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65% schools in PMC limits not RTE-compliant, says survey

About 65 per cent schools in the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) limits do not comply with six important provisions mandated in the Right to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009. These include school building, toilets, drinking water, ramps, boundary wall and separate room for head teacher. A survey conducted by Action for Rights of Children (ARC), a non-governmental organisation based in the city, has come out with the finding.

The ARC study of District Information System of Education (DISE) data 2011-12 relating to 336 government schools in PMC area says only 11.3 per cent of the lower primary schools and 67 per cent of the upper primary schools were RTE-compliant with respect to teacher-pupil ratio of one teacher for every 30 students.

"If extraordinary progress was made on the physical facilities front in 2012-13, more than 80 per cent of all schools would still not be RTE-compliant in terms of facilities and teachers by now," says Priya Kulkarni, a member of the ARC.

The survey has also found that while the Maharashtra State Commission for the Protection of Child Rights, mandated by RTE for monitoring and other functions, has been constituted, it has not met since December 2011. The State Advisory Council, too, has not been constituted for effective implementation of RTE, says the survey.

The ARC has recommended setting up of a special redressal grievance cell in the city, block, district and state levels for implementation of the RTE Act.

"Recently, the state government decided to extend the range of elementary classes from Class VIII. However, its implementation has not begun in Pune city and it is still unclear if it has begun anywhere else," says Anjali Bapat. "As per the Act, it is mandatory for all schools to form school management committees (SMC). The survey found that though all schools have formed the committee, they are not functional," she adds.

The survey revealed that 66 per cent of the SMC members were unaware of their responsibilities.