



**DOVESTONE LEARNING PARTNERSHIP**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**FOR**

**1 October 2021 - 30 September 2022**

## 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:

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Sue Callaghan          | Christ Church, Denshaw, CE Primary School |
| Rebecca Lee            | Christ Church, Denshaw, CE Primary School |
| Alison Leigh           | Delph Primary School                      |
| Mark Hopkins (V Chair) | Delph Primary School                      |
| Sarah Newton (Chair)   | Diggle Primary School                     |
| Mike Rea               | Diggle Primary School                     |
| Rachel Swaby           | 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      | St Agnes CE Primary School                |
| Sue Gittins            | St Agnes CE Primary School                |
| Suzanne Hall           | St Mary's, Greenfield, CE Primary School  |
| Mark Rhan              | 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                 |
| Scott Chapman          | Community Representative                  |
| Tony Shepherd          | Oldham LA                                 |

### Resignations:

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Paula Paslow     | Christ Church, Denshaw CE Primary School |
| Carol Pinnington | Knowsley Junior School                   |
| Paula Glynn      | St Thomas', Leesfield, CE Primary School |

We welcomed James Whittaker, the new head of St Thomas, Leesfield CE primary School, Rebecca Lee and Hannah Jeffares new Chairs of Governors of Christ Church, Denshaw CE Primary and Knowsley Junior Schools

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 2022.**

## **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. 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 schools 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 will be 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 and Local Authority. Risk assessments were produced by schools in response to the covid-19 pandemic and appropriate systems, structures and procedures established in our schools and continue to be reviewed and updated accordingly.

## **Organisational Structure:**

The Dovestone Learning Partnership has a Trustee Board of 21 with one vacancy (community). 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 Trustee Board and holds regular meetings to ensure the Trust delivers 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 2021-22 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 some meetings of the working parties and networks have been held. Action plans have been updated to reflect the current context and review the 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:**

There is no doubt that the pandemic has continued to impact on the work of the Partnership. A key feature of the past year has been on 'relaunching' the DLP (see below).

## **Working Parties:**

### **a) School Improvement**

Following the postponement of the externally-led Peer Review, structures were put in place for Headteachers to work together to look at strengths and areas for development, on a theme agreed by the school being reviewed. A number of these reviews took place in the summer term 2022. Heads felt this had worked well and led to a discussion about setting up a more informal schedule, where heads wanted to look at good practice, or for staff to visit schools to develop their skills from their peers.

There was a focus on reinstating the networks and meetings have taken place for science, geography, Pastoral, SEND, RSEH, EYFS and moderation. More work needs doing on this to put together a calendar to encourage attendance.

### **b) Financial Efficiencies**

The focus for the Financial Efficiencies Group has been to embed the new catering arrangements across the primary schools. This has meant the sharing of information re risk assessments, menus, systems and processes.

Discussion and review continued about the payroll provision which has still been causing a few problems. A key aspect was the changes made to personnel from the EPM. This hampers the responses to queries and concerns and was proving the main difficulty. There was no continuation of support. Some aspects of the service were positive ie the Portal. It was decided that given the disruption and work involved in changing providers, we would keep with EPM whilst still voicing our concerns. Meanwhile, some research would be done in setting up our own system.

During this period the Business Managers and Administrators also oversaw the transition to a new phone and email systems in some of our schools.

### **c) Well-Being**

During the pandemic restrictions we had still been able to continue to schedule coaching training at levels 1-3. We now have a number of people trained to an appropriate standard across the DLP. A focus for the DLP was to now embed the Coaching Strategy and develop this culture across DLP schools. Schools have been asked to identify staff willing to be coaches and those staff who would like to be assigned a coach. A successful pilot project had been held and contributed to developing the systems and processes.

Further support has been arranged for pastoral leads with sessions being run by Sam Muirhead- Oldham Early Help Partnership Officer. Topics covered include family support, pupil mental health, parental conflict and family engagement.

Further investigation has been undertaken re counselling services for schools. This is an area that has significantly increased in priority given the pandemic.

#### **d) Transition and Curriculum Continuity**

There was still work needing to be done on re-establishing the transition work with the primary schools and Saddleworth. This had been seriously affected by the pandemic and was further challenged by the move to the new Saddleworth school. This led to more meetings between Home School Leaders (form tutors) and year 6, review of paperwork and information on new starters and SENDCOs, in particular, supporting and attending transition arrangements.

Developments were proposed in Art, Writing, Singing and PE. We bought into the Sports Competitions organised by Oldham LA which opened up events like archery, cross country and athletics to the pupils. Whilst this was good for the pupils there have been some concerns over the arrangements for the events and consequently has meant that there was less access to opportunities. This has triggered a review and will mean that in the coming academic year events will be organised by sports co-ordinators. There was discussion about establishing a girl's football team across DLP schools.

The annual writing project was put on hold and the music festival was now planned for March 2023.

#### **Other DLP Developments:**

##### **CPD**

- Louise Astbury delivered further training following the sessions on metacognition. The focus for this was reading and questioning and linking to the previous work on IPEEL.
- Computer Subject leader network was established through the National Centre for Computing Education programme and supported by Jamie Edmondson and held at Saddleworth. Training was based around key priorities identified through an audit undertaken by the schools.
- Planning was undertaken for the October 2022 staff event and meetings held with staff from Pivotal Education.
- Heads were asked to complete a proforma which contains a 'menu' of topics to develop a bespoke teaching assistant programme
- Lunchtime staff training had been arranged but due to an outbreak of covid was postponed to a later date.
- Training was provided for the website on how to update the content.

## **Spelling Bee**

The first DLP Spelling Bee was held in the Summer term 2022. 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. On this occasion the winner was from Delph Primary School. It is hoped this will become an annual event.

## **Relaunch of the DLP**

Following discussion at the Heads' Away Day held in September 2021, it was agreed we needed to relaunch the DLP. During the pandemic there were new parents/carers/families, staff and governors who maybe did not know what the DLP was. It was also thought that it would be good for staff generally to know that we were 'back in business'. To this aim:

- A staff presentation was produced
- A new leaflet was developed
- New DLP notepaper made available
- Our website was launched
- Termly newsletter introduced

A Communications Working Party was also established to look at developing our social media presence and how we communicate with our stakeholders. This work is continuing and will be presented at a future Trust Board meeting.

## **Friezland Conversion**

Friezland Governors decided it was the right time to undertake the consultation and statutory processes to become a foundation school and formally join the DLP as a full member instead of an associate member.

A consultation was held during February-April 2022, where there was no opposition to the proposals, the governors made the decision to convert and join the Trust as of 1 May 2022. This was ratified at the following Board meeting. Trustees were delighted to formally welcome Friezland Primary School to the DLP.

## **White Paper**

Following the publication of the White Paper the Heads have had discussions about the future of the DLP given the focus on academisation. Meetings have been held with representative from the Regional Director's office and the Diocese. It has been agreed to explore options by meeting with various MATs but not to make any decisions until the political climate is clearer.

## **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:

- Full staff CPD event October 2022 and building on these developments ie looking at a DLP behaviour support plan.



- Revamp of our DLP website
- Gaining business support and developing grant applications.
- Counselling Services for our schools.

### **Financial Review:**

The DLP's income is provided by the schools who contribute an amount calculated by £500 base amount with £10 per pupil. 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.

DLP had taken a significant carryover in 2021-22 so it was decided to leave the contribution at £500 plus £8 per pupil. An amount of £500 was also given back to schools in lieu of additional SIP work instead of the formal Peer Review.

Full accounts have been prepared and will be shared with trustees. They will be filed at Companies House in April 2023. 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**

This year has been a mixture of getting back on track whilst at the same time still dealing with outbreaks of covid and staff absence. It has been hard to plan and a number of activities have had to be postponed at short notice. However, it has been good to once again meet face to face and there is a strong sense of trying to get back a sense of normality. As we go forward into our sixth year there is a clear commitment to the partnership despite the turbulent and uncertain times. Heads are clear that we need to maintain the activities that we know make a difference to our schools and are being lost across the LA ie networks, training, moderation. We need to explore raising our profile to a greater degree and sharing the good practice within the Partnership.

**Report approved by the Trustees on 6 February 2023 and signed on their behalf by:**

**Trustee:**

Mark Hopkins (Chair)

**Print Name:** MARK HOPKINS