

Looking for your next career challenge?

Are you a strategic leader with a

difference?



Leadership Development Strategic Lead



Contract: Flexible - offered for a fixed period of two years, with possible extension. (Secondment options may be considered).
Salary: Commensurate with experience and expertise.
Responsible to: Managing Director of Learners First Schools Partnership
Job Reference: LF1120LDSL

"Leading in disruptive times means being able to navigate a different course, to create new pathways through the disruption..." (Harris & Jones, September 2020)

We are looking for a highly motivated, entrepreneurial and effective leader to help redefine, reimage and reform our school leadership offer to help take the provision, programmes, participants and the organisations they serve to the next level of excellence and beyond.

If you are excited by a challenge, are hardworking and innovative and possess the skills, knowledge and commitment to drive this endeavour forward, we would love to hear from you.

Learners First is a successful school-based organisation based in South Yorkshire and, following a sustained period of growth, and as we enter a time of significant change within the education sector, we are looking to expand and enhance the team with the addition of an exciting new role. As a forward thinking and innovative organisation, we are looking for a highly motivated, talented and committed individual to join the team at a senior level. The successful 'Leadership Development Strategic Lead' will be responsible for enhancing and extending the existing leadership provision and will be able to successfully shape, implement and deliver strategy to make vision and plans a reality. This new role will be both challenging and rewarding and will require the successful individual to work at a strategic level to drive forward this critical area of work in an innovative and effective way.

The Leadership Development Strategic Leader role is a fantastic opportunity for a forward thinking individual with a passion and proven track record of supporting the professional development of leaders at all levels across the school workforce (all phases and school contexts). The successful applicant will have a secure understanding of the challenges associated with the current educational landscape and the implications for schools and their leaders as well as the vision, enthusiasm, determination and skills to explore, develop and implement the new opportunities they bring.

Leadership Development Strategic Lead Information Pack



Introduction

Learners First is an inclusive partnership which operates without fear or favour and believes that quality should always prevail. The Nolan principles of public service guide our way of working and ensure we operate with honesty, integrity and generosity of spirit. Through our approach we also look to address existing imbalances and examples of privilege bias wherever possible in the system and place a huge ethical and moral emphasis on supporting those facing disproportionate disadvantage as a result of social mobility and contextual challenges. The Learners First design and delivery model has been built on strong partnership working across the region and engagement data and external quality assurance of the provision suggests this has been very positive.

Leadership development forms a significant part of the Learners First offer with hundreds of leaders from a diverse range of schools, settings, phases and contexts accessing the provision, programmes and networks each year. As this key area of our work continues to grow, both in terms of scale and significance, and in preparation for future requirements and a changing national picture, Learners First is seeking an enthusiastic, talented and reliable strategic leader with relevant expertise to join the team and provide strategic oversight and leadership to continue to drive forward this critical area of work.

As a DfE accredited provider of the full suite of NPQ qualifications since 2012, Learners First has a very strong proven track record of designing and delivering high quality leadership programmes across the sector. The accredited leadership programmes are embedded within a progressive curriculum which extends from pre-ITT to executive leadership. Common themes are revisited at progressively higher levels and leadership behaviours, at all levels within the curriculum, are pivotal to the provision. Our approach to leadership development is intrinsically linked to school improvement and a desire to improve outcomes for children and young people, as well as developing the leadership skills and competencies of the individuals. Through our leadership endeavours we aim to:

- Provide authentic, high quality learning experiences for colleagues at all levels within their career which challenge and support them to go beyond comfort zones and learn new things.
- Constructively challenge prevailing orthodoxies and question the status quo through innovation and a genuine desire to make a significant and sustainable difference.
- Look for innovative solutions whilst upholding our professional values and respecting the regulatory frameworks which we, and others within the education system, operate within.
- Create professional and meaningful networks which support both individuals and institutions to better connect, collaborate, improve and grow.
- Engender meaningful, authentic, professional development opportunities and networks which aim to promote excellence, address underperformance.
- Anticipate, respond to, and support schools and leaders to navigate likely trends and challenges within the education sector.

The successful individual will therefore need to be an exceptionally talented, high quality, strategic leader in their own right with experience of working with school, academy and MATs leaders at all levels. They will need to be a confident communicator and able to demonstrate a proven track record of seeking, developing and driving positive and effective partnerships with a wide range of individuals, schools and organisations from across different contexts and sectors. The role will require the successful individual to have a secure and thorough understanding of education policy and how this manifests at both a national and local level. They will be able to connect to other recognised initiatives, have a research informed approach and have the ability, skills and aptitude to scope future developments and the direction of travel within the sector to ensure the Learners First leadership provision continues to deliver and meet the needs of its partners in an authentic way.

Leadership Development Strategic Lead

Key Responsibilities



Main Purpose:

To take a lead role developing the full suite of Learners First leadership development opportunities, ensuring the provision both aligns to the DfE frameworks and national initiatives and delivers on local priorities. This will include full oversight and responsibility for the strategic development of the leadership development offer by enhancing existing provision, ensuring increased engagement and positive impact, and driving the development of new, associated opportunities. There will also be the opportunity to contribute to wider system leadership through involvement in the broader work of Learners First.

Key Responsibilities:

Due to the nature of this new role, the responsibilities and duties outlined below may be subject to change. Therefore, although not exhaustive, key areas are likely to include:

- Lead the design, delivery and coordination of all leadership development activity on behalf of the partnership, ensuring excellence as standard and connectivity to the wider work of Learners First Schools Partnership.
- Work with the relevant key stakeholders to ensure the leadership development offer is aligned to national frameworks and adheres to any new legislation, guidance and/or related DfE policies.
- Undertake a thorough review of all current provision to analyse, identify and scope new or future areas of development and areas of potential growth to enhance the offer and current provision.
- As the key point of contact, effectively promote the Learners First leadership development provision and any associated work at a local, regional and national level to encourage connectivity and engagement within and beyond current networks.
- Oversee the quality assurance of all associated leadership programmes, including responsibility for the production of any related monitoring, data collection and reporting documentation for both and external stakeholders.
- Establish an effective system to engage, build and maintain connections with schools and leaders accessing Learners First programmes and provision.
- Oversee the design and delivery of all leadership development programmes across the partnership, including the development of associated bespoke support, with tangible actions and impact.
- Undertake appropriate and associated research and development activities to stay abreast of policy updates, the latest findings and current trends within related fields, and the development of new teaching and learning initiatives.
- Contribute and take a lead role within associated forums and stakeholder groups, including active participate in local, regional and national networks to ensure the Learners First is well known, respected and well connected across the system.
- Liaise with a wide range of leaders and professionals across a variety of schools and settings to widen participation, encourage access and increase positive engagement with leadership development opportunities and wider Learners First activities. This will include establishing links with new and existing leaders as well as developing professional relationships with other key stakeholders such as Universities, Teaching School Hubs, Research Schools, the DfE and, increasingly, leaders from beyond the sector.
- Undertake a lead role in the training, coordination and dissemination of information to other lead professionals (including lead facilitators and Specialist Leaders of Education).
- Ensure key information is communicated effectively through face to face networks (including briefing events and leadership seminars), website and social media updates, and other relevant channels.

Leadership Development Strategic Lead

Person Specification



The successful individual will be an experienced and credible school leader with a proven track record of working at a strategic level and able to demonstrate influence across multiple organisations. They should be an excellent communicator, organised and thrive under pressure. They will be required to meet tight deadlines, be resourceful and approach their work with a positive 'can-do' attitude with a good sense of humour. The ability to form good working relationships with a range of stakeholders ranging from University professionals, DfE personnel, headteachers, CEOs and senior leaders as well as course delegates and prospective delegates is essential. The successful individual will be able to work strategically to produce work of the highest quality, and importantly, display a high level of commitment to the role and the endeavours of the organisation.

Applications to the Leadership Development Lead role are invited from individuals who can demonstrate:

- A passion and proven track records for improving and implementing leadership development provision for those within the teaching and wider education profession.
- Knowledge of the DfE's early career and NPQ framework requirements and how these link to the endeavours of the wider recruitment and retention strategy.
- A proven track record as a school leader of supporting, developing and nurturing leaders at all levels within the profession.
- Effective mentoring and coaching roles.
- An ability to work at a strategic level to inform, innovate and evaluate practice and anticipate likely trends in education policy.
- Relevant knowledge and expertise across a range of phases, sectors and school contexts and how this can be translated into effective support to aid the development of other teachers, leaders and schools.
- Evidence of working with a wide range of schools, settings and leaders at a strategic level to design and deliver high quality support, training and networking opportunities.
- The ability to use evidence based research and best practice evidence in their own practice and a willingness to engage in further personal and professional CPD and research/development activities.
- A proven track record of designing and delivering high quality CPD programmes and leadership development opportunities which have a proven impact on classroom practice.
- Excellent organisational, communication and interpersonal skills and the ability to inspire and engage others.
- Experience of working with external stakeholders and organisations in relevant and related fields such as HEI providers, the DfE, Opportunity Areas, MAT leaders and headteachers.

It is an exciting time to join the Learners First team and applications are welcomed from individuals with the relevant experience, expertise, attitude and aptitude. The successful individual will also have a keen interest in supporting leaders at all levels within the sector and, ultimately, making a significant contribution to improving the outcomes and wider life chances of children and young people. In turn, as well as a wide range of employment benefits, Learners First will offer the successful individual the opportunity to be at the forefront of leadership thinking and development; the chance to join local, regional and national networks (both within and beyond education sector); exciting professional development and career progression opportunities; and the licence to create and develop mutually beneficial partnerships and networks.

Leadership Development Strategic Lead

Essential Key Skills and Attributes



- 1. Comfortable with Uncertainty**
Is able to move Learners First forward in the face of uncertain and ambiguous circumstances. Recognises, responds and anticipates external factors influencing our core business (including factors influencing partner organisations).
- 2. Identification of Development Opportunities**
Is able to identify and seek out high-potential opportunities (linked to current areas of work/current markets) whilst staying true to the core principles and values on which Learners First is founded.
- 3. Understanding, Vision and Influence**
Is able to influence internal and external stakeholders and work with those individuals in a way which supports their core business and that of Learners First. Has the ability to articulate and promote Learners First effectively and professionally in a range of forums to build strong relationships which successfully acquire, retain and develop 'customers'.
- 4. Motivating and Managing Staff Members**
Possesses the skills and behaviours required to motivate and line manage other team members to accomplish individual and shared organisational goals.
- 5. Effective and Efficient Decision Making**
Able to make sensible, effective and efficient business decisions, even in the face of insufficient information, which take into full consideration both the implications for Learners First and for wider stakeholders.
- 6. Building Networks, Collaboration and Strong Team Ethic**
Can convene, service and create appropriate professional networks (internal and external) necessary for developing, establishing and growing the organisation and supporting its endeavours.
- 7. Management of Operations**
Is able to successfully manage the ongoing operations of Learners First's core business and maintain high levels of quality and customer satisfaction.
- 8. Finance and Business Understanding**
Possesses sound business acumen, has a strong appreciation and understanding of robust financial procedures and can apply these to the running of the organisation, including audit, invoicing and authorisation of payments whilst upholding the values of public service and seeking value for money and efficiency.
- 9. Organisation, Structure and Agility**
Possesses a high degree of organisational skills, self-discipline and professional structure to operate within a local/regional/national framework whilst simultaneously appreciating and embracing the reality that that framework must be agile and able to adapt to an uncertain and rapidly changing educational context, political landscape and strategy.
- 10. Team Ethic**
Has the necessary skills, attributes and behaviours associated with being a strong team player, displays high levels of discretionary effort, and is able to subordinate any personal agenda to ensure the success of the business.

Learners First Schools Partnership: Background & Context



What is Learners First? This is a question we are often asked and in reality, due to the scale and scope of our work, it can mean different things to different people. Schools' engagement with Learners First is often initiated through an individual programme or project and it is unusual for them to access the full suite of opportunities in its entirety. Therefore, for some the partnership is about teacher training and professional development, for others it is leadership and governance networks and nationally accredited programmes, and for others it is bespoke research, development and system leadership. In truth, it is all of these things and more. It is also about finding and facilitating opportunities to reinvest back into the school system, both in terms of financial resources and capacity, and providing opportunities for schools, MATs and their leaders to become actively involved in the scoping, design and delivery of opportunities.

Our Work with Schools, Academies & Multi Academy Trusts (MATs)

Learners First continues to offer a wide range of opportunities and experiences for colleagues across the partnership and work positively with other organisations across the region to stay connected to local developments, including DfE initiatives such as the Teaching School Hubs and targeted school improvement offers. Amongst other responsibilities, this includes being a Lead School for School Direct Initial Teacher Training, a DfE accredited provider of the full suite of NPQ qualifications and Clerking Programme, and holding a DfE English Hub designation and approved Letters & Sounds Hub designation. But alongside the scale and scope of what we do is depth. Our work is focussed on three core, interdependent areas: Leadership Development and Transformation, School to School Support and Governance Development. We are extremely proud of the role we play within and across the sector but prefer to take a humble approach in the celebration of our achievements; our role is to create the conditions and fertile environment in which schools, MATs and their leaders can prosper and to add value to their endeavours for which they rightly take the credit.

Our History

Learners First was established in 2012, emerging from the first wave of the national Teaching School initiative. It was one of the first 100 Teaching Schools designated in the country and used this role to help connect local schools into the national picture at a time of huge change within the education system. Lots has happened over the last eight years. As a South Yorkshire based organisation, much of our work with schools, academies and MATs resides in this and the immediate surrounding areas (particularly south of the South Yorkshire border). However, our work with schools, MATs and wider partners spans the country and involvement in key working parties and new initiatives extend this reach further still. The role and remit of Learners First has also continued to evolve over this time. However, we have remained resolute that in order to have the biggest impact and ensure engagement is ethical, open and transparent, the statutory challenge functions of regulators within the system (such as Local Authorities, MAT Trust Boards, the RSC and the DfE) should not be confused with the partnership's remit which is focussed on support, professional development and innovation.

Our Core Purpose

The core purpose of Learners First is to build professional networks and facilitate meaningful partnerships to support the improved quality of educational provision and associated outcomes for children and young people. For us, this means working with schools, academies and Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) to build professional networks and facilitate meaningful collaborations in order to help improve the quality of educational provision and outcomes for children and young people. It also means being innovative, creative and, at times, brave. We aim to challenge the status quo and take calculated risks on behalf of the school system by constantly questioning and actively seeking, sharing and celebrating examples of excellent and emerging practice from both within and beyond the education sector. Overall, the partnership aims to add real and significant value to the endeavours of individual schools, academies and MATs, beyond that which any individual entity could achieve alone.

Our Key Principles

We are driven by a strong ethos and sense of moral purpose. Our founding principles still hold true and ensure our approach is authentic, inclusive, collaborative and we remain humble as an organisation. We care about outcomes and impact: we want to support more children to thrive both in school and in later life, we want those new entrants to the teaching profession to have better experiences which equip them to be excellent teachers and remain within the profession, and we want to support leaders and governors to fulfil their roles effectively and drive forward improvements in their respective organisations. But we also want to encourage new and innovative ideas and address some of the inequalities which exist within the system. Therefore, the following guiding principles underpin all we do at Learners First across all areas of our work:

- **We endeavour to do the right thing, at the right time, for the right reasons. Always.**
There is no one 'right way' but we will advocate sensible approaches and act with integrity, humility, honesty and openness.
- **We constructively challenge prevailing orthodoxies.**
Questioning the status quo through innovation and a genuine desire to make a significant and sustainable difference.
- **We both respect and have a healthy disregard for authority.**
We will ask questions and look for innovative solutions whilst upholding our professional duties and respecting the regulatory frameworks which we, and the partners we serve, operate within.
- **We are an inclusive partnership which operates without fear or favour and believes that quality should always prevail.**
The Nolan principles of public service guide our way of working and ensure we operate with honesty, integrity and generosity of spirit.
- **We look to address existing imbalances and examples of privilege bias wherever possible in the system.**
We place a huge ethical and moral emphasis on supporting those facing disproportionate disadvantage as a result of social mobility and contextual challenges.