

Ref. No. : Ref No. I.E.S/BHAN/KG/02

Date 10.08.20

Dear Parents,

1. At the outset we hope and pray that this communication finds you and your family in the best of health. We are facing a very distressing and challenging time which calls for unity and understanding. These trying times of pandemic have left us all astray.
2. Whether appreciating how we have implemented online teaching-learning or how your children have remained engaged and motivated throughout, we have truly enjoyed reading your views. You did not need to, and yet you have taken the time to write in and offer your support and appreciation. We truly value the response. It is heartening to note that you have taken the time to understand and appreciate the efforts put in by the Kinder Garten Team.
3. You have raised certain issues i.e. cost savings or reduction of our various operating costs and requested the Management for substantial reduction of fees.
4. For understanding why the Kindergarten needs to charge fees to its students, please understand that Kinder Garten is a permanently unaided learning institution – this means all the expenses towards administration and management of the Kinder Garten – including those relating to paying the salaries of teaching and non-teaching staff– have to be met from the fees required to be paid to the Kinder Garten by the parents.
5. There are fixed operational expenses which every institution has to meet – salaries, property taxes, security agency charges, housekeeping agency charges, annual maintenance charges for computers, water purification systems, air conditioners, fans, licence fees for software used in the computers, maintenance of the building and equipment, repairs and replacement of broken, obsolete equipment. The institution does not receive any grant from the Government or any other authority for meeting either its salary or non-salary expenditure.

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6. In fact, salary expenditure constitutes approximately 70% of the Kinder Garten expenditure.
7. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the administration and management of the Kinder Garten in diverse ways as set out in this communication.
8. Our biggest strength has always been our ability to maintain open and honest two-way communication with our parent body. In the very same spirit, we would like to share some information which we hope will help you understand the rationale behind maintaining certain processes and policies.
9. The Kinder Garten continues to support and employ its entire teaching and non-teaching staff and has been paying them their salary every month, without any reduction in their salaries.
10. Due to the restrictions imposed by the Government of India and the Government of Maharashtra on the physical re-opening of Kinder Garten s during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, the teachers have been trained to switch to a completely online mode of teaching and have also been trained to get ready for a hybrid mode of teaching – we need to keep our teachers prepared for the fast changing scenario, so that we meet the challenges faced by the Kinder Garten and the teachers. Our non-teaching staff have been reporting for duties, once the lockdown restrictions were eased, to attend to administrative matters, including result preparation, accounts updation, Government portal updation.
11. We are constrained to switch to an online mode of teaching, combined with the offline mode of teaching and assignments. The Kinder Garten teachers have trained themselves to conduct the online classes like a virtual Kinder Garten, with a longer duration, the Government of India and the Government of Maharashtra have prescribed the number of hours of online classes each day and we are therefore required to restrict the duration of the online classes.

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12. We continue to meet our financial obligations towards our security and housekeeping agencies and have ensured that they keep their commitment towards their staff too. We believe it is important that in this time, when a single touch or cough or sneeze can transmit infection, we deal with service providers who have been associated and known to the institution for a long time, since they will be more forthcoming about any hygiene risks. Hence, we will not discontinue with their services or take up newer unfamiliar service providers, merely to cut costs as it would mean compromising with the hygiene standards as also the safety of the Students which has always been paramount.
13. The Kinder Garten has incurred additional costs of cleaning and sanitisation in the previous months, continues to do so, since they do function on campus administratively, and will do so in the future as well. You will appreciate that, though the students may not be in Kinder Garten, but our infrastructure and equipment still need to be serviced on a regular basis and maintained in a fully operational condition even during the lockdown period, particularly to avoid any moisture-related damage to computers furniture, lab equipment, washrooms, water-purification systems, and even pre-monsoon cleaning of the underground as well as overhead water storage tanks. The scale of work in maintaining the hygiene standards of the Kinder Garten - including classrooms, lobby, courtyard, washrooms, corridors, water purification system will result in continued cleaning and sanitisation costs, and these costs will increase exponentially once Kinder Garten reopens. This involves increased sanitisation of the entire Kinder Garten campus, to sanitisers in every bathroom, foyer, and public area. This also involves employment of people for orientation sessions with the support staff to ensure that they are aware of the strictness of hygiene standards and the risks involved. Even infrastructure such as ground etc has to be maintained, cleaned and sanitised so that when Kinder Garten resumes, they are safe, cleaned and sanitised for use by our children, and we will have to continue to ensure that they are so. The staff of the Kinder Garten will be trained as per Health and Security norms, when the Kinder Garten reopens in the forthcoming months. Hence, cleaning and sanitisation efforts cost not just in numbers of products/services procured but also breadth of application. We have to be prepared for the exponential costs that will arise once Kinder Garten reopens as you will be witnessing completely different standards of hygiene, cleaning and sanitisation, which needless to mention, cannot be compromised under the garb of cost-cutting measures.

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14. Various obligations to pay overheads like electricity charges, property taxes, rents etc, unfortunately have not changed with the lockdown. Obligations to vendors /Contracts outsourced to third party too continue to be a part of our permanent expenditure, with no relief on the same.
15. We had to assist our Teachers in upgrading their technology skills to teach students on an Online Platform, implemented all over the world to ensure safety to the lives of students , not compromising on concept delivery , assessment techniques and even equipping them to appear for Online Examinations in case of extended emergency crisis. Migrating to a virtual classroom- / online learning has not been easy, yet online learning, both synchronous and asynchronous, has been made available to each student at no additional costs. While our teachers spent and indeed do spend a substantial portion of their non-teaching working hours and even work at home to prepare lessons in advance, the working hours have now extended because they need to first prepare the lessons and then make them online teaching user friendly.
16. With access to textbooks, worksheet files, video resources, and online lectures, we have optimised a synchronous and asynchronous blended learning environment for students. Through all of this transitioning, the Kinder Garten has incurred additional costs which will continue to rise. We are constantly evaluating new platforms, and software, and none of these costs have been passed on to you. Our teams have sacrificed their weekends and worked late into the night to make this happen. In spite of recurring challenges we remain committed to excellence.
17. The Management has ensured that irrespective of whether the fees have been paid or not, online learning is accessible to all. Each student has been given a login ID and access to online modules so that learning is continuous and there is no disruption in learning at home.

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18. As a Kinder Garten however, we do not have the luxury of being prepared for just the online scenario. We are prepared for virtual Kinder Garten, physical Kinder Garten and a hybrid of the two, considering that an entire academic year must be planned since the timeline of this pandemic situation is unpredictable. Correspondingly, investments had to be made, and expenses incurred as any of the three possibilities may become operational at any time during the year. It is also essential to maintain staff strength for when we do revert to a hybrid model or regular Kinder Garten. We may be looking at staggered batches coming into Kinder Garten and any reduction in staff will significantly impact the learning experiences of our students. The multifold nature of this preparedness incurs an extremely heavy expense.
19. Our costs are increasing with cleaning and sanitisation, maintenance, purchase, salaries, availing of cleaning and sanitisation experts, as also the cleaning and sanitisation process of the Kinder Garten, etc. The cost of operations has not decreased in any way but will increase exponentially to ensure complete compliance of safety and hygiene standards once the Kinder Garten reopens.
20. We hope that as a parent, your foremost concern should be on access to education for your child, along with safety/cleaning and sanitisation, etc. so that the immunity level of our children is not endangered. The Kinder Garten has already invested in Thermal temperature recorders, Sanitisers at all strategic places and classrooms, and would also, if directed by the authorities, prepare and keep signboards in common areas and in washrooms regarding safety measures, healthy practices and social distancing.

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21. We have taken up the aforesaid safety and security measures as a self-imposed responsibility as we remain committed not only to the cause of education, but also to the safety and security of our students. Our greatest efforts lie in making the Kinder Garten a place where our students love to come and learn. We equally miss our students' presence, energy and infectious laughter which used to light up our corridors.

22. Certain questions are being raised about certain additional costs for the effective delivery of education imparted through digital medium. You will appreciate that even our costs are, in fact, increasing, exponentially, due to the increased cleaning and sanitisation efforts, unbudgeted expenses on training and development, technical infrastructure and on integrating new platforms and software, investment in machines /equipment for dealing with COVID – 19 situations, being prepared for virtual Kinder Garten , physical Kinder Garten and a hybrid of the two since the timeline of this pandemic situation is unpredictable, corresponding investments and expenses incurred as any of the three possibilities may become operational at any time during the year, human resource, and many other areas. **It is a matter of common knowledge that during this pandemic situation parents have incurred additional expenses even at their homes towards sanitisation etc which is unavoidable.** You will appreciate that the acquisition of certain technological tools such as laptops including expenses towards the internet etc is for the advantage of your child and we do not stand to gain or derive any benefit out of the same. You will appreciate that this pandemic being an extraordinary situation calls for extraordinary measures in terms of time/money/energy/out of box planning etc. We all are incurring additional costs, spending more time/effort/energy than before for which no one can be blamed or held responsible/accountable as it emanates from an unknown and unavoidable situation which has engulfed the entire world.

23. We do appreciate that this pandemic situation has cast some additional responsibilities towards your child but we may add that as parents even pre COVID -19 situation your involvement was discernible. Educators, parents and learners across the globe are dealing with the unique situation that we find ourselves in. This pandemic has affected us all in unexpected and surprising ways.

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24. We are aware that getting used to the new normal with established routines thrown into complete disarray hasn't been easy at all.
25. It will neither be fair nor proper to compare a regular classroom to a virtual classroom and migrating to online / virtual classroom / online learning has not been easy yet online learning, both synchronous and asynchronous, has been made available to each student at no additional cost.
26. Our teams have sacrificed their weekends and worked late into the night to make this happen.
27. In spite of recurring challenges we remained committed to excellence. Given the current pandemic situation and considering our vast experience and expertise, we feel we are very well equipped to determine the perfect balance of various platforms and mediums at every stage for our learners.
28. We have taken all decisions keeping in mind the best interests of each age group. As parents, you may differ with our view on what is best for your child and we respect your individual opinion, however considering the entire scenario we can only advise you to treat every format of learning with the respect and seriousness it deserves and to support our learners through these unprecedented times with an open mind. The Kinder Garten maintains its right to decide what is in the best interest of the child as per their age. As we always believe that the Kinder Garten, family and child are in a three-tier continuous developmental process and hence they should work in unison for the development of the child. We request you render your support in this journey of education.

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29. It has also come to our notice that few Parents/ Associations having vested interest are sending WhatsApp message that Hon'ble Supreme Court and Bombay High Court have given directions regarding non collection of Fee or fee reduction. It may be noted that no such directions have been given either by Hon'ble Supreme Court or Bombay High Court about non collection of Fee/fee reduction. Parents are requested not to be carried away by such false messages. The Hon'ble Supreme Court vide its order dated 10-7-20 in Writ Petition(s)(Civil) No(s).622/2020 in the case of Sushil Sharma has refused to entertain plea of parents seeking waiver of Kinder Garten fees during lockdown and consequently the Petitioner has withdrawn the Petition. We may further add that the GR dated 8th May, 2020 issued by the State Govt stipulating that last year's fees etc should be charged was challenged by the Associations of Schools and others and the Honourable High Court vide its order dated 26th June, 2020 passed in WP-ASDB-LD-VC-100/20 to 103/2020 has stayed the GR dated 8th May, 2020. Thus institutions can charge the notified increased fees, and parents are bound to pay it.
30. We take this opportunity to thank the large number of parents who have shown their continued support and appreciation for the Kinder Garten by sending us encouraging messages/emails. It is heartening to note that you have taken the time to understand, recognise and appreciate the efforts put in by each member of the Kinder Garten team in ensuring that the interest of our children is held paramount, even amid a pandemic. The team has indeed come together fabulously, worked through severely inhibiting circumstances and ensured uninterrupted offline and online learning. Each email and message praising the hybrid education, expressing unconditional support etc has not only upheld but boosted the morale of our entire team and we urge you to continue to maintain this morale as we look forward to another year of delivering nothing but the best of learning experiences for our children.

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31. We request parents to stick to the payment schedule so as to help us in our financial commitments, of which we have given you an idea in the previous paragraphs.
32. You will appreciate that as an unaided Kinder Garten our primary and only source of revenue is fees. Thus despite increased costs as above we have not increased the fees which is a challenging time for the Kinder Garten - but we are MANAGING, not because we have to - but because we WANT to - in view of the current situation and the fact that our expenses are continuing. Having reiterated our costs, and detailed our expenses, we hope you understand that there is absolutely no scope for provision of fee reduction.

Let us all work together so that the long journey ahead of us is spent in a meaningful and constructive manner and allow the Kinder Garten team to focus on further enhancing the programme through innovative and effective learning methods.

We look forward to your understanding in this matter and co-operate with the Kinder Garten and the management in ensuring that the children continue to enjoy their learning and grow with us.

Mishra Nanda Kte

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