

## Admit special kids in selected schools: HDR official



CHANDIGARH: Taking note of shortage of special educators in government schools that has left special children in the lurch, HDR ministry's secretary for school education and literacy Rina Ray has recommended admission of these children in selected schools instead of just any school.

Ray was in the city recently to announce selection of UT for an international test - Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) - held after every three years.

It is a worldwide study, which had been undertaken by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in member and non-member nations since 2000.

TOI had earlier reported that Chandigarh lacked special teachers, also known as resource teachers, in government schools. The education department had even sent a proposal to recruit 194 resource teachers in December 2017. But the same is yet to be approved by the ministry of home affairs.

The city has around 5,000 children with special needs enrolled in government schools. The number also includes children who are getting home schooling. But, there are only 25 resource teachers for them. These teachers too were provided by Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), which now have been merged under one head 'Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan'.

Ray said she was aware about the lack of special educators and had even made a suggestion to the UT regarding the same. She said, "I feel that since the number of differently abled students in Chandigarh is not huge, we could shift them to 10 cluster government schools in the initial phase. As Chandigarh is not too big, the education department can provide transport for these children. This way, it would be easier to manage needs of special children."

She said now the focus is shifting from having disabled students in every school to have them in select schools.

"Earlier it was said that disabled children should be admitted in every school under inclusive education. But now we are told that instead of one kid and one teacher in a school, it is better to keep students together in a particular school which will boost their morale. For instance, a child if alone in school won't have anyone to communicate in sign language. But they will feel good in a group," Ray said.

Asked about the implementation of the suggestion given by Ray, the education secretary, UT Chandigarh, said, "We will have to take appropriate measures in this regard. I will call the officers and discuss the strategy."