

BSAI Workshop on Pastoral Care – A Report

The BSAI Workshop on Pastoral Care focused on strengthening the philosophy, operational framework, safeguarding mechanisms, and emotional intelligence required in modern residential schools. The workshop brought together eminent educators and professionals from leading institutions who shared valuable insights on creating safe, nurturing, and student-centric boarding environments.

I. Philosophy of the Residential Model

“Education Beyond the Classroom”

Session by Dr. Jagpreet Singh

Headmaster, The Doon School

The workshop commenced with an insightful keynote session by Dr. Jagpreet Singh, who emphasized that residential education extends far beyond academics and classroom instruction. He encouraged educators to move from the role of mere supervisors to “passionate pastoralists” dedicated to the holistic growth of every child.

A key highlight of the session was the understanding that nearly 80% of learning in a residential environment happens through the hidden curriculum, including sportsmanship, leadership opportunities, co-curricular engagement, and community living. Dr. Singh stressed the importance of the principle of *In Loco Parentis*, urging educators to treat every student with the same care and concern as their own children. He emphasized that for students to truly flourish, the boarding house must feel like their first home rather than a substitute environment.

Another important takeaway was the principle of “correct in private, praise in public.” Public criticism can lead to resentment and emotional withdrawal, whereas public appreciation builds confidence, belongingness, and the social validation sought by Gen Z and Gen Alpha learners.

II. Operational Dynamics & Bonding

“The Human Element in House Management”

Session by Ms. Sapna Sukul

Chief Operating Officer, BSAI

Ms. Sapna Sukul focused on the operational challenges and human dynamics involved in residential school management. She highlighted that Housemasters and Wardens form the “connective tissue” of a boarding school and play a crucial role in ensuring stability, belongingness, and emotional security among students.

Through interactive activities and group engagement exercises, participants experienced how social bonding can be intentionally cultivated. The session demonstrated that Housemasters must actively encourage inclusivity and healthy peer relationships to prevent cliques, isolation, and social disconnect within boarding houses.

The discussion also included case-based learning drawn from real residential scenarios, helping participants connect theoretical understanding with the practical realities and day-to-day responsibilities of residential life management.

III. Navigating the Gen Z & Gen Alpha Landscape

“Understanding the Person Behind the Student”

Session by Mr. Vinay Pande

Director – Professional Development, BSAI

Mr. Vinay Pande led a thought-provoking session on understanding the emotional and social realities of today's students. The session explored the unique vulnerabilities and behavioural patterns of Gen Z and Gen Alpha learners.

Among the major concerns identified were homesickness, time management challenges, substance abuse risks, body shaming, and the impact of negative labeling. Mr. Pande emphasized that these areas require proactive observation, empathy, and timely intervention from educators and residential staff.

The discussion also reflected on the long-term emotional and psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children. Increased exposure to family stress, digital dependency, and adult emotional conflicts has significantly altered the emotional baseline of students, resulting in a heightened need for validation, emotional support, and reassurance.

A major professional takeaway from the session was the importance of documentation. Participants were advised that all communication with parents, staff, and students must be properly recorded, reinforcing the principle that “if it isn't documented, it didn't happen.”

IV. Safeguarding, Legal Frameworks & Accountability

“Zero Tolerance and Absolute Vigilance”

Session by Ms. Sunaina Tourangbam

Director, National Council for School Safety, Children's Rights & Protection

The safeguarding session focused on the legal, ethical, and professional responsibilities associated with child protection in schools.

Detailed guidance was provided on statutory compliance under the POCSO Act and the Juvenile Justice Act. Participants were reminded that reporting cases related to child safety is not optional but a legal obligation, irrespective of parental pressure or attempts to suppress incidents.

The session further emphasized the necessity of having active Child Safety Committees in every school, comprising the Principal, administrative representatives, counsellors, and other responsible stakeholders.

Special attention was given to understanding different forms of bullying, including verbal, social, psychological, and cyberbullying. Schools were encouraged to establish clear escalation protocols to help staff identify when peer conflicts evolve into serious safety concerns requiring formal intervention.

An important observation made during the session was that many children do not openly report abuse or distress. Therefore, educators and Housemasters must remain vigilant toward behavioural indicators such as sudden withdrawal, declining academic performance, or noticeable emotional changes.

V. Conflict Resolution & Emotional Intelligence

“Calm, Connect, and Resolve”

Session by Ms. Monisha Dutta

Director, The Doon Girls' School

The concluding session on Day 1 focused on conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, and managing the relationship between schools, students, and parents.

The central message of the session was to “respond to the emotion, not just the behavior.” Participants learned that difficult behaviour from students or parents often reflects deeper emotional concerns, fears, or unmet needs.

With Gen Alpha students experiencing emotional sensitivity at increasingly younger ages, educators were encouraged to remain calm, structured, empathetic, and student-focused in all interactions. The session highlighted the importance of maintaining emotional balance while ensuring discipline and accountability.

Practical self-care techniques such as deep breathing, reflection, and identifying one’s “locus of control” were also introduced to help educators manage stress, prevent burnout, and sustain the patience and emotional resilience necessary for effective pastoral care.

VI. Mental Health & Emotional Awareness

“Self-Regulation and Emotional Balance in Residential Life”

Session by Ms. Monisha Dutta

Director, The Doon Girls' School

Ms. Monisha Dutta conducted the concluding session on “Mental Health,” focusing on emotional awareness, self-regulation, and personal well-being in residential life. The session emphasized the importance of understanding and managing one’s emotions in order to maintain balance and effectiveness in both personal and professional responsibilities.

She began by introducing the concept of mood tracking and encouraged participants to observe and record their emotions from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., along with the situations that influenced those feelings. This reflective activity highlighted how frequently individuals overlook their own emotional well-being amidst daily duties and responsibilities.

A key takeaway from the session was that awareness is the first step toward positive change. Ms. Dutta emphasized that while individuals may not always have the power to change their family circumstances, workplace environment, or external challenges, they always have the ability to change themselves and their responses.

The session also introduced practical strategies for emotional wellness, including maintaining a gratitude journal, engaging in self-reflection before bedtime, and consciously monitoring thoughts and reactions. Participants were encouraged to establish healthy emotional and physical boundaries, avoid emotional violations, and identify personal triggers that may lead to stress or imbalance.

Quoting the idea that “Life is 10% what happens to us and 90% how we respond to it,” Ms. Dutta encouraged participants to consciously replace one negative thought with three positive thoughts and actively work toward emotional calmness and stability.

The session concluded with a powerful message on self-control, emotional resilience, balanced thinking, and the importance of responding responsibly and mindfully to challenges in residential school life.

Conclusion

The BSAI Workshop on Pastoral Care provided a comprehensive understanding of modern residential education, emphasizing student well-being, safeguarding, emotional intelligence, and effective pastoral care. The sessions reinforced the importance of empathy, vigilance, structured systems, and proactive communication in creating a safe and supportive residential environment where students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.