



Directors' Strategic Report 2015/2016



Annual Report to Shareholders Learn Sheffield AGM



This **Annual Report to Shareholders** is the first one produced by Learn Sheffield, coming at the end of the first year since incorporation on the 14th August 2015. It provides an overview of performance in this reporting period in relation to board effectiveness, key developments, school improvement outcomes and financial outcomes.

It has been prepared by the Chair of the Interim Board, Darren Tidmarsh, and the Chief Executive, Stephen Betts. It should be read in conjunction with the financial statements and other papers for the Annual General Meeting/ Extra-ordinary General Meeting on Thursday 24th November 2016.

Further information about Learn Sheffield can be found at www.learnsheffield.co.uk

Chair's Message

This is our first Annual Report to Shareholders and I am delighted to be able to report that Learn Sheffield has had a successful year. We are on track to being the well-established organisation that we need to be in order to support the development of improved education in the city and better the life chances for our children and young people.



We are extremely focussed on school improvement and determined to support Sheffield schools and colleges in ensuring that every child and young person has access to a great education, wherever they live and whatever their circumstances. As you will see later in this report school and pupil outcomes show a pleasing improvement, which reflects the hard work of colleagues from across the city and the young people and families that they serve.

Learn Sheffield's purpose is to nurture effective partnerships within an ambitious and effective culture so that, in Sheffield, all of our young people learn with great teachers, in great settings, which are constantly improving. Learn Sheffield aims to strengthen city-wide partnership work, both within sectors, between them and with employers. The School Improvement Strategy and the Sheffield Priorities brings to life these ambitions and sets out the approach that we will take as a city to bring about improvement.

On a personal level I would like to thank all of my colleagues on the Interim Board, who have supported the establishment of Learn Sheffield and its organisational culture. We are pleased to report a healthy first year in terms of financial performance and to have successfully recruited the substantive Chief Executive. Learn Sheffield now moves from an Interim Board to a substantive Board, with a strong basis from which to grow.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'D. Tidmarsh'.

Darren Tidmarsh
Chair – Interim Board

Chief Executive's Overview

Welcome to our Directors' Strategic Report for 2015-16, which is our first annual report to shareholders.

Learn Sheffield has had a very successful first year, which will be described through the rest of this document. We are proud of these achievements and I would like to take this opportunity to thank our team for their hard work and fantastic contributions.

The success of Learn Sheffield, in supporting the schools and colleges of the city, will continue to be based on the partnership and collaboration of everyone involved in education in Sheffield. I would also like to thank everyone for their commitment to our joint endeavours and to our shared ambitions for the children and young people of Sheffield.

Learn Sheffield's vision is that we can bring about improvement through partnerships, and this is central to this strategy and everything that we do. We believe passionately that the purpose of education is to enhance the life chances of children and young people. A great school, therefore, must ensure that it develops the achievement and readiness of its students, so that they are ready for life.

Achievement opens doors for young people, giving them access to the next stage of their education, training or employment. Readiness is their ability to walk through those doors and take the maximum advantage of the opportunities that they have. Learn Sheffield's mission is to support and challenge our members, who are the schools and colleges of the city, to have the courage and confidence to develop the education culture of Sheffield to be a world class city.

This year has seen us make positive collective strides in the right direction. We celebrate these achievements whilst retaining our ambition for the future. There is much to do and we are excited to have the opportunity to build on the platform that we have created.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Stephen Betts'. The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Stephen Betts

Board Effectiveness

The Interim Learn Sheffield Board has led the company through to the end of its first year, enabling it to take responsibility for the first accounting period and the recruitment of the substantive Chief Executive. The Board approves membership applications and has overseen the development of appropriate arrangements and internal accountability systems.

The attendance, effectiveness and contribution at meetings of the directors are kept under review by the chair. Directors agree that the Board is effective in fulfilling its strategic duties and the reports and presentations provided by the executive team are of good quality, enabling the Board to carry out its functions efficiently. The final task of the Interim Board has been to provide oversight to the recruitment of the substantive board.

Significant Developments in 2015/16

Learn Sheffield's first year of operation has, necessarily, involved a very large number of developments, as the company has established itself. The developments identified below summarise this activity and identify some of the key work that has been undertaken.

- The delivery and development of the **School Improvement Strategy** represents the core business of Learn Sheffield. Continuity of service was maintained to ensure that there was no gap between the existing and new strategies, which supported the continuation of an improving trajectory in school outcomes. The new approach, which has been co-designed with each school sector, was 'dry-run' in the summer term, which has informed the new approach this term.
- The development of the **Sheffield Priorities** has been crucial to the approach of Learn Sheffield. The work, which was supported by the National Education Trust and involved stakeholders from across the system, is a clear signal about the intention of the organisation to take a wider view of school improvement. The priorities consider the development needs of the education system as a whole and will drive the work of Learn Sheffield in the years ahead.
- Wide ranging **partnership activity** has been essential to the development of the work above, and provides the platform from which to achieve all of our ambitions for the city. Learn Sheffield is directly supporting a number of important partnerships, including School Leader Partnerships in all sectors, the Teaching School Partnership, SACRE, the Inclusion Programme Board and the newly forming Sheffield Cultural Education Partnership. Further to this Learn Sheffield considers it essential to maintain and develop close working relationships with all key stakeholders in education, including Sheffield City Council, both of the universities in the city, HMI, the Department for Education and the wide range of groups and associations in the city with an interest in education.



- Learn Sheffield has developed its **communication strategy** as a priority. The rapid development of the website has supported the wider development of communication, including the use of twitter. Effective communication is crucial to supporting a school-led system and this is reflected in the increasing use of the Learn Sheffield communication channels by key partners and stakeholders.
- The development of the **Governance Training** offer is a good example of Learn Sheffield's early work in developing services to schools and successful partnerships. The service is commissioned by Sheffield City Council and is being delivered through all of the Sheffield teaching schools and both universities. The quality and range of the offer represents a significant improvement on previous provision and has been designed based on feedback from Governance representatives, which provides a strong approach for future service development.

School Improvement Performance

The reporting areas below are based on the objectives identified by Sheffield City Council in the commission to deliver statutory duties in relation to school improvement.

1. Partnership Working

Learn Sheffield has built on the strong partnerships across and between sectors, which impact positively on the outcomes for children and schools, and which supported the formation of a schools company. Partnership working has been the basis of the improved trajectory of school and pupil outcomes in the city in recent years and this has accelerated in the first year of Learn Sheffield.

We are delighted to report that all Sheffield schools and colleges have engaged with Learn Sheffield this year and all the schools and colleges of the city have either become members or are in the process of doing so.

All schools, across each sector, are participating in the new approach to categorisation, in accordance with the school improvement strategy. The degree of engagement in this school-led work is unprecedented and this area is RAG rated 'green' by Learn Sheffield.

2. School Outcomes

The profile of Sheffield school outcomes had reached the highest level it has been, with 81.8% good or better, by the end of the 2015/16 school year. The proportion of good/better schools had increased overall (all sectors) by 5.2% in 2015/6. Since January 2015 (when the project began) Sheffield's proportion of good/better schools had increased by 10.5%, which is two and a half times the rate of national improvement in the same period.

There were some disappointments and although the number of downward inspection judgements was fewer than previously, they did include some inadequate judgements. For this reason, although it was a successful year for the city, this area is RAG rated 'amber' by Learn Sheffield.

3. Pupil Outcomes

Sheffield's relative performance, when compared to national outcomes, improved across a range of key measures in 2016. Although, at the time of writing this report we do not have a complete picture of pupil outcomes, it is clear that performance across the Sheffield education system is now broadly in line with national outcomes.

This represents a continuation of the upward trajectory of relative outcomes in recent years. In Foundation Stage the city matched national outcomes in the key measure and saw a significant narrowing of the inequality gap. At the end of the primary (Key Stage 2) phase Sheffield reduced the gap to national, to 1%, in the key combined measure. At the end of the secondary (Key Stage 4) phase the city outcome in the new key Progress 8 measure was slightly above zero, which indicates slightly better than national performance.

This improved picture is also reflected in the Sheffield's Local Authority rankings for the key measures (Foundation Stage 93rd, Key Stage 2 92nd & Key Stage 4 59th – of approximately 150 LAs). For the first time, across all of the key measures, the city performance was better than its deprivation ranking (which is 104th), which means that Sheffield's performance was strong when judged against its context.

Whilst we celebrate the improvement in pupil outcomes and recognise that reaching a broadly national level of performance represents an important milestone, we aspire to much more for the children and young people of the city. For this reason pupil outcomes is RAG rated 'amber' by Learn Sheffield with a recognition that a 'green' outcome would correspond to an above national outcomes profile.

4. Outcomes for Vulnerable Pupils

The Sheffield Performance Analysis Report will be available later this term, once the majority of the national data set is known. This will be the point when the RAG rating is formally reviewed by Learn Sheffield. At the present time the rating is 'amber' because, whilst attendance and persistent absence performance has improved across all sectors, the data around exclusions is disappointing.

Financial Performance

Learn Sheffield, as a young company established with no financial reserves, was pleased to complete the first accounting period with a surplus to ensure the sustainability of the company.

Learn Sheffield appointed Hart Shaw as company auditors for the financial year 2015-16 and will present the first audited accounts at the Annual General Meeting.

More Information

More information about Learn Sheffield can be found using the contact information overleaf.

Information about the Learn Sheffield Board can be found on the website, within the 'About Us' section. This will include board meeting minutes and papers, which will now start to be shared via the website.

How can I find out more about Learn Sheffield?

Please contact us to find out more. We look forward to hearing from you.

By Phone: 0114 250 7417

By Email: enquiries@learnsheffield.co.uk

In Person: Learn Sheffield,
Training and Development Hub,
Lees Hall Road,
Sheffield, S8 9JP

Online: www.learnsheffield.co.uk

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