

## Deccan Herald

### Shortage of teachers challenge govt's Chunauti scheme

There are currently 16,000 unfilled vacancies for teachers in Delhi government schools. If guest teachers are not included, the figure mounts to 28,000.

Experts say the shortage can be a roadblock to the scheme which aims to curb dropouts and improve learning levels from class 6 to 9.

“Implementing Chunauti when there is a shortage of teachers, especially in overcrowded schools, is actually a 'chunauti' (challenge),” said a school official from Sarvodaya Bal Vidyalaya in Mori Gate.

While many schools have welcomed the scheme, they have cautioned that such a huge shortage of teachers may not bring the desired results. For some subjects like English, which a problem for most students, there is an acute shortage of teachers at many schools.

“We have more than 20 vacant posts in this school. The students, especially in the Vishwas group, have to sit idle for some periods like English and Science. If this problem is not solved, the purpose of this scheme may be defeated,” said the principal of a west Delhi school.

A school official at Government Senior Secondary School in Dwarka, who did not wish to be identified, said the number of sections in each class increased when students were divided according to learning levels. This means more teachers are now needed.

Under the scheme, the students are divided into three groups: Pratibha (who can read and write passages from their textbook and do basic math), Nishtha (who have scored below 33 per cent in their previous class and struggle in reading and writing), and Vishwas (who have failed class 9 twice or more).

“When the scheme was started, we were short of 10 teachers. We wrote to the district authorities several times and now some have been recruited. There are still some vacancies,” the school official said.

The Delhi government's Education Department is aware of the problem. It is currently busy chalking out a policy to find a solution.

The DoE's Planning Division is brainstorming on decentralising the recruitment of teachers and giving powers to principals to recruit them locally.

“The appointment of regular teachers is a long process so the department is thinking what other policy can be adopted,” an official said.

The suggested recruitment by principals would be on contract – a process different from both regular teachers as well as ‘guest teachers’.

School principals say it will be a good move.

“In Kendra Vidyalayas, the principals have the authority to recruit teachers which helps them deal with vacancies very swiftly, unlike in government schools where it is a centralised process,” said a school principal.