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Our Bureau

Children learning at the Intel Computer Club House workshop in Bangalore.

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THE Intel Computer Clubhouse, in association with the Children's Lovecastle's Trust (CLT), has set up an invention workshop in Jakkur, near Bangalore.

The workshop offers children of the local government school the opportunity to use technology to enable learning based on the premise that children learn better by building or designing and experimenting.

According to Ms Bhagya Rangachar, CLT Trustee, "the learning centre supplements learning through design experience and children from over eight surrounding villages can use facilities and technology to work on projects, creative pursuits and learn about the world around them.

"We have about 200 children coming in each day and the projects and activities are the children's own ideas. The clubhouse has mentors who guide them when and where necessary but the activities are the children's own," she said.

With four modules that enable learning, the clubhouse helps the children organise activities around the themes. For instance, the 'Nature and Me' module helps understand the environment, alternative agriculture techniques and processes and their viability and uses. The 'My Village' module has a civic club while the 'I can touch the sky' encompasses science projects where children learn about rainwater harvesting etc.

Projects in the 'I hear my voice' module focus on creating online magazines with music, developing videos, interacting with other students via video-conference to develop learning materials and study aids.

"We have been given software that we have mapped to certain projects," Ms Rangachar said. "When a child works on a certain project, he uses the software. That way, these children use technology for various activities without having to learn about hardware and software or writing programs. They learn the power of technology and how it can change lives."

For instance, with the participation of the University of Agriculture Sciences, the clubhouse members are planning to implement a rainwater harvesting programme. The activities of the club are centred around the fact that learning becomes fun when the children have a design experience. The activities are not teacher-driven. "We often have mentor-member relationships - especially considering that the children may not have any or any suitable mentor in their homes or villages. We focus on making education fun for underserved youth in this community," Ms Rangachar said.

The Bangalore clubhouse is the 61st Intel Computer clubhouse in the world and the second in the country, according to an Intel spokesperson. The concept was developed in partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MIT Media Lab and the Computer Clubhouse Network was established in 2000.