



# Lotus Leaves

## annual newsletter

### HEADLINES

New eco-showers  
make a splash

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Student numbers  
pass 850 mark

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WhatsApp  
provides a  
learning platform

### Ladakh in lockdown

The school re-opened on March 2nd 2020 after the winter break, only to close again on March 8th because of COVID-19. Online classes began on March 25th, with each class creating a WhatsApp group for lessons. Between 20 percent and 30 percent of pupils were unable to take part online so the focus was on activity-based work with no final assessment. Older pupils received a one-hour lesson twice daily via audio or video and were set assignments on life skills, creative writing and critical thinking. Infants received short video classes. Students without online access received regular phone calls from teachers. On Sundays, they took part in art- and craft-based classes on the theme of upcycling and recycling. Weekly yoga videos from the physical education teachers helped students maintain a calm mind and a strong body. The school's construction programme, due to start at the end of March, was postponed.

In May last year, the governing body appointed new members to the School Management Committee (SMC), chaired by Tsering Motup. Mingur Angmo was appointed vice-principal in September, before the departure at the end of the year of Principal Stanzin Kunzang after her five-year term ended. The SMC, staff and students bade farewell to the principal with speeches and gifts. Mingur Angmo is acting principal in what she called "a year of challenge, change, learning and experimentation".



Students study at home



## Sport

In sport, 2019 was a year of high achievement. Congratulations went to Jigmet Chuzin of Class 9, who was the highest-scoring female at the State Football Academy League in Srinagar in May, attended by teams from all 22 districts in the region.

The Ladakh School Olympics were introduced two years ago to showcase students' sporting talents. The week-long event in August included football, handball, volleyball, badminton, archery, boxing and track events.

In September, the two-day inter-house Annual Athletics Meet enabled students to compete in track and field, including 100-, 200-, 400- and 800-metre races, as well as high jump, long jump and shot-put.



Ladakh School Olympics team celebrates success



## The impact of DPKS on the wider community

Who benefits from your support for the school and how? You have helped to build the school from the nursery up to secondary school level, providing high-quality education for about 860 students at a time.

This is a boon for the village of Shey which has 398 households (2011 census). Most schools have no residential facilities but, thanks to our supporters' donations, the school has four residential courtyards, enabling children from remote areas and nomadic communities to live in.

The school is a significant employer, with 40 teachers and 45 support staff, many of them local people. A team of 30 stonemasons, carpenters and labourers is employed during the seven-month summer construction season. They return each year after doing seasonal work elsewhere in India.

The permanent construction and landscape teams support the local markets in nearby Choglamsar and Leh where they buy much of the building materials. The food needed to sustain the 250 residential students and school textbooks come from markets and local suppliers.

Your support benefits not only the staff and students of DPKS, but also all generations in the wider community.



Infants perform their 'Autumn' dance

## Blooming Day

All 290 students in the infant section participated in their special day on June 22nd, when they put on an energetic show for parents, teachers and guests, an excellent opportunity for the young students to learn to feel at ease performing for an audience. Happy parents and satisfied teachers watched the infants perform with enthusiasm and confidence. One dance was based on the seasons of the year, the school Pecker Band played and a performance by the hula-hoop troupe entranced guests.





Prize-winning painter:  
Jigmet Norboo

## Positive action

During morning assembly students are encouraged to present topics to their peers. Class 4B presented their chosen topic of the harm of spreading rumours "Buy the Rumours, Sell the Facts", expressing their concern about the damage that can be caused by casual gossip. They put the case for "positive thought and positive speech, resulting in positive action".

Students are encouraged to get involved in campaigns. The District Health Department's inter-schools painting competition for World No Tobacco Day on May 31st inspired Jigmet Norboo to create a prize-winning work.

Student Padma Ladol held the position of Culture Captain last year, working with the teachers' culture committee to organize the school's cultural activities. Every Wednesday is a culture day when staff and students wear traditional dress and students bring traditional food for lunch.

## Construction

The second eco-shower building was completed in 2019, facilities that are proving popular with residential students. An essential seismic upgrade of the two-storey junior school was also completed, a complex task that took two years. Congratulations to the construction team.

The third residential building was also seismically upgraded, ensuring greater safety in the event of an earthquake and providing more thermal insulation, as well as an extra dormitory for eight students. Five residences are still to be upgraded.

The 2020 construction season could not start at the end of March because of the COVID-19 lockdown in India. We hope some construction work will be possible later in the year and we are raising funds for the purchase of materials in the autumn before the roads close again for winter.



Seismic upgrade: Junior School building



Sowing seeds: students help out

## Dragon garden landscape programme

In June 2019, volunteer landscape architect Jennifer Chandler returned to continue her work on the planting strategy. She was delighted to find that some of the cuttings in the plant nursery had survived the winter and the seeds collected by the gardeners Tsetan and Angmo had been stored and were ready for sowing. Watching Jennifer at work, some of the children became interested and wanted to help. With her encouragement they planted cuttings and sowed seeds in some of the planters on the campus. Jennifer carried out a field trip to find indigenous plants from which cuttings could be taken for propagation in the plant nursery.



# School events spring 2019 to spring 2020

## April

Three entries won awards in the inter-schools Bhoti essay competition during Ambedkar Jayanti celebrations on Sunday April 14th.

Arup resident engineer Emilie van Wijnbergen started her six-month stay.

## May

DPKS joins the public celebrations of the Buddha Purnima on May 18th with a colourful float.

Formation of the new-elected student council, with a visit by special guest Colonel A.M.Shinde, Commanding Officer, Leh National Cadet Corps.

Students participate in an inter-school painting and music competition.

Appointment of new members of the School Management Committee.

Volunteer landscape architect Jennifer Chandler arrived on May 10th for a one-month visit.

Volunteer educationalist Chris Krauss visits to provide coaching for teaching staff.

## June

Inter-schools cricket competition with Lamdon School.

Morning presentation from classes 6A and 7B on "cyber-addiction and its hazards", with short dramas illustrating its toll on young adolescents and how it is becoming a social menace.

The latest talk in the "Inspire to Aspire" motivational series took place, with guest speaker His Eminence Choskyong Palga Rinpoche talking about issues affecting adolescents.

Parents and villagers attend the White Lotus Expo and Fete, held for the fifth year on June 9th.

## July

Schools Exchange Programme: a New Delhi Municipal Council school visits DPKS.

Jolly Phonics training for English-language teachers.

The two-week summer holiday started on July 21st.

## August

Final year students' educational tour crossed the Khardung La mountain pass (altitude 5,359 metres/17,582 feet) and participants rode quad bikes and camels.

National Sports Day was held on August 29th.

## September

A 2,500-km fundraising cycling challenge through France was completed by dedicated school supporter Edwin Gruber.

Teacher's Day celebrations were held on September 5th and the school celebrated its 18th Founder's Day on September 24th.

Appointment of Vice-Principal Mingur Angmo.

Health screening for tuberculosis took place.

## October

Two-day camp organised by the Nature Conservation Foundation, a non-governmental wildlife conservation and research organisation based in Mysore, India, for 49 students and two teachers in the hamlet of Khatpu, in the Rong Valley, to learn about the unique native flora and fauna of Ladakh.

## November

Parents attended the Results Proclamation Day on November 1st, signalling the end of the academic year. Student awards were given out and Wisdom House won the prize for the best house of the year.

On November 4th the new academic year started.

Hundreds of cakes were baked to celebrate Children's Day on November 14th.

On November 25th, Principal Stanzin Kunzang left after her five-year tenure ended, with the advice: "Remember, never stop learning as learning never stops."

## December

Special assembly for world AIDS awareness day on December 2nd, plus distribution of winter homework.

On Saturday December 14th, school closed for the winter holiday. Students in years 8 to 10 were given information on mandatory on-campus winter coaching.

## January 2020

January 11th and 12th: Winter Hemis Festival, celebrating the heritage and spirituality of Ladakh.

January 26th Republic Day. Students participated in a march-past and cultural performance competitions, coming 1st and 3rd positions respectively.

## February 2020

Class 10 matriculation results published. The school achieved a 97% pass rate.

## March 2020

School reopened after the winter break on March 2nd.

Submission and evaluation of winter holiday homework on March 3rd.

All schools in India closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic on March 8th.

## April 2020

Class teachers set up WhatsApp groups for home learning. Virtual talent competition.



If you would like more information, or would like to donate or offer your expertise and time, then please contact:

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on behalf of

