

Bright Sparks – Chiswick’s charity helping to educate children from the slums of India

Dr P Singh

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The initial spark for Bright Sparks came in 2001 when a group of women working together in the Punjab in the north of India, decided to provide an education for ten local children involved in child labour.



Bright Sparks School was set up in 2002 by Gail Edwards and Nimrat Kaur and has grown to become an international charity - registered in India, England and Wales, and based in Chiswick, England.

The school is a happy and energetic learning environment for over 100 children, who receive a flexible and supportive education, enabling them to

learn at a level which suits them.

The children live with their parents in a slum on the outskirts of Mohali in Punjab, in illegal settlements that could be demolished by the government at any time, and in unsanitary conditions without running water. Often, a whole family shares one room.

Seeing the children flourish makes Bright Sparks a very worthwhile and fulfilling experience for everyone involved.

Many of the children are involved in child labour, some as young as eight years old working to support their families, and so have fallen through the gaps of the normal schooling process.



Many of the families belong to government recognised ‘scheduled castes’ - the lowest castes in Hindu society, and are typically rural migrant families from the poorer rural states of India.

The children’s parents move to Mohali to seek employment, but being illiterate they work mostly as unskilled workers.

Bright Sparks enables children to spend time with their friends and have space and time away from the harsh environment they live and work in, making the school a very important part of their lives.

Bright Sparks gives the children a potential way out of poverty, an opportunity to learn and progress, earn a higher income when they are old enough and so transform their lives.

The school’s staff work closely with the children’s



families and support them where possible with difficulties that may stop their children from coming to school. These can include paying for the loss of a child's wage, providing medication, transport costs to hospital and, on occasions, giving food parcels to families.

It recognises that the best way to make long-lasting changes is to work in partnership with local people and services to meet the needs of the children coming to school each day.

£10,000 a year is needed to maintain and run the school. With continued support the school hopes it will employ more teachers to deliver education and support for older children and increase the capacity of the school further.

A small donation goes a long way

All donations contribute to the running costs and future development of the charity. Even a small amount can make a big change.

£5 a month will enable the school to buy computers and books providing skills that could be the difference between a job with prospects or a life lived hand-to-mouth.

£10 a month will provide an education for a child or young person who will often be the first family member able to read and write.

£25 a month will pay for 80 hours of class tutoring a month.

£35 a month will pay for a computer teacher.

To make a donation please contact the charity via its UK website

<http://www.brightsparks.org/donate.htm> or email
Chairperson: Sharon O'Connor
[shazaoconnor@gmail.com] or Secretary: Tim
Burley [tim@brightsparks.org]

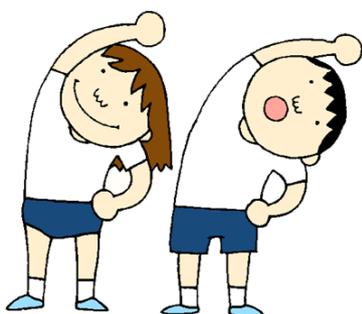
Preeti studied at Bright Sparks for five years and went on to further study. She later started her own stitching service at her home making Punjabi suits for local people and also ran an afternoon tutoring service from her home for children. 'Bright Sparks has made my life better; otherwise I would have to do work like my mother.'

Puneet also attended Bright Sparks. He became a car mechanic's apprentice.

Bright Sparks; 86 Grove Park Terrace; London; W4 3JJ www.brightsparks.org

<https://www.facebook.com/Bright-Sparks-School-India-144612372273941/>

Bright Sparks is a registered charity in England and Wales. Charities Commission number 1126402



Get fit and donate: try a yogaplusexercise class in Chiswick for £5 (all donated to Bright Sparks). Send an email via www.yogaplusexercise.weebly.com, or text Dr Singh on 07800 862499 and quote 'Bright Sparks' Booking essential. See website for terms and conditions.