

Schools with a difference - what's in it for your child?

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Executive Summary: Residential schools which not only provide academic education, but also develop other aspects of children are gaining popularity. Sahyadri School and Rishi Valley School are two such schools in the country, which admit children from class 4 onwards. While these schools can be good for your child's development, you should understand if your child is comfortable with this. Involve your spouse in making the decision if this school is good for your children.

School life is the best for most of us. This is when the child has no responsibility and has no worry about his future. And if this is further enriched by doing something more than mere text book study, then it is all the more better! There are schools in the country, which promote independent thinking in children and provide all round development. Some of our clients have been asking us to research on such unconventional schools and if it is a wise choice for their kids. Here, we explore features of two such schools in the country - Sahyadri School in Pune and Rishi Valley School in Madanapalle.

Sahyadri School - This school is located in Rajgurunagar near Pune and founded by J.Krishnamurti. The school started in 1995 and aims on the growth of children on all counts - academic, extracurricular and development of moral values. The class strength is small compared to normal schools, and as a result, the teacher student ratio is also low. This ensures better attention to each kid.

- **Academics:** The school is for children between class 4 and class 12. Classes 4 to 6 is termed as junior school, where the children are exposed to projects, field-visits, camps, nature-study, drama, story-telling and writing. Classes 7 and 8 are termed as middle school years and students learn concepts through workshops, outdoor activities, excursions and craftwork. Communication skills are honed as children are encouraged to discuss various topics in open houses and class meetings. The senior school programme is for students in classes 9 and 10, where the children are given responsibility for various activities in the school like planning and organizing school events. Class 10 exams are under the ICSE board. Students are given the option to choose a wide variety of subjects like Music, Fine Arts, Physical Education, Environmental Science, Commercial Studies, Economics Applications, and Computer Science Applications, including compulsory subjects offered in traditional schools. Class 11 students are required to choose electives offered by the school.
- **Extra-curricular activities:** It is said that the talent in an individual is best spotted when he is young. Sahyadri School gives importance to art education and physical education. There is a separate Art complex which provides for learning different forms of art and craft, music and dance. Students in classes 4 to 8 receive formal training in classical music. Similarly, they also attend dance classes, either in Indian or Western folk dances. Extra classes in music and

dance are offered to interested students in the form of evening hobby classes. Physical education is also encouraged, as a part of the normal schedule, with the campus offering a wide variety of games including football, basketball, cricket, tennis, badminton, hockey, softball, volleyball, throw ball, handball and table tennis. There is a morning exercise programme and periodically hikes, treks and outdoor camps are organized. Students are also taken to excursions to understand environmental issues and the heritage of the country. In the weekends, children can participate in informal clubs and activities depending on their interest, ranging from science to films, writing to theatre and from photography to cooking. Children are also taught moral values such as kindness and mutual respect.

- **Admission and Fees:** Admission to the school can be obtained in the classes 4 to 7 and in class 11. The admission forms are available from October 1st every year. While interviews for classes 4 to 7 will be held between January and March, class 11 students are interviewed in early April. One can purchase the application form by paying Rs. 500 and completed applications can be sent back to the school. The fee structure can be accessed on the school website, by clicking [here](#).

Rishi Valley School - The Rishi Valley school is located in Madanapalle in Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh and is modelled on the basis of J.Krishnamurti's philosophy. There are 360 boarding students and sixty faculty members in the school.

- **Academics:** The Junior and Middle school has 190 students in classes 4 to 8 (Junior school comprises of classes 4 to 6, while middle school comprises of classes 7 and 8). Students of both the junior school and the middle school are in the same complex and share the facilities. Class strength is only 20 to 25 students. Students are allowed to visit different parts of the campus, villages and other outdoor activities to strengthen learning skills. In the middle school, students are taught using audio visual media, teacher designed material and field trips, in addition to classroom teaching. While the junior school has basic subjects like English, languages, mathematics and environmental studies, the middle school has subjects such as history, geography and science as well. The senior school with 160 students comprises of classes 9 to 12 and is affiliated to the ICSE and ISC boards. The senior school is in a separate complex within the campus. In the senior school, students are given more awareness of the world and are developed as responsible and sensitive human beings. Classes 11 and 12 form a separate programme, and students will need to apply as new candidates in class 11. Students will need to choose four subjects as electives and the study combinations are a part of Science, Humanities and Business Studies.
- **Extra-curricular activities:** The school encourages all forms of constructive extra-curricular activities. In the middle school, students are exposed to different forms of arts and crafts, sports, drama and music. Research projects in different areas, involvement in rural work and environment related work are also encouraged. In the senior school, in addition to these activities, students are also exposed to other disciplines such as journalism, astronomy, afforestation, rural health, rural education and different forms of culture classes. Activities such as bird watching, different forms of sports and games and various aspects of music and dance are a regular part of the curriculum.

- **Admission:** The application form can be downloaded from the school website by clicking [here](#). The filled in application forms should be sent to the school with a demand draft for Rs. 500 by December. The dates and procedure of application may vary for every academic year and it is best to contact the school for the details.

Schools like Sahyadri and Rishi Valley promise an all-round development for the child. They also help the child to become independent and face the world. However, the drawback is that the child is away from home. Some children may be emotionally affected because of this and may feel neglected. You must adopt a balanced view while making your decision of sending your kid to such a school and this depends on your individual situation. You must also remember to involve your spouse while deciding if such schools are good for your children.

All the information given above is from the respective websites of the schools. It is recommended that you contact the school for current details or find out more information by visiting the website of [Sahyadri School](#) and [Rishi Valley School](#).

Have you heard about any of these schools? What is your view on them? Will you admit your child to such a school? Let us know.