

Want admission to Class 11 in Chandigarh? Dial helpline

A helpline for students seeking admission to Class 11 in this city's highly sought after government schools is turning out to be a big hit.

The helpline - made up of 15 phone numbers - was started this month by Chandigarh's education department and are getting scores of calls every day from students and parents. Over 10,000 seats are available in the science, commerce, humanities and vocational streams in the 35 government schools here.

Saroj Mittal, assistant director (vocational education), told IANS: 'This is the first time we have started an admission helpline. It was much needed as every year there were cases of misunderstanding among students and parents. This is our step to streamline the education system.'

Under the education system here, those passing out of Class 10 have to take admission afresh in Class 11 in the case of government schools.

Unlike the usual image of state-run schools in India, many of the ones in Chandigarh are not only sought after by students from the city but also by those from Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh.

These schools are well known because of their results and overall environment. The merit list cut-off in most courses is above 85 percent.

Fifteen senior lecturers and principals of various government schools are facilitating the work of the admissions helpline. Their phone numbers have been published in the prospectus, which is common to all the government schools here.

Raghu Sharma, who was seeking admission to the science stream in Class 11, said every day admission procedures seemed to get more complicated and therefore the helpline was the need of the hour.

Besides local calls, the helpline is also receiving calls from students and parents from states like Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and New Delhi. The helpline remains open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. every day.

'On an average I am attending around 50-60 queries every day,' said Preeti, a facilitator appointed by the education department.

'Earlier many students used to ask us how to fill up the admission form and which documents to attach. But now most queries on the helplines relate to cut-off percentages in various streams.'

Another helpline counsellor said: 'Many parents are calling as they have a difference of opinion with their children on the choice of course.'

Answers are provided on the helpline for issues like number of seats, eligibility criteria, fee structure, expected cut-off marks, reserved seats, available subject combination and dates of admission.

'Right from the first day there has been a tremendous response. Even after 8 p.m., worried parents and students keep calling. The majority of them ask about the scope of vocational courses that many schools are offering,' said Sunil Kumar, principal of Government Model Senior Secondary School in Sector 22.

Earlier, during examinations, another helpline was started by the education department, which turned out to be a phenomenal success.

'Most of the calls I am getting are from parents as they seem to be more worried than their wards. The frequency of calls increases after 5 p.m. as most working parents get over with their work around that time,' added Preeti.

Alkesh Sharma (© IANS / India eNews)