



Transforming Rotherham Learning

A School Improvement Partnership Model

March 2011

Our Commitment

- All students making at least good progress
- No underperforming cohorts
- All teachers delivering at least good learning
- All schools moving to at least the next level of successful performance

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**Transforming Rotherham Learning (TRL)
A School Improvement Partnership Model
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1. Context

Whilst much of the detail of the policy contained within the recent White Paper is still just emerging, it would seem clear that there will be:

- An increased emphasis upon school – on – school support in a more commercial ‘school improvement’ market
- A reduced resource for centrally and LA provided support to schools
- The use of ‘new’ Academies and outstanding support schools to deliver school improvement support for other partners
- The development of Academy ‘chains’ to deliver support and help run schools that are deemed to be ‘failing’ or ‘merely satisfactory’
- A reduced role for LAs that will focus on light touch monitoring/challenge, an broad oversight of school improvement and the championing the progress and well being of vulnerable learners
- The continued existence of Ofsted, floor targets and ‘categories’ and ‘schools at risk’.
- Other factors such as Free Schools, University Technical Colleges etc that will de-stabilise the local system

It is clear from discussions with Headteachers and Governors that within this broader context there is still a considerable appetite from leaders across all phases in Rotherham to continue to work in partnership to better deliver improved provision and outcomes for all of Rotherham’s children and young people. Further, Headteachers on the Working Parties believe there is a moral and professional imperative to attempt to construct a better local system for all of our educational community.

Two groups of Headteachers, representing all phases met to discuss the above issues and suggest ways in which it might progress. To this end we recommend the proposal set out below.

A Rotherham School Improvement Partnership

2. Principles

All present thought that the TRL principles still hold good:

- We are all responsible for all Rotherham's children and young people.
- All Rotherham learners will achieve; no one will be left behind.
- Learning is the core business: investment, policy and strategy must be driven by opportunities for learners.
- Learning Communities (LC) will be rooted in and responsive to the needs of local people.

3. The Mission

The clear view was that any emerging partnership must be more effective and successful in promoting the outcomes of all children and young people and will need to address underperformance, particularly in KS2, and the variable standards in the secondary phase. In summary, the partnership will be tested against its ability to accelerate progress at a series of levels:

- all students making at least good progress
- no underperforming cohorts
- all teachers delivering at least good learning and
- all schools moving to at least the next level of successful performance

Essentially, the partnership will be school led, will be driven by the need to ensure student progress and well-being and will be independent of short term political expediency. It should focus on building excellence and addressing underperformance in equal measure.

4. Organisational Principles

The partnership must build the necessary, sustainable capacity and capability required with which it can deliver the above. A range of case studies have been developed that model and illustrate the above. These feature elements including addressing severe institutional underperformance, improving an already good school, developing strategic activity across a phase, using Headteachers and other leaders in a consultancy capacity and creating cross-phase improvement.

All colleagues were adamant that any commissioning or contracting of support would begin with very clear success criteria that identified the gains for children and young people, the Teaching and Learning gains and the benefits to whole school performance. The group identified a range of resources that could be put in place for the Academic Year 2011/12 that would help deliver the above agenda. These included:

- i. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Funding (£750,000 min for 2011/12)

- ii. The Endowment Fund
- iii. Teaching Schools (at least one in each of primary, special and secondary phases)
- iv. SES personnel in place 2011/12 e.g. Secondary and Primary Consultant Heads, Data Manager, Business Manager
- v. Contributions from schools additional to the above
- vi. Income generation

5. Operational Considerations

In determining the scope of the Partnership's activity it was clear that a distinction needed to be drawn between the contribution and relationship with the Local Authority (admissions, appeals, SEN administration, payroll etc) and the School Effectiveness Service. It is the latter that will be the key operational partner to schools and Headteachers. Further, it needs to be emphasised that the partnership will focus exclusively on **improvement and transformation** and leave the vast majority of the LA's statutory duties in their current location. The Strategic Group (see below) will liaise closely with the LA through the Consultant Headteachers and the CYPS Strategic Director. The Consultant Headteachers will be the critical link between the SES and the Improvement Partnership

The SES Director is currently consulting Headteachers and others about a broader Partnership Executive that will connect and oversee the variety of Headteacher and school related activities such as The Improvement Partnership, Schools Forum, Learning Community Representatives, the leadership of PRUs and so forth.

6. What has worked and what should we retain moving forward?

- i. There was a strong feeling that the SIP programme at its best had improved outcomes, providing challenge and support to schools. Central to the success was an experienced Head as SIP with a careful match of school to SIP. Regular and connected dialogue with an external colleague was seen as vital. At its best such a process had helped share good practice and effective strategies.
- ii. School reviews commissioned and involving school leaders
- iii. Elements of targeted support have helped impose focus and structure to school improvement activities.
- iv. 'Pairing/Sharing' – Primary Partnerships, Executive/Consultant Heads and Zones were given as positive examples of a shared drive for improvement.
- v. New Headteacher, NQT and other induction programmes were seen as worth retaining across the Partnership
- vi. Leadership Programmes at all levels were seen as necessary and successful.

The focus must remain on improving leadership, provision and children and young people's outcomes.

7. What requires improvement and remodelling?

- i. If a SIP/Consultant Head/Peer Head type programme is continued it should focus less on monitoring and more on challenging accurate self evaluation, identifying need and brokering support.
- ii. The above allied to SPGs need to provide a better analysis of progress and a clearer audit of need across LCs. This will then provide a firmer foundation for improvement activities. Currently the view is partial.
- iii. Where programmes and projects were successful e.g. stronger management systems, then access should not be limited to targeted schools – it should be a universal offer. These and other activities need to be carefully evaluated by Heads/Consultant Heads/LLEs
- iv. Specialist and Special school expertise should be used more widely, particularly to intervene early in a child's learning journey
- v. The LC offers a real opportunity to provide peer support and challenge with an 'external, critical friend' alongside. The LC also offers significant opportunities to share resources and gain better value for money that can release resource and expertise for T&L
- vi. Develop more cross phase leadership work. License leaders to innovate and run projects on behalf of others.
- vii. Use a Partnership to develop better CPD for Associate/Support Staff. This could be commissioned by Heads across LCs and the wider Partnership
- viii. There needs to be a more rigorous evaluation of the impact of Behaviour Support Services and SEN provision. The use of our Special Schools and their expertise and specialisms offer real opportunities here.

8. How do we build capacity within our schools?

- i. Develop a better audit and understanding of both need and ability across both SES and The Improvement Partnership.
- ii. Create a more accurate performance picture across schools. Use the processes identified above to broker and signpost schools/LCs
- iii. Involve practitioners in scrutinising each other's practice to support improvement. Utilise Local Leaders of Education (LLEs).
- iv. Facilitate support networks (e.g. through middle leadership programmes and new head teacher opportunities etc)
- v. Use our very best Headteachers/LLEs to coach and mentor other Heads and leaders. Promote their work with other schools.

9. And within our Learning Communities?

- i. Explore joint staffing/new appointments – should/could these be made by an individual school (i.e. overstaffing) or as a joint LC appointment? What would these roles 'look like' (i.e. development of job descriptions to reflect new collaborative roles?)

- ii. Share resources to realise economies of scale, releasing resources for T&L
- iii. Given a more accurate understanding of performance, develop 'smart partnering' of 2-3 schools within a LC around a core issue e.g. boys writing. These activities should promote 'deeper and quicker' improvement.
- iv. Look to have a Consultant Head or Local Leader in Education (LLE) in each Learning Community.

10. Facilitating Learning Community and School-to-School Support

- i. A thorough **audit** at individual school level would be necessary to develop an accurate picture of performance, expertise, strengths and areas to develop. In addition to aspects of leadership, teaching and learning, the audit could include practice linked to administration/finance/site management/pastoral care/family and parental engagement etc.
- ii. **Quality Assurance** processes for the audit activity would be vital in ensuring judgements were accurate and current. Heads working alongside Consultant Heads would quality assure in the first instance, testing out theories where data or other evidence gave an indication of the practice in relation to delivering the Mission.
- iii. **A Record of Strengths and Areas for Development** – given the possible transience of some circumstances, the way in which the audit findings were recorded would need to be kept "live" and updated on a regular basis as further quality assurance within individual schools and across learning communities took place.
- iv. Schools' individual strengths could be recorded alongside others within an LC overview. A bank of Learning Community "directories" could be constructed to form a "live" overview/ framework of strengths / expertise across the partnership which was quality assured on a regular basis.
- v. This "live" record could then form the basis of **the resource** available to all schools to facilitate school on school support, providing individual schools with a tool to look within their LC in the first instance to meet their needs, and then wider across other learning communities, the LA and beyond for support.
- vi. Given the above it would be the role of the two Consultant Heads supporting the Strategic Group to provide a summary of the analysis/audit and the consequent need for investment to secure improvement and transformation.

11. Co-ordination and management of Learning Communities

Different learning community leadership models are beginning to emerge. Some learning communities are planning to buy in the services of a member of staff external to the schools to drive the work of the learning community (sustaining a model employed by the EAZ). Other models included a colleague from the secondary school having dedicated time to lead on the work of the learning community. A third model was also

discussed where a primary head teacher/LLE may take a lead in driving the learning community work (although it was acknowledged that this would not suit every learning community due to pressures on head teacher time and workload). Some learning communities might also benefit from some front loading support from the authority via the consultant head teachers. It is clear, however, that if Learning Communities are to be a central theme in developing policy and practice we will need to give thought to how they are managed and led.

12 The Role of Teaching Schools

The DfE see an increasing role for Teaching Schools within the improvement process.

“A national network of outstanding schools, which will take a leading responsibility for providing and quality assuring initial teacher training (ITT) in their area and offering professional development for teachers and leaders” (National College March 2011)

We are fortunate in Rotherham to have several primary schools, two special schools and one secondary who meet the Ofsted criteria of outstanding in Leadership, achievement and teaching/learning. These schools are currently discussing ways in which Rotherham can submit either a connected 0-19 bid or connected phase bids. The relevant elements of Teaching School status for the Improvement Partnership include:

- i. Initial Teacher Training
- ii. Graduate Teacher Training
- iii. CPD
- iv. Designating and managing Specialist Leaders in Education (SLEs)
- v. Leadership Development and Talent Management
- vi. Support for schools, including those in Challenging Circumstances

13. Leadership and Governance of the Improvement Partnership

This links to the points outlined above

The Short Term (2011/12/13)

- i. Partners would be expected to contribute so as to drive both their own improvement and that of the other members. The broader partnership group would commission schools, staff and students to develop excellence to promote further improvement in and across all schools.
- ii. Consultant Headteachers/LLEs working with schools will audit current strengths and areas for development across each phase, each Learning Community and the Partnership as a whole. This ‘intelligence gathering’ would be supported by the SES Data Team and would include Heads indicating their willingness to further

develop excellence on behalf of the wider partnership. This may come from individual institutions, Learning Communities or other collaborations e.g. Teaching Schools

- iii. Recommendations for priorities will be presented to A Strategic Group (6 - 8 Heads including Teaching School Head(s), CYPS Director and two Consultant Heads). The priorities will be costed, timed and funded through Partnership monies. Each priority will have success criteria related to the Mission Statement and The Strategic Group will use these to monitor and evaluate progress.
- iv. In the first year, because of tight timescales some current activity e.g. core subject support in Secondary might have to be rolled forward (in that for a September start some appointments to schools would need to take place in the early Summer Term.)
- v. Any appointments would be to schools and all investment would be through schools. Much challenge and support could take place, as now, directly between schools or within Learning Communities. The Partnership should only fund the priority activities in the main. If other work in and across schools needs to happen other than the core priorities, the Consultant Heads will help broker and arrange that but funding will be minimal
- vi. The Consultant Heads will be the critical link between the SES and the Improvement Partnership. Both groups will use the analysis of performance and audit of capacity and capability to inform their work. For example, analysis of live data will inform SES of schools that are likely to under-perform or fall below floor targets. The SES will look to the Improvement Partnership for strategies and support to address such issues. The SES and Improvement Partnership will both drive to deliver the Mission set out above and issues such as KS2 performance will be central to their activities.
- vii. The Consultant Heads will work with The Teaching School(s) directly to broker their activities to support capacity building (ITT, GTP, recruitment, succession planning, and leadership development) and improvement. They would ensure linkage and coherence with the rest of the system through the membership of The Teaching School(s)' Headteacher on the Strategic (Governance) Group.
- viii. The Improvement Partnership will not be exclusive to Rotherham. It will accept partners and providers from other LAs after careful consideration of the value they could add and the contribution they could make. Further, the Improvement Partnership and SES will consider income generating opportunities from work with schools and partners in other LAs and institutions. The Strategic Group will be the decision making authority in these cases.
- ix. Critically, Heads from across the phases, along with Consultant Heads, would have a shared responsibility for the Quality Assurance and Evaluation of the overall strategy, the individual activities and the effectiveness of the partnership.
- x. Progress will be presented to the other Headteacher Meetings, the School Forum and any other appropriate groups

Medium Term (2012 onwards)

- i. The Strategic Group and other Heads QA work of Partnership.
- ii. The Group and other Heads will research other sources of increased funding.
- iii. On basis of a successful first year(s) and the prospect of direct funding to schools then the Partnership will consider:
 - a. Funding Consultant Heads and a Partnership Team similar to above. This may also include the Partnership's own HR Group
 - b. Locating all in schools, most likely Teaching Schools and carry out their work from there.
 - c. The Partnership will fund the team and QA its work and impact

14. Governance

This needs to be 'light touch', agile and representative without being too large. It must not become too complex and bureaucratic. Heads thought that in the first instance the Partnership Strategic Group should consist of a small, representative group of Heads (6-8) licensed by and delegated from each phase along with a Consultant Headteacher from each phase and the CYPS Strategic Director. The group should include a Head or Leader from a school that meets Teaching School criteria in each Phase. Their focused remit should include:

- ✓ Commissioning an audit of improvement needs and capacity
- ✓ Confirming key priorities and determining annual resource commitments
- ✓ Ensuring on-going Quality Assurance and Evaluation
- ✓ Ensuring communication and consultation with other groups e.g. Headteachers (in Phase, Learning Communities or Joint Meetings), FE, HE, other providers
- ✓ Shaping the work of Consultant Heads/LLEs and other personnel

It is clear that the group should not become routinely involved in other LA type activities. It will need to liaise with other Headteacher activities e.g. Partnership Executive, Phase Headteacher Groups, School Forum, Appeals etc but can be separate from them to retain focus and drive.

15. Improvement Examples

The Working Parties have developed examples of how current and new school – to - school support and challenge can transform the life chances of learners. These examples will illustrate practically how the Mission, principles and organisational elements can come together in a very practical and effective manner. They will identify the value added of a new way of working and the means of ensuring the Partnership sustainability.