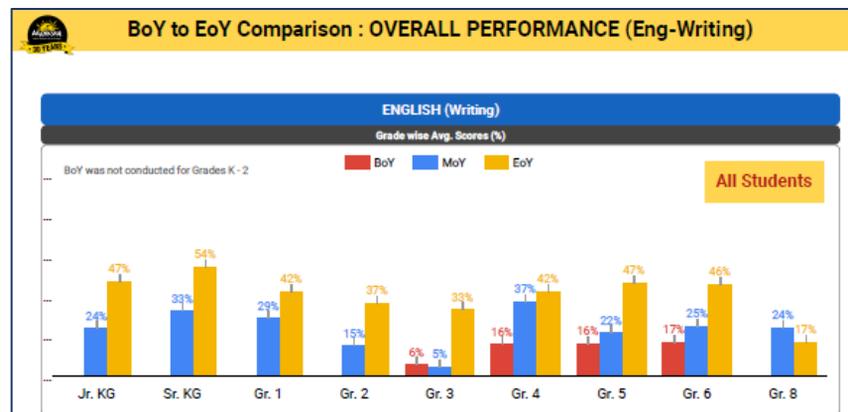


Reading skills were measured for all students as per their reading grade levels (not their class). Most students belonged to aa-C group – ‘Early Emergent Readers’ level. The reading scores have improved for Y-Z group, K-P group, and D-J group. This has been attributed to the weekly ‘Read Aloud’ classes and use of RAZ App. However, the BoY-EoY scores for aa-C group shows a decline.

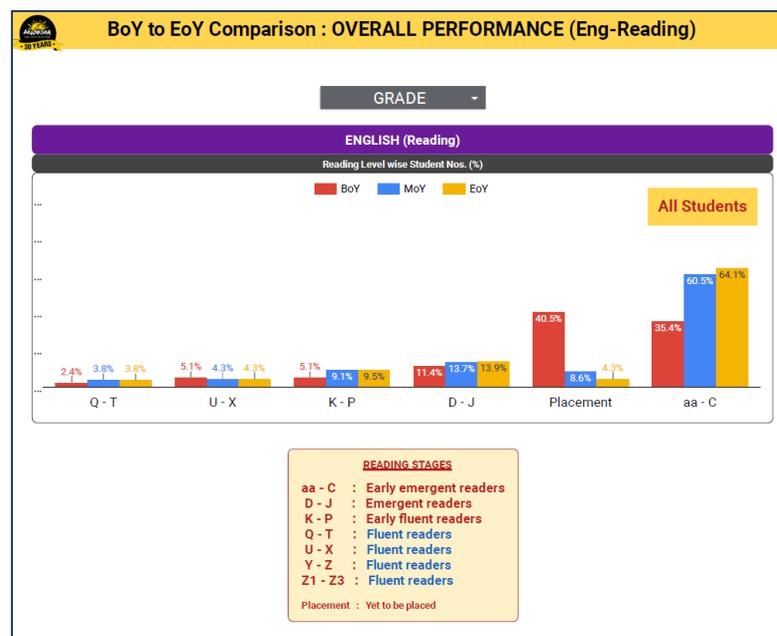
**PKGEMS Assessment AY21-22:** Similarly, BoY, MoY and EoY assessments were conducted for PKGEMS for academic year (June'21 – March'22).



End-of-year grade-wise average score for Math improved across grades in comparison to the baseline and mid-term assessment, except for Grade 1 whose average score declined from 59% to 45%. No BoY assessment was conducted for students of Jr. Kg – Grade 2.



End-of-year grade-wise average score for English writing improved remarkably for all grades, except Grade 8. No BoY assessment was conducted for Jr. Kg – Grade 2.



Reading skills were measured for all students as per their reading grade levels (not their class). More than half of the students – 64% belonged to aa-C group or 'Early Emergent Readers' level. The reading scores this group shows minimal improvement.



FGD with CSMEMS teachers, Impact Assessment, 16<sup>th</sup> March 23.

#### d. Teacher training:

All teachers interviewed for the study have been part of yearlong teachers training programmes conducted by Af. Teacher training programmes are planned throughout the academic calendar both at the school level and central AF level. Teachers have been part of

- i. Weekly Classroom observations where teachers receive feedback,
- ii. Bi-monthly co-planning meetings where lesson plans are made and discussed with the team, and
- iii. Monthly cluster meetings for subject teachers to exchange ideas to make learning

resource persons were also invited to conduct sessions on ‘Reading aloud to Children’ and included sessions on how to choose a book, the best seating arrangement, voice modulation, and questions to ask that will encourage students to reflect and think.

A key highlight during the pandemic in 2020 and 2021 was guiding teachers to adapt to online method of teaching and providing remedial needs-based teaching.

### 3.3.ii. Student well-being:

#### Goal for student well-being:

*Focus on socio-emotional development of students and mindfulness through activities such as circle time, collaborative activities in art and games.*

activity clubs – Art, Embroidery, Handwork, Movie, Carom, Chess, Dance, and Drama to help students interact and collaborate with each other, and build key life skills like confidence, empathy, teamwork and a sense of responsibility. CSMEMS also had a Sports week in February 2020 and inter-school football and kabaddi tournament. In class, the teachers supported setting up of display boards to showcase students’ art and craft work, essays, and poems in order to build a practice of appreciation and respect.

Both CSMEMS and PKGEMS made an effort to continue activities when the schools were closed. CSMEMS conducted virtual English. poetry festival; subject exhibitions; Yoga, Art and Zumba sessions; and Diwali and Christmas.

#### a. Activity Clubs:

CSMEMS focused on socio-emotional development of students and mindfulness through activities such as circle time, and collaborative activities in art and games. Students of Grade 3-5 were part of various



Children watching a movie during ‘Movie club’ time, CSMEMS

**b. Socio-Emotional Ethical learning during COVID19 pandemic:**

Both school teams worked with a renewed focus on the well-being of students and families during the months the schools were closed. Families were dealing with issues such as food stress, need for medical attention, issues of domestic violence, and COVID-19 symptoms. The school responded by reaching out to parents through well-being and by integrating Socio-Emotional calls, Ethical (SEE) learning that involved feeling-check activities; and Quality Circle Time (QCT) guided by the school counsellor to help students understand their emotions and teaching them to express and share their personal challenges.



Sports week, February 2022, CSMEMS school.

**3.3.iii. Community Engagement:**

**Goal for community engagement:**

*Creating awareness about child safety (physical, emotional, sexual), good parenting and meaningful engagement with children through workshops with parents.*

**a. Engaging parents in school activities and education programmes:**

Community engagement is driven by the social workers of the school who spend their working days visiting communities, interacting with children’s families to check-in after their well-being, and encouraging them to participate in school activities. During AY19-20, the schools conducted annual meetings for goal- setting with parents’, monthly meetings to encourage parents to take up activities such as reading a story to their child every night or packing their child’s school bag. Monthly education programmes on subjects such as addiction, children’s development, nutrition, sexual health, and personal safety education sessions were conducted by the school throughout 2019-20. During 2021-22, the school also raised funds and conducted vaccination drive, and provided ration to families that had lost jobs or whose income had been severely impacted. SMC members (14 persons) visited ‘Bhilar Village of Books’, in Mahabaleshwar where



Vaccine awareness drive for parents, Kasarwadi, 2021.



SMC members visiting ‘Bhilar Village of Books’ in Mahabaleshwar.

over 35 families in the village have created a library in their homes. PKGEMS also conducted partnered with Light House, to upskill parents who had lost jobs, to help them with finding employment. 40 parents were trained and certified in digital literacy and received support from Light House in their job search. The visit was meant to help the committee understand the logistics of setting up a community library. Parents interviewed in CSMEMS school have shared that the Annual Day is a very inclusive event with everyone participating and contributing to make it a success. Many parents, especially mothers, were appreciative of the Women's Day celebrations in CSMEMS premises that had games and interactive activities.

### **b. Role of parents as co-educators during COVID-19 pandemic:**



*Parent demonstrating an exercise of 'critical-thinking' taught by the school during COVID19 pandemic.*

CSMEMS team engaged with parents to help them take on their role as educators during COVID-19 pandemic. While parents were familiarised with ways of virtual learning, they also taught ways of supporting their children at home. Teachers shared simple exercises and activities that parents could do at home to engage their children. For example, in the photo (left), the parent was sent a design to be made on the floor in her house that could be used as a maze by her son to reach to the reward/prize as part of critical thinking exercise.

Parents were also taught to support their children with making of dream boards, sight words board and other at-home learning activities.

## **3.4. Efficiency:**

### **3.4.i. Teachers as guides:**

Apart from being engaged in student's academic development, teachers have also been engaged in students' personal growth. Teachers undertake home visits during the first part of the academic year to build a rapport with parents, and to understand parents' challenges and struggles. This has helped them explore ways to manage help for the children in both academic and non-academic ways. The teachers also work closely with the school counsellors to recommend children dealing with anger management and behavior issues. This has helped in bridging the gap between a child's performance in the classroom and in his/her personal home environment.

In AY20-21 and 21-22, when schools were dealing with low attendance and submissions during online classes, teachers conducted home visits to enquire after the children's well-being and made efforts to address the causes with help of the social work team. Specific attention was provided to students with higher dropout risks.

### 3.4.ii. Pedagogy:

According to the school leadership team, they have been able to successfully explore and adopt innovative approaches to learning. They have adopted a skill-based learning vs knowledge-based learning model, where there is an emphasis on project-based/ activity-based learning that is child centric. They are driven by the 4Cs of 21st century learning – Critical thinking, Communication, Collaboration, and Creativity.

CSMEMS teachers have also attributed the positive learning outcomes to differentiated method for different grade level students, especially in reading, followed by English and Math during the pandemic. Teachers were able to give simpler instructions to students which, according to them, has helped them to understand it better. Teachers have also shared that the integration of Art with other subjects has helped promote creative learning. Classrooms decorated with artworks related to what is being taught in the child's grade helps in continuous learning. It was interesting to note that all students interviewed during the study shared that they loved Math because it was taught through activities, and that activities made learning fun. They added that all activity-based learning was fun and interesting. PKGEMS teachers have found adoption of RAZ App very helpful as it allows personalised grade-level teaching, and parents too can log in and track their child's progress.

Attendance and assignment submissions were a challenge during school closure and students suffered from virtual fatigue, lack of motivation and concentration. teachers were required to be innovative in their approaches. Thus, for Ay21-22, break-out rooms were encouraged, and activity and inquiry-based learning was adopted where children in small groups explored topics and asked questions. Attendance certificates were also introduced to motivate students to attend sessions.

### 3.4.iii. Parents as partners:

All interviewed parents felt that the school is unique because of the effort it makes to include the parents in their child's learning and their socio-emotional development. Additionally, they also mentioned the school's contribution in their own awareness of various issues and to their family well-being. Parents are members of the School Management Committee (SMC), and volunteer in various school activities as part of 'Helpers Group'. Parents are motivated to contribute to the school's activities for the service that the school has provided them - SMC and helper group members monitor students' attendance (parents call up students' homes when they are absent from



school and when a child has not been to school for four days, a group member makes a visit to the child's home to enquire after their well-being; they monitor mid-day meals and children's tiffin (parents are encouraged to provide a fruit for tiffin); they conduct home visits and interact with other parents in identify issues or struggles in the family such as alcoholism or financial stress. The social worker, in such cases, reaches out to the families and provides support and counselling to the parents. The schools' community engagement is key to their strategic partnership, wherein, parents are looked at as equal partners in their children's academic and personal development. Educating parents on various child-related has helped develop parents' capacity to support their children with homework, has enabled a supporting environment at home where children can focus on schoolwork and encourages them to provide time and attention to their children.

### 3.5. Impact:

#### 3.5.i. All-rounded development of students:

AF has managed to provide a balanced and all-rounded development to its students.

Students enjoy academics, as well as sports and activities. In the student survey conducted amongst 118 students, all students have responded that they love attending school, and enjoy the activity clubs the most. The school has been able to make Math a fun activity and it was picked as the most loved subject in the survey. Learning through solving problems, flash cards, number line, group work activities has made Math a fun activity.

During our interaction with the students, they appeared confident and answered all questions with ease. Most boys shared that they enjoyed sports, especially football and many of them wanted to become professional football players. The girls shared that they aspired to become IAS officers, and cardiologists.

AF's three-pronged approach of working with parent community, and on children academic and socio-emotional well-being has created a vibrant learning environment for students where they can thrive both academically and emotionally.

“

*AF provides a lot of space and resources for students' well-being. It's not just social workers and counsellors who are engaged in students' emotional well-being, but all the stakeholders are aligned to the same goal. We ensure a child is provided with 'reflective spaces' with activities such as journaling and circle time.*

”

- Jhanvi, School Counsellor CSMEMS



Parents' – Social worker meeting at CSMEMS.



Football theory session, CSMEMS, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

### 3.5.ii. High student retention and low absenteeism:

School	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR
<b>Avg. Monthly Student Attendance 2019-20</b>										
CSMEMS	93%	93%	92%	92%	96%	91%	94%	92%	92%	
PKGEMS		81%	80%	79%	89%	76%	84%	75%	NA	
<b>Avg. Monthly Student Attendance 2020-21</b>										
CSMEMS	47%	63%	59%	55%	58%	52%	58%	56%	56%	66%
PKGEMS	27%	30%			15%	37%	29%	35%	38%	34%
<b>Student Attendance 2021-22</b>										
CSMEMS	58%	55%	55%	54%	60%	56%	83%	56%	84%	90%
PKGEMS	31%	31%	31%	39%	38%	67%	64%	51%	35%	

For AY19 – 20, CSMEMS reported overall student average attendance was reported at 93%, while PKGEMS reported overall average attendance of 81%.

In AY20-21, both schools had adopted the blended learning model and student attendance was a challenge due to lack of access to mobile phones, internet, relocation of parents. CSMEMS reported overall average attendance of 55% and PKGEMS reported average attendance of 31% (PKGEMS parents are spread out and many relocated to their native hometowns during the pandemic). Also, according to the staff, better attendance at CSMEMS could be because of higher level of engagement with the parent community. Both schools have directed their efforts towards improving community engagement and boosting attendance in the following year.

In AY21-22, average attendance improved at 72% for CSMEMS, and PKGEMS at 43%. Schools intermittently during the last quarter of FY22, leading to improved attendance in physical classes.

Student Retention % overall			
School	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
CSMEMS	97%	100%	100%
PKGEMS	98%	100%	100%

Both CSMEMS and PKGEMS have reported more than 95% retention rate for the reporting period, including the pandemic years, is a significant achievement. Parents shared that they value the opportunity provided by AF schools, and thus would not want to let go of it easily.

Teacher Retention % overall			
School	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
CSMEMS	100%	100%	100%
PKGEMS	100%	100%	99%

Teacher retention too was remarkably high during all three years. All teachers interviewed had been working in the school since more than five years, and a few had been there since before CSMEMS was set up in 2013 and had previously worked in AF's after-school centres.

### 3.5.iii. Overall community development:

AF has gone beyond the classroom to support families and the community at large. The social worker is closely attuned to both individual family and community issues and challenges. This has helped the school initiate need-based targeted responses for families. Apart from counselling and other management interventions, the school has previously (prior to COVID19) provided training for livelihood opportunities to mothers from financially distressed families.

Parents have been encouraged to reach out for support, and community. SMC members and parents group members are sensitive to the community's challenges. Parents are appreciative of this, and the goodwill earned by the school has resulted in parents' cooperation and support in various ways. Parents feel a sense of ownership of the school, and are willing to fulfil their duties and responsibilities towards their children as well as the

### 3.6. Equity:

CSMEMS serves the educational needs of children living in 1 km radius to the school. Most of the students are from low-income families from Nashik phata, Hirabai Jhopadpatti, and Vikas nagar area of Kasarwadi working in the MIDC (Maharashtra Industrial Development Area). They are primarily from two major religious communities - Hindus and Muslims. 80% of parents are daily income earners working as construction workers, plumbers, auto drivers, cooks, barbers, tailors, painters, welders, electricians, domestic workers, daily wagers at petrol pump, or vendors.

PKGEMS caters to children from families who live around 10-20 kms of Koregaon Park. They are from 11-12 local communities – Renuka basti, Dhole Patil Road, Yerwada and Kondhwa. Most parents are employed as drivers, masons, and daily wagers for Pune Municipal Corporation.

The School is providing equal access to quality education, regardless of race, gender and socio-economic status, and providing equal opportunity for all students to succeed.

“

*The school is an important and integral part of our community. The school pays equal attention to Students' academic and home life. It is also actively engaged with our community*

”

- Inaf, parent of CSEMEMS student

## 4. Take aways:

The implementation of the school project in CSMEMS in 2019-20 was implemented as per proposed plans. At CSMEMS, a new reading intervention was introduced to improve reading skills of children at their levels along with an improved curriculum for Math, and integration of Arts to the overall curriculum. The school was able to successfully engage students in activity clubs and conducted all planned outreach and education activities with the parents. However, COVID-19 pandemic that started in March 2020 changed project plans in both CSMEMS and PKGEMS. The focus shifted to staying in touch with children and parents and ensuring their socio-emotional well-being. Efforts were made to help parents support their child's education at home and maintaining learning levels. Regular programme activities and assessments could not be conducted.

Below are some recommendations that have emerged from our interaction with stakeholders during this study, and during the process of putting together of this report.

- ❑ **Learning gap:** All parents interviewed reported severe learning gaps caused by COVID pandemic. Even though the schools have been supporting students with recovery and bridging learning gaps, parents have stressed on the need to have additional classes.
- ❑ **Reporting:** Both CSMEMS and PKGEMS have submitted quarterly reports to Mphasis. However, updates relating to reading level assessment could not be verified due to unavailability of assessment data (End of Year Assessment for 2020-21 does not include reading levels assessment). Data management could be streamlined at the central level to align with the reporting that is being done by the school teams. Also, reading level assessments, should reflect individual student grade-level progress from beginning to end of year, could be maintained and shared to view progress and development of students.
- ❑ **Regular computer classes:** Students both during the survey and in-person discussions have expressed the need to have regular computer classes, instead of computers as a club activity which is limited to a few sessions a week. CSMEMS and PKGEMS students feel that it is a critical skill to learn and practice on a regular basis, and efforts could be made by the school to enable access to computers for all students, especially of senior grades.
- ❑ **Sustainability:** Both CSMEMS and PKGEMS are entirely dependent on donor funding, and disruption of grant inflow could pose a threat to the sustainability of the schools. While new AF schools have financial support from the Government (up to 55% funding approx.), similar arrangement for the older schools could be explored.
- ❑ **Partnership:** Partnership with other organisations and resources could be explored for student development activities and teacher training.

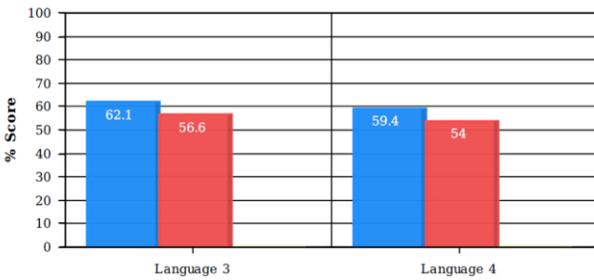
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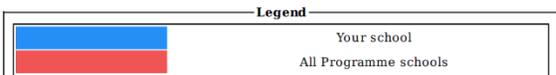
## Annexure:

AF partnered with Education Initiatives (Ei), an education research and technology platform working on measurement of learning outcomes, to conduct a common Math and English benchmark test for grades 3-8 in all Akanksha schools. The study report for 2019 and 2020 has been shared by AF (no school level assessment was undertaken for CSMEMS for AY 2019-20). The data provided gives an insight into CSMEMS student performance in comparison to other AF schools.

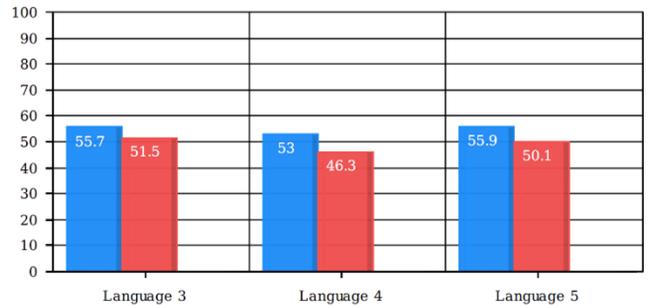
Overall performance – Language, 2019



	Language 3			Language 4		
	YS	P	C	YS	P	C
<b>N</b>	70	770	0	72	791	0
<b>Avg(%)</b>	62.1	56.6	0	59.4	54.0	0
<b>SD</b>	16.6	18.4	0	14.8	16.6	0

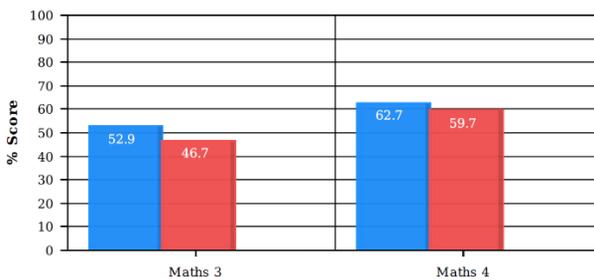


Overall performance – Language, 2020



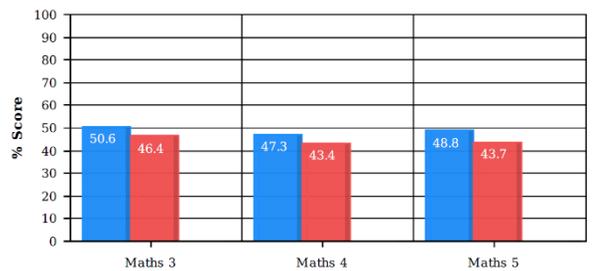
	Language 3			Language 4			Language 5		
	YS	P	C	YS	P	C	YS	P	C
<b>N</b>	69	893	0	65	751	0	71	757	0
<b>Avg(%)</b>	55.7	51.5	0	53.0	46.3	0	55.9	50.1	0
<b>SD</b>	16.9	19.1	0	17.4	18.2	0	16.2	17.0	0

Overall performance – Maths, 2019



	Maths 3			Maths 4		
	YS	P	C	YS	P	C
<b>N</b>	69	771	0	71	794	0
<b>Avg(%)</b>	52.9	46.7	0	62.7	59.7	0
<b>SD</b>	15.6	15.9	0	16.7	18.5	0

Overall performance – Maths, 2020



	Maths 3			Maths 4			Maths 5		
	YS	P	C	YS	P	C	YS	P	C
<b>N</b>	69	892	0	69	752	0	71	761	0
<b>Avg(%)</b>	50.6	46.4	0	47.3	43.4	0	48.8	43.7	0
<b>SD</b>	18.6	17.4	0	17.5	16.5	0	17.2	17.1	0

### CSMEMS Performance

- Nearly 60% of students on an average have scored between 50% - 75% in Language across both the grades.
  - Nearly 45% of students across both the grades have scored between 50% & 75% in Math.
- CSMEMS has out-performed the Akanksha network of schools across both the grades in English & Math.

