

THINKING SCHOOLS ACADEMY TRUST
COMPANY NUMBER: 7359755

Subject	Meeting of The Board of Directors	Date	22 nd April 2020
Room	Via Teams Video Call	Time	5.00pm
Present	Michael Bailey, Stuart Gardner, Steve Geary, David Lycett, Peter Martin, Ian Mason, Derek Morrison, Gerard Newman, Linda Randall, Lee Trimby	Clerk	Sandie Davenport
Apologies accepted	Rachel Jordan-Evans	In attendance	Gwynn Bason, Mandy Gage, Dan High, Lee Miller, Jody Murphy, Natalie Sheppard, Kelly Denton
Non-attendees			

Key Points Discussed and Action Items				
No.	Agenda Item	Action/Discussion	By whom	When
1.	Declaration of business interests	There were no declarations of interest pertaining to items on the agenda.		
2.	Welcome and apologies for absence	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, extending a warm welcome to Dan High who had recently joined the Exec team and to the Clerk. Apologies were received and accepted from Rachel Jordan-Evans.		
3.	Minutes and matters arising	The Chair considered the minutes from the last meeting of the Board in February. There were no matters arising and the Chair signed the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting. The Board noted the written resolution agreed unanimously by Directors in March 2020 which delegated decision making to the Executive Team.		
4.	CEO report, TSAT response to	Mr Gardner gave a presentation on his CEO report, highlighting the following matters.		

<p>Coronavirus</p>	<p>1. Meeting the challenge of Coronavirus</p> <p><u>Term 4 education provision and remote learning</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary – resources had been sent home with pupils at the end of last term; there was also online content. Mr Geary advised that 10 lessons were being posted online every 10 days for Years R-6, along with online games to help with learning e.g. for Phonics. Parents had been given teachers’ email addresses for support. Mrs Murphy advised that Headteachers had met before half term to share good practice. All schools were utilising interactive resources such as TT Rockstars. Schools were also collecting feedback from Parents. • Secondary – work was being set via Teams and Show My Homework. • What has gone well? – Ms Sheppard replied that feedback from parents was positive, particularly around Google classrooms for Years 5 & 6 and the use of Facebook to send out assemblies and for pupils to send in videos. • Thinking Tech – Mr Gardner praised the Thinking Tech team who had responded well and had ensured that staff had the appropriate means to engage in online learning, including repurposing nearly 100 laptops. • Even better if: – Primary schools were able to use Teams in the future. • Mr Gardner thanked Ms Sheppard for all her work around the digital strategy and her help implementing digital resources in response to the situation. <p><u>Term 5 priorities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driving Teams forward. • Creation of online courses accessible to students 24/7 (cloud-based). • Supporting students to become effective digital learners and citizens. • Providing ongoing educational content delivery. • Main concerns were Years 5, 10 & 12 as next year was a critical year for assessments; concern that outcomes would be negatively impacted. • Engaging students – Ms Gage had started an outreach and engagement programme for students as a, significant amount of students at the Victory were not currently engaging, either because they were unwilling or unable. • Keeping students and teachers safe during digital engagement. • Social interaction – concerns over the lack of social interaction, especially for the younger children. Mr Geary was looking at pastoral options, particularly for Years 1 & 5. Online books were useful in keeping children engaged. Mrs Murphy added that this was particularly useful for deprived families who might not have books at home. <p><u>Distance learning visions for summer 2020</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key questions: how do we provide for Year 5, 10 & 12 in September and bridge the 		
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		<p>learning gap, and how do we make the most of this opportunity to implement greater use of digital technology in schools?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Sheppard had issued guidance for staff on keeping safe while delivering lessons online through Teams and this was also being built in to CPD. Microsoft were funding two days of training for staff in key Office 365 apps and Ms Sheppard was working with the trainer to design the training around the Trust’s aims. A full training proposal would be available by next Tuesday. • Ms Sheppard was continuing to resolve short-term and long-term issues for student access to digital learning resources. Ms Gage had designed a survey for parents regarding digital access and whether they would be interested in investing in a device for their children with support from the schools. A Director asked if the Trust was moving towards Teams as the main vehicle for digital learning and interaction between teacher and learner and noted that it had limitations for 1:1 interventions. Ms Sheppard replied yes, for secondary schools, but that it needed to be looked at further for primary schools. Seesaw was currently being used by primaries as it provided better navigation for younger learners although Teams would be looked at in more detail to explore its full functionality. Mrs Murphy advised that they were looking to pilot Teams at New Horizons for Years 5 & 6. • Hannah Miller would be working with digital ambassadors in schools from next week to look at what good digital learning should look like. • A Director asked about the engagement strategy mentioned earlier. Mr Gardner replied that the key was to maintain engagement with those students already engaged and then implement outreach work to engage those currently unwilling or unable. Ms Gage advised that the strategy was based around three groups of students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Those who have digital access and are engaging. - Those who don’t have digital access (this would be challenging) - Those who have digital access but aren’t engaging. Ms Gage would be looking at the barriers to engagement and developing strategies to remove those barriers. The first step would be a student survey with questions about access, engagement and quality of learning. Mr Gardner advised that the Government was expected to announce a scheme for provision of laptops for disadvantaged pupils later that day. <p><u>Exam grades</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary – the DfE had announced that there would be no assessment data collection for KS1 and KS2 this year. Mr Geary advised that if schools reopened in June, his school would probably still run internal Year 1 phonics assessments and Year 2 & 6 SATs so that the schools had their own data. Mrs Murphy agreed that this was important so that schools could identify learning gaps and to set realistic progress targets going forward. If schools didn’t reopen before the summer holidays, it was possible that the new Year 7s 		
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		<p>would be assessed in September so that secondary schools had baseline data.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary – the DfE had asked schools to assign grades for Years 11 & 13 and then rank pupils within each subject and grade. Exam boards would then provide grades after their own internal assessments. Directors discussed the potential issues arising from this. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The DfE would be comparing grades with previous years and could potentially downgrade outcomes that were higher than expected. This would be a concern for Goodwin and RGS as outcomes had been on a trajectory for significant improvement. – FOI requests around the grades submitted by schools. Schools must have a robust system for determining grades and the data must be held securely within Teams to maintain an audit trail. Mr Bassan advised that the Trust was developing templates for recording the information used to determine each grade such as average grade for internal assessment, average grade for homework, average grade for progress. Subject heads would spot-check the grades and the rankings for consistency. There was a risk of sensitive information being leaked prior to the results days in August. Mr Miller advised that the Trust is working to manage this risk. A Director asked if the Trust was consulting its legal advisors. Mr Miller replied that the legal advisors were updating the Trust weekly on any legal and security implications. • A Director asked whether schools were having conversations with parents and pupils on the process so that expectations were managed. Mr Gardner replied that a letter had been sent to all parents outlining the DfE proposal and how the schools were going to apply it, assuring parents that a robust process was in place. Ms Gage advised that a high level of pastoral support had also been put in place to support Year 11 and Year 13 students, including transitional support for Year 13s going to university and taster sessions for Year 11 in preparation for Year 12 courses. <p><u>Safeguarding</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Government had predicted attendance rates of 20% for vulnerable children and children of key workers but the national uptake was much lower with current attendance rates below 1% nationally and around 2% in Medway. • The Trust was providing support for vulnerable pupils in the following ways. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A safeguarding reporting button on all schools’ websites. – Staff making regular direct contact with students. – Creating safety plans with students. – Weekly contact with social workers. – Covid-19 annex on all schools’ websites. • These children were the least likely to engage with online resources. Ms Gage advised that making contact with these children was challenging, particularly EAL children. This was especially evident at Victory where the school had been unable to make contact 		
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with 190 children (out of 960). At HGS there were 200 vulnerable children so four staff were contacting 50 children each on a weekly basis.

Union engagement

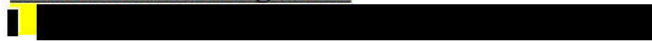
- All schools had initially seen challenges from unions after the lockdown started, in relation to safeguarding concerns for staff. The Trust had had a very positive meeting with the unions two weeks into lockdown. The unions had agreed with all aspects of the Trust's approach to managing schools during the current crisis and would be issuing a joint statement with the Trust the following week. The Chair thanked Mr Miller for the positive outcome. Mr Miller added that the HR team had been instrumental in managing staffing matters and it was a very positive reflection of the HR team being brought in-house.

Priorities going forward

- Mr Gardner outlined the immediate, short-term, medium-term and long-term plans on how the Trust would manage the reopening process. Directors agreed that the plans were thorough. In preparing the plans, the following assumptions had been made.
- Assumptions around lockdown:
 - Lockdown would continue for a few weeks after the peak of cases, this was expected to be towards the end of Term 5.
 - Schools might start to reopen at the start of, or during, Term 6 with a possible staggered return for pupils e.g. key workers' children returning first.
 - Another coronavirus peak was likely in 12-18 months' time.
- Assumptions around reopening:
 - Schools were likely to be given two weeks' notice.
 - Likely to be a phased reopening e.g. primary schools first, then Years 10 & 12 in secondary schools.
 - Provisions required to support reopening would probably include social distancing, enhance cleaning requirements and continued self-isolation for anyone with symptoms. Directors discussed whether other measures might need to be considered, such as temperature checks, but there was concern that this might result in teachers having to make medical judgements that they should not be expected to make.

2. Strategic updates

Performance management



Data breach at Newbridge

[REDACTED]

Maritime Academy

- Mr Miller advised that there had been a slight change in design of the academy in relation to sustainability – the school would be slightly larger and the space more flexible. This had helped secure additional funding. The Chair congratulated Mr Miller.
- A series of design meetings with the architects would commence 4th May with a view to submitting the planning application around Oct-Nov although this was ambitious.
- Expected opening September 2022.

RGS/TPA expansion

- The 3 storey new build at The Portsmouth Academy was nearing completion and would be handed over in August ready for the new September term. There were a few risks around that timescale with some work possibly continuing into September but there would be no impact on teaching and learning.
- The tender submissions had come in for RGS at [REDACTED] over budget. [REDACTED] had been taken out of the contract and further savings were being looked at. Completion was still scheduled for September 2022.

Thinking Solutions for Education

- Mr Miller was working with external clients on various projects which were detailed in the CEO report. Progress was very positive. There was an expanded offer with the [REDACTED]

RGS restructure

- Mr Bassan advised that timelines had been amended due to the current crisis. Consultations were being finalised with staff this week; the model would be approved next week; the consultation would then be suspended until September with implementation moved back to January 2021.
- The majority of savings would come from natural movement of staff and the aim was still to redeploy rather than make redundancies.

[REDACTED]

		<p style="text-align: center;">[REDACTED]</p> <p><u>Central updates</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board extended its congratulations and thanks to the HR and IT teams for their help to schools in the current crisis. Mr Miller added that creating an in-house HR function had had a very positive impact and that the HR team were doing an excellent job. • Capital funding – Mr Miller reported that the Trust had received its expected capital funding pot from the DfE and was currently working through the proposed capital projects. Each project was being rag-rated and priority would be given to those needed for completion by this September. • Technology – Mr Miller reported that RGS and Meredith had now been successfully moved onto the Trust’s network. The two remaining schools, Goodwin and Victory, would be moved during the summer holidays so by September all schools would be on the single network. • Finance – Mr Miller advised that the current focus was on budget setting for next year. Budgets were due to be approved by the Board on 15th July. <p>3. Ofsted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Gardner advised that Ofsted inspections were currently suspended, possibly until September, and that the timetable for inspecting Good primary schools seemed to have moved from 3½-4 years to 3 years so inspections would be slightly more frequent. • Mr Gardner presented a timetable to the Board detailing expected Ofsted windows and statutory deadlines. A significant number of the Trust’s schools were due inspections in 2020/21. • A Director asked whether RGS was expecting to retain its Outstanding judgement at the next inspection. Mr Bassan replied that both RGS and Goodwin had robust Ofsted action plans already in place. <p>The Chair thanked Mr Gardner for his detailed report.</p>		
5.	Decision report	<p>Mr Gardner reminded the Board of the written resolution agreed by Directors in March 2020 which delegated decision making to the Executive Team. A folder had been created in the Board’s Teams folder detailing decisions taken. Mr Gardner invited Mr Miller to highlight any major purchasing decisions that had been taken.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Miller had signed off an IT purchase to support the new build at The Portsmouth Academy which had been [REDACTED] over his normal authority level for signing off. • The Trust had purchased a 3 year licence at [REDACTED]/year with iHASCO to provide online 		

		<p>training as part of the Trust's CPD strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A list of all the decisions made by the executive team up to 22nd April are annexed at the end of these minutes. 		
6.	Vice Chair	The Chair noted Lee Trimby's resignation as Vice-Chair and Board member with effect from the end of the current academic year and thanked him for all his help and assistance. The Chair asked Directors to give some thought as to nominations for a new Vice-Chair and a new Board member who had finance expertise.		
7.	Communication to RGB & AAB	Mr Miller advised that the RGB meetings due to take place in March had been cancelled. He suggested that the AAB and RGB meetings scheduled for June/July should continue but on a virtual basis via Teams. All Directors agreed the proposal. Mr Miller and Mrs Denton will coordinate.		
8.	AOB & correspondence to the Chair	Mr Miller had received the Accounting Officer letter from the ESFA earlier that day and it had been circulated to the Board. Mr Miller assured the Board that the Trust had been aware of all the updates in the letter. A key area of focus would be internal audit and this would be discussed further at the Audit Committee.		
9.	Items for next agenda	None suggested.		
10.	Date of next meeting	<p>The Chair extended his thanks to the Directors of Education for all their hard work and asked that his thanks be passed on to all school staff on behalf of the Board. He thanked Mr Miller for the excellent work being done by the central services and asked him to pass on the Board's appreciation to staff. The Chair also thanked Mr Gardner for his continuing hard work.</p> <p>Date of next meeting: 15th July 2020.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 6.55pm.</p>		

As referenced in agenda item 5, below are the details of the decisions made by the Executive Team up to 22 April 2020.

Decision made:

Ratified MJS Nut Free Policy

Ratified MJS Sex Education Policy

Ratified MIS Accessibility Policy

Ratified MIS Equalities and Diversity Policy

Ratified MIS Behaviour Policy

Ratified MIS Annexe to Safeguarding Policy

Ratified Health & Safety Policy

Ratified Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy

Ratified Attendance Policy

Ratified School Condition Allocation

Ratified Data Protection Policy

Ratified Governor Code of Conduct Policy

Ratified Records Management Retention & Disposal Policy

Ratified Top slice Policy

Ratified Expenses Policy

Ratified Investment Policy

Agreed the proposal to move forward with the identified over £10,000 SCA projects

Agreed the Aruba switching and wireless procurement

Agreed the procurement of new front of class presentation systems within Holcombe Grammar, and new staff computers for both Holcombe Grammar and The Victory Academy;

Agreed the recruitment of two IT Customer Support Technicians (1st line), one in Kent hub, and Portsmouth hub, to join prior to summer 2020

Agreed the procurement of the Ihasco training platform