

**Report to Schools Forum
05th October 2012**

Learners First - school led school improvement

1. Summary

The Government's aim, 'to support the school system to become more effectively self-improving', charges schools with the primary responsibility for their own improvement. As the capacity of Local Authorities reduces and schools and leaders take on greater responsibility for school improvement, leading improvement work across the system, there is a need to put in place suitable safeguards and a support infrastructure to ensure all children and young people fulfil their potential.

During 2011/12 it became evident that aligning the strategic groups for RoSIP and the Teaching School Alliance would better serve our schools and allow us to firmly root local priorities within the national context. From the outset, school leaders agreed that RoSIP and the TSA must build the necessary, sustainable capacity and capability required to deliver the agreed Mission in all settings. This will mean investing in, and drawing on school based staff to take lead roles in developing and delivering improvement programmes – in effect re-investing resources in the schools system to be more self supporting. Forum members will recall that the funds made available to the Partnership were derived from savings made through 'value for money reviews' conducted by Headteachers in 2010/11 and a realignment of spending priorities.

In order to do this, a more formal partnership structure with clear governance arrangement needs to be put in place to safeguard the work of the Partnership. Such arrangements will help clarify the financial position and our capacity to provide school improvement both formally and informally in the future. Following legal advice and thorough exploration of all possible options and consultation with the current representative strategic group, the formation of a not-for-profit 'schools company' was agreed: 'Learners First Schools Partnership Ltd'. The company operates on behalf of Rotherham's partnership of schools and through the Director of Children and Young People's Services, the Local Authority acts as the supervising authority. Financial probity is secured through the submission of audited accounts on an annual basis to the supervising authority.

2. Recommendations:

- (i) That Schools Forum support the recommendation of the ROSIP Strategic Group and agree to maintain the current level of funding for the Schools Partnership of £764,797 for the next two years 2013/14 and 2014/15.
- (ii) That current balances of DSG funds held by the local authority on behalf of the Schools Partnership in respect of 2011/12 be transferred to the school company 'Learners First Schools Partnership Ltd' with immediate effect.
- (iii) That the local authority sets up processes to transfer funds from the DSG for 2012/13 onwards to 'Learners First' on a quarterly basis in advance.
- (iv) That 'Learners First Schools Partnership Ltd' circulate the Minutes of all meetings and the annual audited accounts to members of the Schools Forum.

Learners First Schools Partnership

1. National Background

The Government's aim, 'to support the school system to become more effectively self-improving', charges schools with the primary responsibility for their own improvement. As the capacity of Local Authorities reduces and schools and leaders take on greater responsibility for school improvement, leading improvement work across the system, there is a need to put in place suitable safeguards and a support infrastructure to ensure all children and young people fulfil their potential.

2. Local Response 2011-12: RoSIP and the TSA

During 2011-12 this context led a number of school leaders from all phases to plan, design and construct the Rotherham School Improvement Partnership (RoSIP). 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 address KS2 underperformance and the variable standards in the secondary phase. At a similar time to this, a group of outstanding schools, including schools from outside the Rotherham LA boundary, led by Wickersley School and Sports College bid for and successfully achieved Teaching School* status. In July 2011 the Wickersley Teaching School Alliance became one of the country's first 100 Teaching School Alliances. The relevant elements of the Teaching School remit for RoSIP included:

- 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

During the course of the year it became evident that aligning the strategic groups for RoSIP and the Teaching School Alliance would better serve our schools and allow us to firmly root local priorities within the national context. This led to a number of key areas of focus being identified (through the amalgamation of the outcomes from the Learning Community Audit and the Teaching School core remit) and sub-groups formed to look at each area in more detail and put forward recommendations on behalf of the whole school system.

The collective and shared Mission remained the driving force behind all activity and areas of school improvement focus throughout 2011-12 and continues to do so into 2012-13:

- 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

** Teaching Schools - "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)*

3. Developing Our Partnership: Learners First Schools Partnership

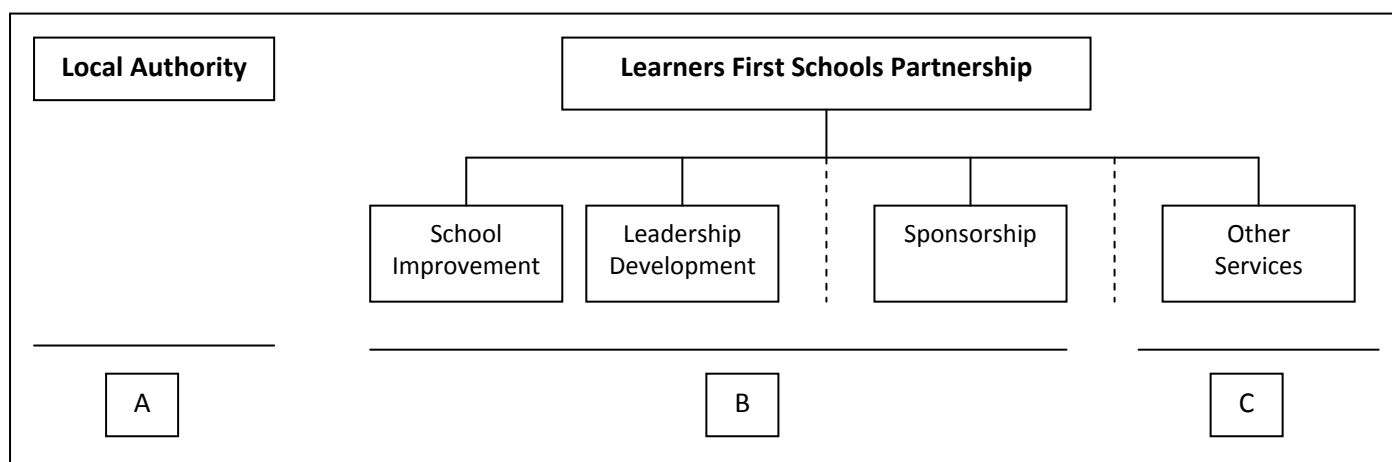
From the outset, school leaders agreed that RoSIP and the TSA must build the necessary, sustainable capacity and capability required to deliver the above Mission in all settings. Throughout the course of the year the collective Partnership can report many successes and areas of impact. It has become increasingly

apparent however, that a more formal partnership structure with clear governance arrangement needs to be put in place to safeguard the work of the Partnership. Such arrangements will help clarify the financial position and our capacity to provide school improvement both formally and informally in the future. Following legal advice (Browne-Jacobson), thorough exploration of all possible options and consultation with the current representative strategic group, the formation of a not-for-profit company was agreed: **'Learners First Schools Partnership Ltd'**. Essentially, the Partnership will remain school led, driven by the Mission and the need to ensure improved outcomes for children and young people. It will be independent of any short term political expediency. Many recently formed school partnerships are exploring company and/or trust arrangements, but for our Partnership the rationale for entering into a company arrangement includes:

- Risk Mitigation
- Organisational and financial clarity (separating agreed Partnership funding from any individual school or the local authority)
- Facilitating further collaborative work (including potential sponsorships)
- Opportunity to bid for grants
- Decision making and composition of the board
- Establishing a brand

4. Core Remit of Learners First Schools Partnership

The primary focus will remain on building excellence and addressing underperformance in equal measure through system led school improvement and leadership development. The key areas are outlined below:



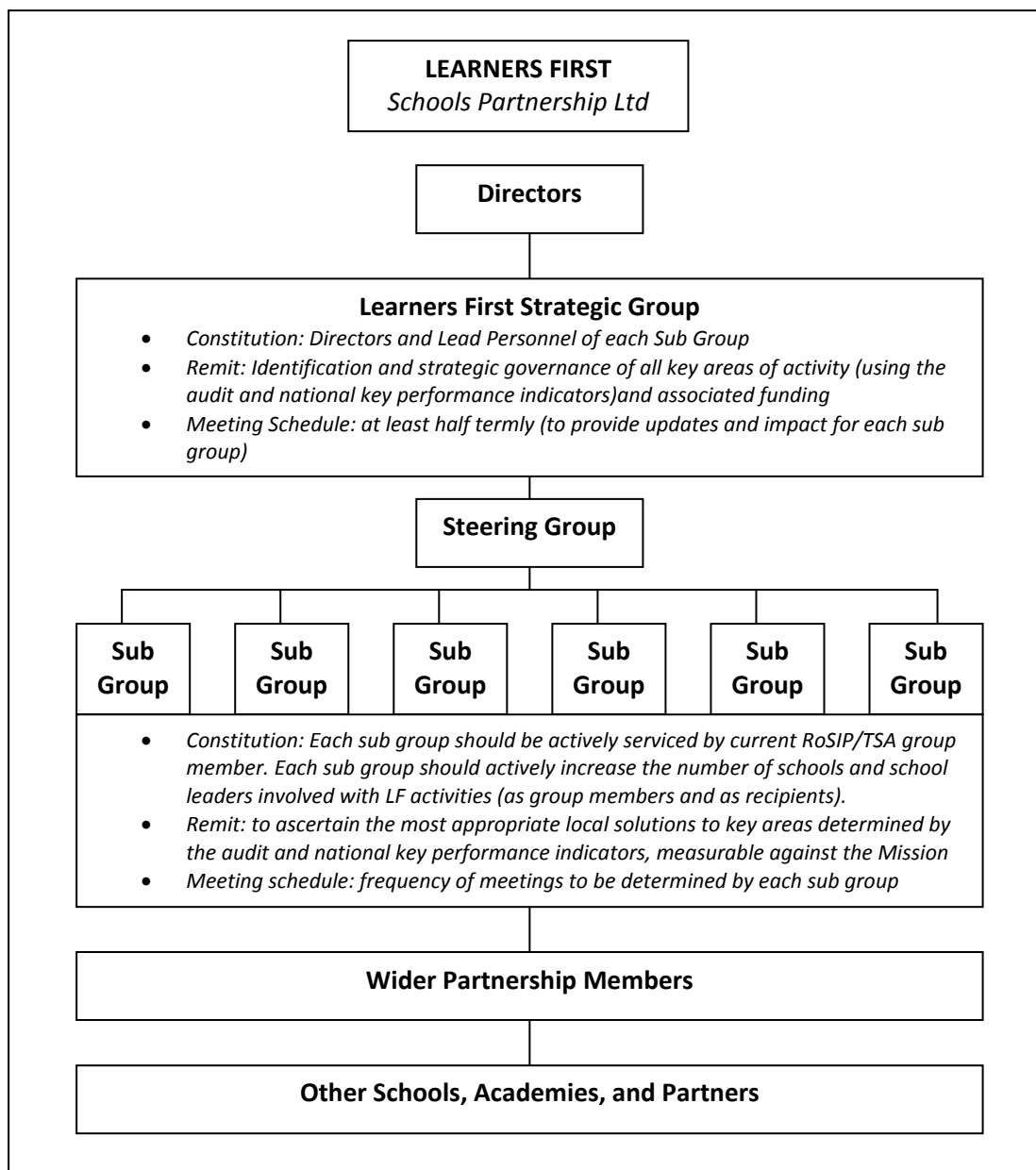
The Company [Learners First Schools Partnership Ltd] is a not for profit company for the advancement of education. The Company has been incorporated by Wickersley [as lead school of the TSA] in accordance with s.11 of the Education Act 2002 and The School Companies Regulations 2002, for the purpose of supporting collaboration to deliver school improvement and to capture “best practice”. The local education authority is designated as the supervising authority for the Company as required by law.

5. Governance of Learners First

When the strategic governance group of RoSIP first formed it was agreed that the governance should 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 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'*. As the RoSIP and TSA strategic groups merged and the work of the Partnership has developed and grown over the last year, the membership of the group has continued to expand to such an extent that is no longer able to fulfil its core strategic function. Therefore, it has become necessary to amend our governance arrangements, building upon our existing accountability structures and using legal guidance (from Browne-Jacobson) in accordance

with the formation of Learners First Schools Partnership. The model outlined below is designed to allow the Partnership to:

- maximise impact and outcomes measured against the Mission;
- aid the communication strategy across the partnership;
- ensure consistent and coherent accountability structures and impact measures; and
- ensure key priorities of the partnership are addressed in equal measure.



5.1 Directors

In accordance with the legal requirements of the configuration of a not-for-profit company, a representative board of directors has been established. There are seven directors denoting the 0-19 remit of the Partnership with representation from early years settings, primary, secondary and special schools (effectively covering Teaching School, RoSIP and wider school members). Currently, the directors of Learners First School Partnership are:

- **John Henderson**
Executive Headteacher of Whiston Worrygoose, Whiston J&I and Canklow (primary schools)

- **David Hudson**
National Leader of Education (NLE)
Headteacher of Wickersley School and Sports College (lead school of the Wickersley Teaching School Alliance)
- **Phil Marshall**
Consultant Headteacher
DfE Adviser
- **Alan Richards**
National Leader of Governance (NLG)
Chair of Governors
- **David Silvester**
Primary Headteacher
Chair of Schools Forum
- **Julie Turner**
Local Leader of Education (LLE)
Headteacher of Aughton Early Years
- **Nick Whittaker**
Local Leader of Education (LLE)
Executive Headteacher of Hilltop and Kelford (Special Schools)

5.2 Learners First Strategic Group, Steering Group & Sub Groups

In line with the remit of the original RoSIP **strategic group** agreed by school leaders, this group should be representative of the partnership structure, be accountable to partnership members, comprehensively cover of all key areas of activity, and remain non bureaucratic. This group should therefore consist of a small, representative group of Heads (6-8) licensed by and delegated from each key area of Learners First activity (i.e. the lead personnel of each sub group). The constitution of the strategic group will therefore be the Directors of Learners First and the leader of each sub group. The sub group leads will also meet independently as a **steering group** to discuss and agree operational protocols and procedures to ensure consistency across the sub groups.

The membership of each sub group will be revisited and enhanced through the involvement of additional headteachers and personnel from a range of Local Authorities and settings (including settings with executive headteacher arrangements, federations and multi academy trusts). The sub groups will meet regularly throughout the course of the year, with the lead of each sub group reporting back to each other and the Directors on key areas of activity and impact measured against the Mission at the Learners First Strategic Group/Steering Group meetings. (As an aid, each sub group will be provided with action planning materials.) These meetings, which will be held on a half termly basis, will also serve to ensure effective communication and coherence between the sub groups. Each sub group lead will be charged with the dissemination of information from the Learners First Strategic Group meetings to their group members.

All sub group and strategic group members are advocates of Learners First and are responsible for the dissemination of information and promotion of opportunities to other schools within and beyond the partnership. The progress of each sub group and Learners First in general will be reported to both joint and single phase Headteachers' meetings – in effect 'the shareholders'.

5.3 Learners First Infrastructure

Learners First Schools Partnership will be serviced by an established infrastructure of key personnel working closely with the Strategic Group. The infrastructure includes a finance director, a project director, facilities/events personnel and administrative staff. The Strategic Group consists of outstanding headteachers and leaders (0-19), from across a number of school/academy settings and Local Authority areas, with successful and proven records of school and system leadership. This includes National Leaders of Education (including those with experience of leading a National Support School), Local Leaders of Education, Specialist Leaders of Education, a National Leader of Governance, Consultant Headteachers, and Executive, Academy and Federation Headteachers.

In response to urgent and/or unforeseen situations, Learners First is in the advantageous position to draw upon a large pool of expertise and experience covering all phases, contexts and socio-economic deviations from across a number of Local Authority areas. This includes the commitment and willingness of not only the Strategic and Sub Group members but also of a wider pool of stakeholder headteachers from across the country who possess the necessary expertise, credibility and capacity to undertake headship roles across more than one school/academy, including schools of concern and those in scope. Through its secure governance, strategic leadership, and wide reaching networks (including additional Teaching School Alliances, NLEs from a range of Local Authorities, and HEI providers) Learners First is able to effectively support other schools on their journey to sustainable improvement and the next level of successful performance.

6. Funding Arrangements

Learners First School Partnership is a not for profit company. Any funds that the partnership is in receipt of and/or generates through its core school improvement and leadership work will be profiled against the key areas of activity and reinvested into the school system. The Learners First Strategic group, with the aid of key finance personnel, will be responsible for profiling the budget across the key areas of activity and reporting progress and spending to the whole system.

Priorities for Learners First 2012-13

To Deliver the Mission - 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

Governance: Strategic Group

KS2

Budget Allocation: £

REMIT & ACTION PLAN				
Data	Targeted Support	Learning Community	Mathematics	English
<i>Membership</i>	<i>Membership</i>	<i>Membership</i>	<i>Membership</i>	<i>Membership</i>
Remit	Remit	Remit	Remit	Remit
Marketing, events, impact review & R&D				

Targeted Professional Development

Budget Allocation: £

REMIT & ACTION PLAN		
NQT	RQT	Support Staff
<i>Membership</i>	<i>Membership</i>	<i>Membership</i>
Remit	Remit	Remit
Marketing, events, impact review & R&D		

SEN

Budget Allocation: £

REMIT & ACTION PLAN	
Underperforming Cohorts	SEND Progress and Achievement
<i>Membership</i>	<i>Membership</i>
Remit	Remit
Marketing, events, impact review & R&D	

Leadership

Budget Allocation: £

REMIT & ACTION PLAN			
SLE	LLE/NLE	Leadership Licence	Succession Planning
<i>Membership</i>	<i>Membership</i>	<i>Membership</i>	<i>Membership</i>
Remit	Remit	Remit	Remit
Marketing, events, impact review & R&D			

ITT

Budget Allocation: £

REMIT & ACTION PLAN		
GTP	PGCE	School Direct
<i>Membership</i>	<i>Membership</i>	<i>Membership</i>
Remit	Remit	Remit
Marketing, events, impact review & R&D		

KS4

Budget Allocation: £

REMIT & ACTION PLAN		
English	Mathematics	Science
<i>Membership</i>	<i>Membership</i>	<i>Membership</i>
Remit	Remit	Remit
Marketing, events, impact review & R&D		

School Improvement Budget 2011/12 to 2014/15

Last updated: 20th September 2012

4-Year Budget Profile	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	TOTALS
Balance b'fwd	£0.00	£794,611.00	£325,365.13	£163,162.13	
DSG	£764,797.00	£764,797.00	£764,797.00	£764,797.00	£2,029,594
Standards Fund	£275,800.00	£0.00	£0	£0	£275,800
Total budget for Year	£1,040,597.00	£1,559,408.00	£1,090,162.13	£927,959.13	£2,305,394.00
Expenditure	£245,986.00	£1,234,042.88	£927,000.00	£927,000.00	
balance c'fwd	£794,611.00	£325,365.13	£163,162.13	£959.13	

2012/13 Budget

	Units	Rate	Budget 2012/13	Group Sub-totals	% of Exp
KS2				£384,744	31.18%
NLEs	240	£500.00	£120,000		
LLEs	132	£400.00	£52,800		
Data Systems (MAG/FFT)			£59,113		
Targeted Support (SLE)	180	£350.00	£63,000		
Specific School Support (SQ; SB; RO)			£89,831		
KS4				£279,237	22.63%
Maths			£80,159		
English			£68,039		
Science			£68,039		
Targeted Support (SLE)	180	£350.00	£63,000		
SEN			£168,500	£168,500	13.65%
ITT			£180,000	£180,000	14.59%
Leadership Programme				£25,000	2.03%
Leaders of tomorrow		£5,000	£5,000		
Strategic Development			£20,000		
Targeted Professional Development				£57,500	4.66%
ITP/OTP Programme (per course - 6 attendees)	5	£2,100.00	£10,500		
Support staff programmes			£20,000		
NQT/RQT			£8,000		
New programme development costs			£19,000		
Infrastructure				£139,062	11.27%
Central Team			£66,062		
Steering Group Leads			£30,000		
Marketing, Communications, R&D			£15,000		
Events and venue costs			£12,000		
Accountancy & Legal costs			£16,000		
TOTAL			£1,234,043	£1,234,043	100.00%
Balance				£325,365	