



Report on IQM Inclusive School Award



School Name: Dovedale Primary School

School Address: Herondale Road
Liverpool
Merseyside
L18 1JX

Head/Principal Mr Nik Smith

IQM Lead Mr Matt O'Toole and Mrs Issy Rogers

Assessment Date 25th and 26th September 2025

Assessor Mr David Clay

Sources of Evidence:

- Self Evaluation Report
- OFSTED Report
- School Website
- Observations of Morning Routines
- Learning Walks
- Book Sampling
- Visit To Forest School
- Lunch Time Observations
- School Development Plan
- Excellence and Improvement Partner (EIP) Report Form
- Continuous Provision Planning for Year One
- EYFS Assembly

Meetings Held with:

- Senior Leadership Team
- Pastoral Support Team
- School Council
- Inclusion Lead and SENCo
- Subject Leaders
- Parents including PTFA
- Informal Discussions with Parents
- Wellbeing Ambassadors, Sports Ambassadors, Eco Warriors, Rocket Resilience Champions
- Governors
- Support Staff (LSAs, 1:1 Teaching Assistants, Attendance Officer)



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Overall Evaluation

Dovedale Primary School is a large, four-form entry community school located in the heart of Mossley Hill, Liverpool. With 840 pupils on roll, including 23% identified with SEND, 10% with EAL, and 8% entitled to Free School Meals, it is a thriving and diverse school community. Despite its size, the school exudes the warmth and care of a much smaller setting; the strength of relationships between staff, pupils, and families ensures that every child is known, valued, and celebrated. The school's reputation for inclusion and pastoral excellence is widely recognised across Liverpool and beyond, leading to high demand for places and exceptional levels of retention.

The inclusive ethos is both distinctive and deeply embedded. Dovedale's refreshed school values, Happiness, Inclusion, Resilience, and Ambition, are not simply aspirational statements but lived realities that underpin every decision and action. These values have been shaped collaboratively with pupils, parents, governors, and staff, ensuring they are meaningful and understood by all members of the community. This is inclusion not as a bolt-on or initiative, but as the golden thread that runs through all aspects of school life. One member of staff commented that, "If you have happy staff, you have happy pupils," and this was clearly evident from both staff and students during the visit.

The atmosphere during the visit was calm, purposeful, and welcoming. From the moment pupils arrive at the school gates each morning, they are greeted warmly by name, with senior leaders and pastoral staff visible and approachable. This daily ritual sets the tone for a school where every child feels a sense of belonging and connection. The impact of this visible leadership presence cannot be overstated; it is a deliberate strategy that reinforces the familial culture within a large setting and contributes significantly to the exemplary behaviour and attitudes observed by Ofsted in 2024. Senior leaders and pastoral staff welcome children by name and are there to support both the pupils and their families. This support is greatly appreciated by parents, with one recognising that the school is "another level – they go above and beyond for all of its pupils."

Relationships across the school are exceptionally strong. Pupils model the kind, caring, and respectful attitudes consistently demonstrated by their teachers. Staff retention is high, with many staff having served at Dovedale for decades, and a number of current staff are themselves ex-pupils or parents of children in the school—a testament to the deep loyalty and pride inspired by the school's ethos. The happy and motivated staff body creates an environment in which both children and adults want to be, and this positive culture is reflected in the school's outstanding attendance rate of 97.8%. This is a school where everybody just wants to be.

Pastoral care is a genuine strength of Dovedale. The dedicated Inclusion Team and Pastoral Support Team provide a highly visible, proactive presence across the school day. The team targets support where it is needed, but this is also complemented by empowering pupils themselves to take responsibility for their own wellbeing. Systems are in place for pupils to self-refer to the pastoral team when they need additional support, fostering independence and self-awareness. Initiatives such as the *Rocket Resilience* champions, who support play in quieter areas of the playground, and the



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nurturing *Smile for a While* provision, offering calm spaces for children who need respite from the busy playground, reflect the school's creative and sensitive approach to supporting all learners. This empowerment ensures pupils are not passive recipients of support, but active participants in managing their own needs, preparing them well for life beyond primary school. As well as supporting peers, *Rocket Resilience Champions* extend their influence to the wider community, for example by hosting a Macmillan Coffee Morning and interacting beautifully with families.

SEND provision at Dovedale is exemplary. Needs are identified early, with rigorous systems in place to ensure timely and effective intervention. Teachers are supported by a highly skilled Inclusion Team, led by an Assistant Headteacher dedicated full-time to inclusion, who works alongside the SENCo and SEND admin officer, whose role goes well beyond administration. The expertise of staff is evident in their ability to make careful adaptations to the curriculum so that pupils with SEND are not only included but thrive academically. Ofsted (2024) captured this when noting: *"The school sets very high expectations for pupils' achievement. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils achieve very well."* Staff across the school spoke passionately about their role in supporting both pupils and families, reflecting the deeply held belief that inclusion is everyone's responsibility. Staff were appreciative and recognised the knowledge and expertise that this team brings.

Consistency is a hallmark of the school's work. Systems and processes are well embedded, ensuring that pupils experience seamless support across year groups and phases. Behaviour throughout the visit was exemplary in classrooms, assemblies, and around the school. This consistency was exemplified in the school's phonics provision, where children are rigorously and sensitively supported to secure the foundations of early reading by expert staff. The same ambition and care are visible throughout the wider curriculum. Learning observed during the assessment was purposeful and engaging, with pupils eager to share their knowledge and demonstrate their skills. In Geography, children proudly showcased their Lego models of semi-detached and terraced houses; in the creative areas, they applied progressively taught artistic skills with independence and flair. Pupils are encouraged to take risks, embrace challenge, and take ownership of their learning developing both knowledge and resilience.

The school's curriculum extends beyond the academic to nurture the whole child. Continuous provision continues beyond Reception and into Years 1 and 2, ensuring smooth progression and developmentally appropriate opportunities for exploration. Forest School is a particular strength, offering every child in the school the opportunity to engage with nature, develop teamwork skills, and build resilience. During the assessment, Year 6 pupils were observed, muddy and smiling, working collaboratively to develop bushcraft skills an authentic example of how Dovedale nurtures independence, resilience, and joy in learning, while prioritising the development of the whole child.

The extra-curricular offer at Dovedale is outstanding. It is both extensive and inclusive, with opportunities ranging from choir and crochet to street dance and athletics. Over 100 children attend cross-country and athletics training before school, exemplifying the ambition and enthusiasm of both pupils and staff. Importantly, enrichment opportunities are also carefully targeted: the after-school Forest School club, for example, provides a nurturing and therapeutic environment for children identified as



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needing additional support. This breadth of provision reflects the school's commitment to ensuring that every child finds their niche and has the chance to shine.

Community engagement is another notable strength. Parents speak highly of the school's open-door ethos and the genuine welcome they receive. The PTFA is highly active, raising over £40,000 annually through creative events such as quiz nights, a community pantomime, and the *Dovefest* festival. Families of all backgrounds are actively engaged in school life, from sharing expertise in classrooms to leading cultural celebrations such as Eid Day. Feedback from parents is overwhelmingly positive, with 100% saying they would recommend the school to others, and every parent reporting that their child is happy at Dovedale.

Staff wellbeing is also prioritised. Leaders are proactive in ensuring workload is manageable and provide tangible support, such as wellbeing days, counselling provision, and flexible working arrangements where possible. This investment in staff translates into the consistency, stability, and high morale that underpin the school's success. Ofsted noted the positive impact of this culture, with staff unanimously reporting that they feel supported and happy at the school.

Dovedale Primary School is an exceptional example of inclusive education in action. It combines the high expectations and ambition of an academically successful school with the warmth, care, and compassion of a family. Pupils achieve exceptionally well, more importantly, they leave as resilient, confident, and compassionate individuals equipped to thrive in the world. The school's inclusive ethos is not only embedded but celebrated, ensuring that every child is known, supported, and given the opportunity to flourish.

Dovedale Primary School is the definition of an inclusive school. It fully meets the standard for the Inclusion Quality Mark and in recognition of its outstanding provision, consistency, and culture. Dovedale would be an outstanding addition to an IQM cluster, bringing expertise, creativity, and passion for inclusion.

I am of the opinion that the school fully meets the standard required by the Inclusion Quality Mark's Inclusive School Award. There are only minor areas requiring development and the school is aware of these. I recommend that the school be awarded the Inclusive School Award and be reassessed in 3 years' time.

I also recommend that the school should consider applying for Centre of Excellence status subject to the inclusion within its plans of the appropriate areas for development and the completion of the Centre of Excellence documentation. If the school chooses to pursue this status and it were to be awarded the school would be subject to annual review from this point forwards.

Assessor: Mr David Clay

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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Joe McCann MBA NPQH
CEO Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd



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Element 1 - The Inclusion Values of the School

At Dovedale Primary School, inclusion is not a statement of intent but a daily reality. The values of *Happiness, Inclusion, Resilience, and Ambition* are evident in the way the school community works together and in how pupils describe their experiences.

Behaviour is the bedrock of inclusive practice at Dovedale. Across classrooms, playgrounds, and corridors, children demonstrated exemplary conduct and exceptional behaviour for learning. Calmness, positivity, and purpose were constants, with pupils eager to learn and clearly enjoying school. High expectations are consistent, but they are balanced with warmth; the smiles on children's faces reflect the respectful relationships and the pride they take in being part of the school. Pupils themselves spoke of this culture of kindness, with one child remarking, *"I couldn't choose the kindest teacher because every teacher at Dovedale is kind, and they teach everyone to be kind."*

Parents expressed confidence in the trust they place in the school to meet the needs of their children. Many chose Dovedale specifically for its inclusive ethos. They praised the way staff listen, respond, and adapt provision so that their children feel safe, supported, and able to thrive. This trust is rooted in the school's rigorous approach to identifying needs early and providing tailored support.

Adaptations are not exceptional responses at Dovedale, but part of the fabric of daily teaching and learning. Leaders are clear that meeting need is everyone's responsibility, and this is reflected in the flexibility of staff in adapting provision. Significant financial and strategic investment in inclusion further demonstrates the priority placed on equity of access. As a result, pupils are supported in whatever way is necessary to make the progress of which they are capable.

The welcoming nature of the school extends powerfully to new arrivals. Pupils who had joined Dovedale from war-torn countries spoke passionately about the warmth of the welcome they received, and the support offered by both peers and staff. Their accounts demonstrated not only how they had settled, but also how they had been equipped and empowered to thrive in their new environment.

Pupil leadership is another visible expression of the school's values. Children are encouraged to use their voices through roles such as Prefects, School Council, Eco Warriors, Wellbeing Warriors, and PE Ambassadors, with further opportunities planned throughout the year. Pupils proudly shared achievements such as planting trees and working towards the Eco Award, demonstrating a strong sense of responsibility to their school and wider environment. Forest School was also spoken about with enthusiasm, with pupils describing how it helps them develop new skills, grow in confidence, and enjoy time in nature. The diversity of pupils within leadership groups is a particular strength, reflecting the inclusive ethos of the school.

Given the size of the school, careful organisation ensures that no child is overlooked. Leaders track involvement in clubs, competitions, and enrichment to guarantee that all pupils have the opportunity to take part. Intra-class competitions ensure every child enjoys the experience of competitive sport in a positive and supportive way. This



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systematic approach demonstrates the school's determination that inclusion extends beyond the classroom and into every aspect of school life.

Dovedale is a school where pupils feel valued, safe, and cared for. They are challenged to achieve highly, supported to manage their own needs, and encouraged to contribute positively to their community. The inclusive values of the school are therefore not simply espoused but lived, shaping confident, compassionate, and resilient young people.

Next Steps:

To continue to share and model inclusive practice with other schools, supporting them to embed similar approaches.



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Element 2 - Leadership and Management and Accountability

Leadership at Dovedale Primary School is firmly rooted in the belief that inclusion is the responsibility of everyone. Leaders have established a culture where every member of staff understands their role in supporting pupils with diverse needs, while also ensuring that they are well supported and empowered to do so. The message is clear: inclusion is not the work of a small team, but the collective commitment of all.

The leadership team models this ethos through visibility, consistency, and care. Leaders are invested in the community they serve, demonstrating unwavering commitment to ensuring that every child receives a high-quality offer, both academically and pastorally. Their presence is felt at the school gates, in classrooms, and across the wider school day, providing reassurance and guidance to pupils, families, and staff alike.

Governors play an active and strategic role in this work. They bring a wealth of experience and professional knowledge, enabling them to provide both support and appropriate challenge. Governors are passionate about the inclusive offer at Dovedale and spoke of the way in which they themselves have learned from the school's practice, taking insights about inclusive approaches back to their own workplaces. Their pride in the school was evident, but so too was their determination to ensure that leaders continue to reflect, refine, and improve provision.

Staff at Dovedale are solution-focused and adaptable. They are supported by an Inclusion Team whose expertise is widely recognised across the school. The team is highly knowledgeable, bringing significant experience and specialist understanding, but remains open to collaboration with external professionals to ensure that practice is always appropriate and effective for pupils. This openness to learning and development reflects the school's determination to "get it right" for every child.

SEND provision is exemplary. Leaders ensure that systems are rigorous and responsive, allowing needs to be identified early and support to be implemented effectively. Importantly, the school also draws on models of practice beyond its own expertise where needed. The *Engagement Model*, for example, has been embedded for pupils not yet working on subject-specific learning, providing a framework to monitor and celebrate progress in ways aligned with local specialist provision. This ensures that pupils with the most significant needs are well supported and that their achievements are recognised and valued.

Through these systems, Dovedale demonstrates that it is able to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with the highest levels of complexity. Progress is evident across the school, not only in academic outcomes but also in pupils' confidence, independence, and wellbeing. Staff consistently spoke of the encouragement they receive from leaders to reflect on and refine practice, underlining the collaborative culture that drives improvement.

Ultimately, leadership and governance at Dovedale are characterised by their unity of purpose: a relentless commitment to securing the very best for every child. Leaders, governors, and staff work together to create an environment where inclusion is non-



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negotiable, where solutions are sought with creativity and care, and where the success of every child is celebrated.

Next Steps:

To continue to develop the use of external expertise to refine provision for pupils with the most complex needs, sharing this good practice with other schools.



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Element 3 - Curriculum – Structure, Pupil Engagement and Adaption

The curriculum at Dovedale Primary School is ambitious, inclusive, and carefully designed to ensure that every child is able to succeed. Leaders are committed to ensuring that the curriculum reflects the diversity of the school community and the wider world. This commitment is evident in the deliberate choices made in curriculum design, such as the selection of artists, authors, and significant figures that ensure pupils see themselves represented and valued. Former pupil John Lennon is also celebrated within the curriculum, with pupils learning about his influence both locally and globally. This approach fosters a sense of pride in the school's heritage while also inspiring pupils to recognise the impact they themselves can have on the wider world. Subject leadership teams were passionate about their subject and wanting to ensure it is right for their pupils.

Ofsted (March 2024) noted that: "The school has designed an engaging and highly ambitious curriculum for pupils, including those with SEND. A wealth of experiences is carefully planned to allow pupils to gain a deeper understanding of what they study." This external validation captures the strength and depth of the curriculum, which is both knowledge-rich and experience-led, ensuring that all children, whatever their starting point, are able to flourish. It was particularly evident that the curriculum went beyond the national curriculum to ensure that pupils had the skills needed for the next steps in their educational journey.

Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) is a particular strength. Led by a passionate and knowledgeable subject leader, PSHE is embedded across the school and contributes significantly to its inclusive ethos. The school has been awarded the Rainbow Laces accreditation, recognising its commitment to equality and diversity. Pupils spoke confidently about the value of PSHE, describing how it helps them to understand themselves and others, and how it supports the calm, respectful culture of the school.

Staff at all stages of their careers are supported to deliver the curriculum to a consistently high standard. Early Career Teachers in particular praised the strength of collegiate support, describing the team ethos at Dovedale as empowering. One ECT explained how much they valued the guidance and expertise of colleagues, ensuring they felt confident and well prepared to meet the school's high expectations. This culture of support ensures that the curriculum is delivered with skill and consistency across all phases.

Innovation is another defining feature of Dovedale's curriculum. Leaders have begun to explore the use of artificial intelligence to adapt planning and resources for pupils with additional needs. While still at an early stage, this work exemplifies the forward-thinking approach of the school and its determination to use technology to enhance inclusion. The integration of AI demonstrates the school's ambition to ensure that all pupils can access learning, express their ideas, and develop independence in their learning.

The curriculum at Dovedale is therefore both inclusive and aspirational. It is deliberately designed to meet the needs of all pupils while also reflecting and celebrating diversity,



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heritage, and innovation. Pupils leave the school confident in themselves, respectful of others, and equipped with both knowledge and skills to thrive.

Next Steps:

To continue to develop the use of technology, including artificial intelligence, as part of curriculum adaptations, ensuring that all children are able to access learning independently and express their ideas with confidence.

To continue to develop the curriculum for oracy so that it is consistently taught and expectations are high across the school as it is embedded throughout the curriculum.



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Element 4 - Teaching and Learning – Learning Environment, Planning Resources, Pedagogy

Teaching and learning at Dovedale Primary School are characterised by ambition, creativity, and consistency. Classrooms and wider learning environments reflect high expectations and a deep understanding of how children learn best.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, learning environments are calm, warm, and purposeful. From the very start of their school journey, Reception pupils are supported to settle quickly, engage in learning, and develop positive relationships. During the visit, Reception children just three weeks into the term were observed to be happy, settled, and thriving. Interactions between staff and children were strong and conducive to learning, underpinned by a nurturing but purposeful approach. Outdoor spaces for Reception, Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3 extend the classroom and provide rich opportunities for exploration, collaboration, and creativity. Children were observed using these spaces with confidence and purpose to deepen their learning.

Rigour in the teaching of phonics is a particular strength of the school. The approach is systematic, consistent, and highly effective, ensuring that no child is left behind. Expert staff deliver sessions with precision and care, balancing rigour with sensitivity to ensure that all pupils are able to make strong progress. Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained and that interventions are deployed swiftly for those who require additional support. This commitment to excellence in early reading lays secure foundations for future learning.

Across the wider curriculum, teachers use strategies that ensure pupils build knowledge securely over time. Spaced retrieval is embedded across foundation subjects, enabling pupils to recall prior knowledge and apply it to new learning. Subject leaders play a pivotal role in mapping progression and ensuring consistency, while also adapting provision to ensure that all pupils, including those with SEND, can access the curriculum successfully.

Planning is purposeful and reflects a shared commitment to inclusion. Teachers are solution-focused and flexible, adjusting approaches and resources to meet the needs of individuals while maintaining ambition for all. Resources are carefully chosen to be progressive and challenging, supporting pupils to take ownership of their learning. Pupils themselves spoke enthusiastically about their experiences, with some describing how they were motivated to continue their learning independently at home for example, by writing for the *500 Words* competition outside of school hours.

Assemblies and celebrations also reinforce the culture of high expectations and joy in learning. Pupils are celebrated for values such as perseverance, creativity, exploration, and hard work, with awards such as the *Persevering Parrots* and *Hardworking Hedgehogs* fostering a positive climate for effort and achievement. The EYFS assembly, where pupils sang and danced with smiles on their faces alongside staff, was a powerful example of the joy children feel in learning.

Support for pupils with SEND is seamlessly integrated into classroom practice. Pupils were observed learning alongside peers in mixed-ability pairs, with sensitive support



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and collaboration evident. Where staff are uncertain about how best to support a pupil, they proactively seek out guidance to ensure needs are fully met. This proactive and reflective approach ensures that no child is left unsupported.

The consistency and ambition of teaching and learning at Dovedale reflect the strength of leadership and the dedication of staff. Classrooms are places of joy, challenge, and inclusion, where every child is supported to achieve and to love learning.

Next Steps:

To continue to develop whole-class feedback, ensuring that pupils have the opportunity to respond directly to feedback and edit their work to demonstrate progress.



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Element 5 - Assessment

Assessment at Dovedale is a strength of the school and plays a central role in driving the consistently high standards achieved by pupils. Attainment in standardised tests is excellent, particularly in early reading, where over 97% of pupils passed the Year 1 phonics screening check. This outcome reflects both the rigour of the school's phonics programme and the skill with which assessment is used to identify gaps and tailor support. Across reading, writing and mathematics, children achieve strongly, with internal assessments and moderation meetings evidencing attainment well above national expectations.

Teachers make highly effective use of both formative and summative assessment. Live marking, immediate feedback, and same-day interventions are embedded across the school, ensuring misconceptions are addressed before they become barriers. In mathematics, the mastery approach supports this ethos, with teachers checking progress in small steps and adapting lessons responsively. Similarly, in science and foundation subjects, pre- and post-unit assessments, alongside "Knowledge Reviews," help pupils revisit and retain learning over time. This ensures assessment is not simply an endpoint but a continuous process that supports memory, application, and progression.

Assessment systems are carefully designed by subject leaders to support teachers in making accurate judgements and planning effectively. Each subject is structured around clear "end points" which are realistic and manageable, avoiding unnecessary cognitive overload. Subject leaders engage in regular vertical monitoring, combining book scrutiny, pupil interviews, quizzes, and teacher feedback to build a holistic view of impact. This comprehensive methodology ensures that children who require support are swiftly identified and provided for, while higher attainers are stretched through enrichment and ambassadorial roles.

The school also makes effective use of external standardised assessments, such as PIRA reading tests, which allow for detailed question-level analysis. Leaders deliberately returned to paper-based versions to ensure deeper diagnostic insight, preparing children for the demands of Key Stage 2 and beyond. Data from such assessment's feeds into termly pupil progress meetings, enabling teachers, senior leaders, and the inclusion team to discuss progress and agree precise actions for individuals and groups. Alongside this, the Engagement Model is being embedded to capture small-step progress for pupils with the most complex needs.

Next Steps:

To further embed the use of Arbor as the school's assessment and tracking platform, ensuring that staff, pupils, and parents can access clear, consistent, and transparent information about progress.

To continue to refine the use of the *Engagement Model* to capture, celebrate and plan for progress for pupils with the most complex needs.



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Element 6 - Behaviour, Attitudes to Learning and Personal Development

Behaviour and attitudes to learning at Dovedale Primary School are exemplary. Across lessons, assemblies, and unstructured times, pupils demonstrated calmness, focus, and a genuine enthusiasm for learning. This is underpinned by a culture of high expectations, where children are encouraged to strive for their best in a supportive and nurturing environment. Pupils mimic the attitudes modelled by staff, displaying the same warmth, kindness, and respect that they experience from adults in school.

Relationships at all levels are exceptional. Interactions between children, and between pupils and staff, are characterised by mutual care, fairness, and respect. Pupils spoke of their trust in staff to be kind, supportive, and fair. In turn, staff trust pupils to rise to the consistently high expectations set for them. This reciprocal trust creates a calm, purposeful atmosphere where children feel safe, valued, and confident to contribute.

Tweaks to lunchtimes have further strengthened the inclusive culture. Adaptations ensure that all children are calm and comfortable, with additional provision available for those who need quieter spaces. The pastoral team, alongside the *Rocket Resilience* champions, play an active role in ensuring lunchtime is a positive, sociable, and enjoyable part of the school day.

The enrichment of each subject supports pupils in taking their learning further. Subject leaders deliberately build opportunities for enrichment into their plans, whether through visits, visitors, clubs, or community projects. This breadth of experiences ensures that pupils not only acquire knowledge but also deepen their understanding and apply it in meaningful contexts.

Forest School is an outstanding feature of the school's provision. Every pupil access this offer during their time at Dovedale. It provides opportunities to take risks, problem-solve, and work collaboratively in a natural environment. During the visit, Year 6 pupils were observed working together, muddy and smiling, as they developed bushcraft skills and strengthened their teamwork. Forest School also continues the ethos of continuous provision seen in EYFS and KS1, embedding independence, creativity, and resilience.

Pupil voice is strong. Leadership opportunities such as Prefects, School Council, Eco Warriors, Wellbeing Warriors, and PE Ambassadors empower pupils to make a difference to their school and community. Pupils spoke with pride about these roles and the impact they were able to have, for example through environmental projects or supporting the wellbeing of their peers.

Wellbeing sits at the heart of personal development at Dovedale. The pastoral team works sensitively and effectively with children who need additional support, ensuring that every child feels secure and able to flourish. This commitment is visible not only in bespoke interventions but also in the universal culture of care that permeates the school. The pastoral team are skilled in supporting both the students and their families. The school runs a nurture parenting program to support the families in supporting personal development and behaviour at home.



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Pupils at Dovedale demonstrate outstanding behaviour, attitudes, and personal development. They are confident, resilient, and compassionate learners who embody the inclusive values of their school.

Next Steps:

To investigate ELSA training for a member of the pastoral team, further strengthening the school's capacity to support pupils' emotional wellbeing.



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Element 7 - Parents, Carers and Guardians

The reputation of Dovedale is exceptionally high and is reflected in the number of families who choose the school, particularly those with children who have additional needs. Parents consistently describe the school as welcoming, warm, and “all about the kids.” They speak of the kindness and fairness of staff, with one parent noting that the school is “another level they go above and beyond.” Another shared how, just four weeks into joining, their child proudly declared, “*this is my school.*”

There is a deep trust between parents and staff, underpinned by calm reassurance, confidence, and a proactive investment in interventions to meet children’s needs. Open days are particularly powerful, with parents observing that the pupils themselves “sold the school” through their pride and happiness in being part of the Dovedale community.

The PTFA plays a pivotal role in school life. From large-scale fundraising events such as the annual pantomime and *Dovefest* summer festival, to focus groups, bake sales, and Christmas fairs, their work enriches school life, raises significant funds, and strengthens community ties. These events attract the wider community and have raised tens of thousands of pounds to support provision at Dovedale.

Parents are also deeply involved in learning and enrichment. They volunteer in Forest School, donate equipment, plant trees, and even help deliver sessions. Coffee mornings, workshops, and tailored parenting programmes – including specialist ASD training and the Nurturing Parent Programme provide ongoing support and guidance. The Inclusion and Pastoral teams are highly visible, greeting parents daily at the gates, and offering sensitive, accessible support whenever it is needed. Parents spoke of any concern being validated and sensitively supported.

Alumni also continue to be part of the school’s story. On the second day of the inspection, former pupils returned from secondary school to volunteer, confident and articulate in sharing their positive experiences. Parents of children now in secondary settings report how well-prepared their children were for the next stage, with the strong relationship with Calderstones High School ensuring continuity and smooth transition.

Overall, Dovedale is more than a school; it is a supportive network where families feel valued, included, and proud to belong.

Next Steps:

To share good practice in the support for the whole family through courses such as the Nurture Parent Programme.



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Element 8 - Links with Local, Wider and Global Community

Dovedale Primary School is proud to be recognised as a **School of Sanctuary**, reflecting its unwavering commitment to providing a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment for all pupils, including those who have sought refuge and safety in the UK.

The school is deeply committed to ensuring pupils understand their place in the local community, the wider city, and the global world. Strong partnerships and carefully chosen opportunities enrich learning, build character, and reinforce the inclusive ethos of the school.

Cultural diversity is celebrated and embraced. Events such as Mother Tongue Day and Eid Day highlight and value the heritage of pupils and their families. These occasions foster pride and belonging, with pupils encouraged to share their languages, traditions, and faith practices. In Reception, the "Families Wall" is a striking example of this ethos in practice, proudly displaying and celebrating every family, ensuring that children see their identities valued from the very start of their school journey. Pupils also described how they "felt proud to be them," reflecting the school's success in creating an environment where difference is respected and celebrated.

Commitment to equality and inclusion is further demonstrated through the school's involvement in wider initiatives. Dovedale has achieved the Rainbow Laces Award in recognition of its work to promote LGBTQ+ inclusion and celebrate diversity in sport. The school also participates in Liverpool Pride, ensuring pupils understand the importance of equality, representation, and respect for all.

Environmental responsibility is another cornerstone of Dovedale's global links. The school has achieved the Eco School Award, with pupil-led initiatives such as the Eco Warriors driving forward sustainability projects. Pupils take pride in activities such as tree planting, recycling initiatives, and reducing energy use, demonstrating their understanding of their responsibility to care for the planet.

Partnerships with universities and external organisations add further depth to provision. Members of the Rocket Resilience Team spoke with pride about collaborating with university professors to design a dementia-awareness game, combining creativity with social purpose. This project exemplifies the way Dovedale encourages pupils to engage with real-world issues and contribute positively to society.

The school is also proactive in fundraising and charity work. From Macmillan Coffee Mornings to large-scale events organised by the PTFA, fundraising is embedded in the school's culture of care. Pupils learn the value of giving back and are inspired to use their voices and talents to make a difference for others, both locally and globally.

Through these varied and meaningful links, Dovedale ensures pupils leave with a strong sense of identity, belonging, and responsibility. They are proud of their community, respectful of difference, and equipped to play their part in a diverse and ever-changing world.



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Next Steps:

To continue to expand global partnerships that allow pupils to make meaningful connections beyond their immediate community, deepening their understanding of diversity, sustainability, and social responsibility, while also developing meaningful relationships with communities from more deprived areas of the city and the wider world to further develop empathy and understanding.