



DOVESTONE LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

ANNUAL REPORT

FOR

1 October 2022 - 30 September 2023

Reference and Administrative Information

Company Name: Dovestone Learning Partnership (DLP)

Company Registration Number: 10866723

Registered Office: Saddleworth School
High Street
Uppermill
Oldham
OL3 6BU

Trustees:

Michala Uttley	Christ Church, Denshaw, CE Primary School
Rebecca Lee	Christ Church, Denshaw, CE Primary School
Rachael Swaby	Delph Primary School
Mark Hopkins (Chair)	Delph Primary School
Sarah Newton	Diggle Primary School
Mike Rea	Diggle Primary School
Rebecca Hill	Friezland Primary School
Jane Goodwin	Friezland Primary School
Vanessa Payne	Knowsley Junior School
Hannah Jeffares	Knowsley Junior School
Mike Anderson	Saddleworth School
Alice Rea	Saddleworth High School
Sarah Butterworth (Vice Chair)	St Agnes CE Primary School
Sue Gittins	St Agnes CE Primary School
Suzanne Hall	St Mary's, Greenfield, CE Primary School
Ruth Broadhurst	St Mary's, Greenfield, CE Primary School
James Whittaker	St Thomas', Leesfield, CE Primary School
Rebecca Ashton	St Thomas', Leesfield, CE Primary School
Jayne Clarke	Oldham Sixth Form College
Vacancy	Community Representative
Vacancy	Community Representative
Tony Shepherd	Oldham LA

Resignations:

Sue Callaghan	Christ Church, Denshaw CE Primary School
Alison Leigh	Delph Primary School
Mark Rahn	St Mary's, Greenfield CE Primary School
Scot Chapman	Community Representative

We welcomed Michala Uttley, the new head of Christ Church, Denshaw CE primary School, Rachael Swaby moved headships from Friezland Primary School to Delph Primary School and Rebecca Hill became the Acting Head of Friezland Primary School. Ruth Broadhurst took over the Chair of St Mary's, Greenfield CE Primary School Governing Board.

Members of the Trust body are appointed in line with the Memorandum and Articles of Association, with due regard to statutory guidance for Trusts which are appointing bodies for schools.

Solicitors:

Brownejacobson
Mowbray House
Castle Meadow Road
Nottingham
NG2 1BJ

Accountants:

Jackson, Brierley Harthan Ltd
43 High Street
Uppermill
Oldham
OL3 6HS

Auditors:

N/A

The Trustees, who are also Directors of Dovestone Learning Partnership for the purposes of company law, present their annual report for the fifth year of operation which ended 30 September 2023.

Introduction

The Dovestone Learning Partnership was established in October 2017 by eight primary schools and one secondary school based in the Saddleworth and Lees area of Oldham Local Authority. They are:

Christ Church, Denshaw, CE Primary School
Delph Primary School
Diggle Primary School
Friezland Primary School
Knowsley Junior School
Saddleworth High School
St Agnes CE Primary School
St Mary's, Greenfield, CE Primary School
St Thomas', Leesfield, CE Primary School

This is a legal arrangement between the schools with Delph and Diggle Primary and Knowsley Junior Schools changing their status to foundation schools to establish the Trust. In May 2023 Friezland Primary School also became a Foundation School and full member of the Dovestone Learning Partnership. All the schools believe that by working together we can help improve the outcomes for the pupils. Whilst each school retains its own identity and ethos, the schools share the co-operative values of Self-help, Self-responsibility, Democracy, Equality, Solidarity and the Ethical Values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others. Together we face many similar challenges in relation to finance, recruitment and retention of staff, Ofsted, school outcomes, youth mental health etc. Together we work collaboratively for the benefit of all the school communities involved.

Structure Governance and Management

The Dovestone Learning Partnership is a Co-operative Trust created under the auspices of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and uses a DfE approved model Memorandum and Articles of Association. The company was incorporated and gained charitable status on 14 July 2017. The charity was set out to administer and manage the property and other assets of the charity, known as the Dovestone Learning Partnership, for the public benefit.

Role of the Trustees

There are two trustees per school, which is generally, though not in all cases, the Head teacher and Chair of Governors, together with representatives from other organisations that can support the work of the DLP. All the Trustees are familiar with the work of the DLP and visit the schools. New Trustees are introduced to our work by existing Trustees.

Risk Management:

The Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed, and continue to monitor the arrangements and systems in place, to mitigate those risks. Procedures are in place regarding health and safety of staff, pupils and visitors to the schools of the Trust. The Trustees seek appropriate advice, for example, through their insurers, solicitors, Unions and Local Authority. Risk assessments continue to be reviewed and updated according to need.

Organisational Structure:

The Dovestone Learning Partnership has a Trustee Board of 22 with two current vacancies for community representatives. The Board, who meet a minimum of three times each year, are responsible for the strategic direction and policy of the partnership. The Chair and Vice Chair rotate annually with a Chair of Governors and a Headteacher alternating taking on the role. A Memorandum of Understanding is in place and the day to day responsibility for the organisation rests with the Steering Group of Headteachers of the schools within the Trust. The Steering Group is responsible to the Trust Board and holds regular meetings to ensure the Trust deliver the services specified and the key objectives are met. The Steering Group has established a number of working parties, networks and task groups to meet the DLP priorities. The Chairs of Governors of the DLP schools have also established a network.

During 2022-23 the Trust Board has met face to face on three occasions. Heads and Chairs have also been in regular contact. Heads had continued to meet on a monthly basis and meetings of the working parties and networks have been held. Action plans have been updated to reflect the current context and review the Partnership's priorities.

Trust Objectives:

- a) To enable distinctive, aspirational schools
- b) To encourage innovation and inspired decision making
- c) To build capacity, resilience and determination
- d) To develop strong leadership, governance and accountability
- e) To strengthen cross-phase working and transition
- f) To enable wider opportunities for all within the school community and beyond
- g) To share expertise and best practice across our schools
- h) To provide exciting and relevant CPD opportunities for staff
- i) To support the well-being of pupils, staff and wider school community
- j) To deliver long term sustainability through efficiencies and savings, that release resources to improve the rate of progress for all pupils

Key Achievements:

As the schools continue to recover from the impact of the pandemic, new challenges became apparent with the cost of living crisis and the increase in SEND and child mental health issues. DLP priorities have been updated accordingly to support schools in meeting these challenges.

Working Parties:

a) School Improvement

The externally-led Peer Reviews were reinstated this year with Julie Stevens from the Local Authority taking on the role of the external adviser. Julie worked with 6 of our 8 primary schools and reports were produced with a clear focus on Ofsted requirements. An additional payment was made to Saddleworth so they could employ some additional secondary expertise. Generally the reviews were well received and gave schools a clear direction linked into their individual priorities.

Networks and meetings were held for Science, History, Geography, RSEH, SEND, EYFS and Moderation. Most were well supported but some membership was low and some staff no longer available to deliver input. It was felt that links with the LA networks would benefit staff and reduce overlap.

Financial Efficiencies

The Financial Efficiencies Working Party continued their work in embedding the new catering services and sharing information and ideas. There remained a focus on improving the payroll services which continues to provide challenges in its organisation. The group looked into energy efficiencies given the severe increase in costs and shared good practice. A review of the supply service was also undertaken. As the Local Authority had withdrawn its bursarial support services to school the working party worked together to provide support to those schools that were most affected by this. Training was undertaken through Pennine and it would mean that some job roles would need to be reviewed.

b) Well-Being

A big success for the DLP this year has been the introduction of counselling services across the schools. Working with pupils, staff and families all schools are able to see real impacts of this initiative. Sessions of 20 minutes were held with primary pupils. Support was also available for staff and a training programme for parents and families was also developed. Schools were able to have between 1.5 hours – 3 hours of counselling support per week. A contribution equal to 3 hours per week was made to Saddleworth to increase the hours of their existing service. This need had been identified as a priority following the increase in mental health issues for pupils some of which was a result of the pandemic.

Work continued on developing the coaching support for following the training undertaken. Although currently take up is low this will hopefully increase as links are made with appraisal and career development.

A directory of pastoral support is in developing utilising staff skills and expertise. This will be collated and shared across the partnership. The pastoral network was also used to upskill staff to increase capacity within school.

c) Transition and Curriculum Continuity

The concentration for the working party was the re-establishing of the networks as previously stated (linked into the School Improvement Working Party). The priority was to support subject leads in development of their subject areas. This followed a review of the networks being run and an agreement that there should be a focus on foundation subjects – History and Geography.

The co-ordination of the Sports Partnership was undertaken by PE co-ordinators rather than buying into the LA provision. Again this proved popular with the pupils with each school hosting an event. The facilities at the new Saddleworth school were a bonus and the Young Leaders were involved in running the activities and supporting the younger pupils. Events included football, athletics, tennis, orienteering, rounders, etc.

A music festival was held in July at Saddleworth School. The event included a variety of performances ranging from Brass Bands, A Guitar Group, Keyboards, School Choir and Piano accompaniment to a lively Spice Up Your Life finale. It was a real showcase of talent and enthusiasm.

The Art and Writing Festival has been rearranged for the Spring Term 2024.

Saddleworth and some primary schools were also involved in a transition project undertaken through OMDC.

Other DLP Developments:.

CPD

- Following feedback from Ofsted Inspections priority was given to supporting training for subject co-ordinators with a particular focus on sequencing throughout the curriculum. It was agreed this would be held remotely as twilight sessions to accommodate as many staff as possible. This was delivered by Louise Astbury and colleagues. This began in the summer term and extended over into the new academic year.
- Our staff event held on the Friday before October half term had input from Pivotal Education on behaviour and what could change if adults changed. This was well received by all and discussions continued in schools in the afternoon.
- Following on from the staff event further training from Pivotal was organised - Classroom Culture Certified Instructors. This enabled each school to have a 'specialist' and the DLP to have a team of people available to offer support where needed.

- Four sessions were arranged for Teaching Assistants. Offered as a full programme or schools could chose to send TAs to individual sessions. This included sessions on Being an Effective TA, Facilitating Learning, Managing Behaviour and The Changing Role of the TA. Over 40 participants attended the sessions.
- Trauma informed Training was delivered internally. A presentation was given re Young Carers
- A 2-session mid-day supervisor training course was also delivered with 10 people attending.

Spelling Bee

The second DLP Spelling Bee was held in the Summer term 2023. Schools held heats in their own schools with the winning contestants coming together at Delph school for the final. Participants were asked to spell a range of age appropriate words increasing in difficulty. The winner was Poppy from St Thomas', Leesfield CE Primary School.

Communications Strategy

A short term working party was run to develop a look at how we could improve our communications about the DLP. It was agreed that we should develop our social media presence. We commissioned work to be undertaken on setting up DLP on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter. We have also undergone a review of our website as it was proving difficult to update due to the format. It is all now complete and we are able to use these to promote DLP.

Academisation

Whilst any requirements to academise had been withdrawn for the time being it was still important that DLP kept a 'watching eye' on this agenda. We are particularly interested in what is happening locally. In the summer term we received presentations from 4 organisations, Crompton House, Pinnacle, Forward as One and Blue Coats. This continues to be a regular discussion item.

DLP Review

Given we have had a number of changes to the leadership of the DLP it was thought that the Heads' Away Day, held in September 2023, would be a good time to review:

- Vision and Values
- Aims and Objectives
- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
- 5-year Plan
- Plans for the academic year 2023-24.

These were consequently shared with the Trust Board and adopted. MoUs were re-signed.

Looking Ahead

As well as the initiatives and projects described above the DLP is continually looking to build on these developments to extend and challenge the work undertaken. A number of key aspects to report, that are post the Annual Report, are as follows:

- Following sharing of data some training for KS 1 & 2 Writing has been arranged
- Resilience and well-being will be a focus....
- Art and Writing Competition taking place in the Spring Term
- Poverty Proofing audits to be undertaken
- DLP Calendar issued to aid planning attendance at networks and meetings
- Increase our community representation on the Board.
- Groupings of schools with similar development areas to work together as an alternative to peer review.

Financial Review:

The DLP's income is provided by the schools who contribute to a central budget.. This income is used to pay for DLP expenditure such as external consultant, DLP facilitator, training fees, venue hire and other aspects that will the support work towards the DLP priorities.

For 2022-23 DLP reinstated the £10 per pupil contribution together with the £500 base amount. This reflected the increase in expenditure due to the cost of living crisis.

Full accounts have been prepared and will be shared with trustees. They will be filed at Companies House in April 2024. The DLP has re-engaged our Accountant.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit in accordance with Section 249B (2) of the Companies Act 1985

Conclusion

It is good practice to look back on the work that has been undertaken by the partnership. It shows that the DLP is getting back on track following the pandemic and a year of reinstating the key functions and priorities. It has also been a time of change where we have welcomed new personnel and been able to update and review our vision and values. What was good to see was that there was little change to these and it continues to be the 'golden thread' through the partnership and what directs the work we do.

Report approved by the Trustees on 5 February 2024 and signed on their behalf by:

Trustee:

Sarah Butterworth (Chair)

Print Name: SARAH BUTTERWORTH