

Emirates Airline Foundation continued supporting autistic children even during pandemic

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Dhaka: With World, Autism Awareness Day is observed on April 2 amid a gradually worsening worldwide Covid-19 pandemic situation. The 2020 school closures were particularly disruptive to children on the autism spectrum who thrive on routine and stability.

Among all challenges of the pandemic, children at the new Safe Centre, supported by Emirates Airline Foundation, typically received in-person instruction and therapy five days a week, and the lockdown meant a disruption to those personalised interactions. The Safe Centre team was on hand to support parents, providing online instruction to children where possible and guiding parents with practical, safe strategies and activities to help meet the sensory and motor needs of their children while at home.

When it was time to come back to Safe Centre, the team helped transition the children to return to their educational settings successfully with a special two-month programme. The programme included dividing students into different

groups, focusing on one-to-one activities, as well as direct teaching, modelling and practising routines and behaviours to alleviate student anxiety as they returned to their educational settings.

The school is currently supporting 52 students on the autism spectrum, facilitating classes and sessions for four students per classroom in accordance with Covid-19 precautionary measures. All safety measures and hygiene standards continue to be adhered to in the classrooms and across the Safe Centre facilities.

Established in 2010, the Safe Centre for Autism is a not-for-profit, special education centre in the UAE that caters for students who struggle with behavioural or developmental difficulties, autism, speech and language delays, and sensory deficits. The Emirates Airline Foundation has been supporting Safe Centre since 2012, and more recently helped fund its new 20,000 square foot state-of-the-art facilities to accommodate and support more than 100 children. Safe Centre moved into its new facility in January 2019, after construction was completed on the new building.

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