



BibleLands

.....Overseas Partner Fact Sheet..... The SIRA School

How it all started

Unlike the special needs facilities offered in the UK, the Palestinian education system has no such provision. Therefore, in 1992, the Swedish International Relief Association (SIRA) opened a school in Bethlehem, to help children with learning difficulties.

The school's original aim was to help those who had fallen behind in their mainstream education with basic literacy skills. Over the years, the programme has developed and the school now offers special needs education, to a very high standard. It is the only school of its kind across the West Bank.

Current Activities

The SIRA School has up to 70 students, aged between 6 – 16 years, all of whom have learning difficulties. Classes, which are arranged by age and ability level, have no more than ten children, and this high staff-to-pupil ratio enables individual academic plans to be set and specific needs to be addressed.

The reasons for the student's problems in their mainstream education are varied. Some have health issues, some lack support or help at home, and others have learning disabilities, such as dyslexia. The school aims to reintegrate its pupils back into mainstream education after an average of 3 years, although this depends on each individual child.

Early intervention is key and many of the students, if they receive the necessary support early enough, are able to make the transition back to mainstream education relatively easily.

The school recently started to offer workshops and resources to teachers in local mainstream schools. It is hoped that this training will help teachers in those schools to recognise students' special needs earlier, enabling them to be helped within the classroom setting, rather than simply falling behind and perhaps dropping out of school altogether.

This programme will allow the SIRA School's work to reach many more students than they can help through their education programme in Bethlehem alone.

Following a serious accident, Fadi was unable to keep up with the work at his previous school, and soon fell behind. He began attending the SIRA School where, through caring teaching, his abilities were redeveloped. He quickly reached the point where he felt the same as others, and he hopes to return to his old school soon.



Key facts

- Founded: 1992
- Location: Bethlehem, Holy Land
- First Grant from BibleLands: 2004
- BibleLands' Grant: £15,000 p.a.

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