

THINKING SCHOOLS ACADEMY TRUST
COMPANY NUMBER: 7359755

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| Subject | Board of Directors, Strategic meeting | Date | 3/5/2023 |
| Location | London | Time | 11:00 |
| Present | Stuart Gardner, Gerard Newman, Tash Hurtado, Clive Star, Kaye Bettey, Derek Morrison, Peter Martin, Ian Mason (from 12.30) | Clerk | Kelly Denton |
| Apologies accepted | Michael Bailey, Julie Spurgeon, Steve Geary | In attendance | Jody Murphy |
| Non-attendees | | | |

| Key Points Discussed and Action Items | | | | |
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| No | Agenda Item | Action/Discussion | By whom | When |
| 1. | Business Interests | No declarations of Business Interest were stated | | |
| 2. | Apologies | Apologies received from Steve Geary, Michael Bailey & Julie Spurgeon | | |
| 3. | Consolidation | <p>SG outlined the high-level changes in the Trust from 2021 to 2023 and his thoughts on the need to deliver through processes not individuals as the Trust grows.</p> <p>The Board held a discussion on the PRU and the challenges this will bring to the trust. SG covered the appointment of Max Hall and the appointment of external school improvement support for Burton, as well as the position Burton has with our secondary schools in Torbay. The short-term risk will be making a PRU of that size financially viable. The longer-term strategy is Burton supporting pupils back into main stream education and how our two secondaries in Torbay can work to support this.</p> <p>A trustee asked SGs plans given the accelerated growth of the Trust and capacity to cope with new schools, including safeguarding and SEN provision of the Trust to support these schools.</p> <p>SG explained the plan that growth would support the stability of the Trust long term and the</p> | | |

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| | | <p>board discussed how the Trust ensures its positive impact on these schools with discussions on the individual needs of schools who have joined the Trust recently and due to join over the coming six months.</p> <p>The Board discussed the onboarding process, how schools integrate into becoming 'a TSAT school' and how school improvement is implemented, agreeing the trusts differing approaches and journey for special measures and good schools. The board discussed the planned journey for BET, Burton and CRGS schools and governance.</p> <p>The Board discussed the changing leadership structure to incorporate a SEN lead for the trust to support schools and the growth of the safeguarding team to support schools, with board recognising the strength and impact of the central safeguarding team.</p> <p>The Board discussed the potential Trust strategic direction of being a Trust of choice for main stream and grammar schools, but highlighting that schools join us for different factors, but the driver being how differing schools can fit within our model and engage with the strategy as well of the performance of the Trust and relationship with RSD. The Board discussed the differentiating federated model strategy of TSAT vs larger “template” MATs, and how this supports the school improvement model. The Board agreed that the federated model strategy – providing autonomy for individual schools within a framework is right one for the Trust (noting that there was a management, reporting and QA overhead with this model).</p> <p>A discussion was held on being a Trust of choice for grammar schools and the Trust successfully offering a space where grammar schools can be supported as grammar schools as well as contributing wider - within the context of TSAT now being one the largest grammar school MATs in the country.</p> <p>The Board discussed the impact on the wider Trust of growing at the same rate as over the last few years, and the Board agreed through discussion that the Trust should look to a period of approximately two years to consolidate, and should not proactively approach any schools during this period (although recognising that we may be recommended or approached by Regional Directors or schools). It was agreed that each new school approaching the Trust should be reviewed on the basis of how they will impact the current Trust schools, what support is needed, how they will contribute to a hub or capacity, as well as the locations and regions in which the Trust currently operate.</p> | | |
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| | | <p>The Board discussed the need to further develop systems and processes to react to data and school level performance where expectations aren't being met. The Board agreed that they need this level of information and quality assurance, so that the Board is confident in that the school are engaged with, the right interventions are in place and progress being made. The Board agreed an approach of data and individual relationships with schools will be key to identifying these areas for improvement and the working with the school to action school improvement.</p> <p>The Board asked SG to present his plan for a leadership model and school improvement model that can support growth and consolidation. SG covered the planned leadership model and the board questioned succession planning, staff development to sustaining this model.</p> <p>The Chair summarised the agenda item and agreements made by the Board, with the agreement of a period of consolidation needed.</p> <p>The Board discussed the current Governance model, identifying areas that need to be reviewed in line with growth and leadership responsibilities – in particular that once new schools and the BET MAT had joined us, we would have 9 RGBS/IMBs, which is not an efficient model. The ESFA recommendation for an external review of governance was discussed, which could incorporate all areas of the Trust including the South West proposal on Governance structure and delegated responsibilities.</p> | KD | Jul 23 |
| 4. | Rationalisation | <p>The Board discussed the performance of the Goodwin Academy and progress made on school development, with improvements in behaviour management, staff absence and teaching & learning, which trustees have seen through school visits, data and feedback from the Executive. SG explained the school is now focussed on SEN long term improvement, impact of curriculum and embedding student habits. The Board agreed that school improvement is having a positive impact, and in the medium term the Board will need to review the next Ofsted outcome and potential growth in the area to build a sustainable hub in South East Kent</p> <p>The Board referred to the TSFE strategic plan for expansion discussed previously and agreed delaying growth of TSFE external services whilst we consolidate our services in line with new schools and education growth. The need to embed central services whilst recognising the</p> | | |

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| | | work needed by central team to also embed new schools and grow internal services to support schools and consolidate those teams and service delivery was also recognised. The Board agreed to a period of consolidation for TSFE and central services | | |
| | | A trustee questioned the consistency of the Trust approach to suspensions/exclusions and interventions for behaviour management, and a discussion was held on the Trust approach. SG explained that the model of our Trust isn't a set approach or template for behaviour management and interventions, but that each school is QA'd by central team. The Board questioned the Executive QA of interventions before it gets to GDCs, and how the Executive and Board ensure that the interventions are proportionate and consistent across the Trust. A discussion was held on the differences between regions and individual schools and the support given to Heads. The Board agreed that the governors on GDCs and the RGBs have the responsibility for ensuring the behaviour policy is suitable and applied correctly for suspensions and exclusions. | | |
| 5. | How TSAT operates | SG outlined that in the Trust, the model is one of accountability resting with the headteacher, which allows a large amount of autonomy in local decisions. However, there is a need to be clear on what interventions we want when performance isn't where expected. It was noted that the Trust has moved from heavy trust influence over sponsored academies with inexperienced heads, to a larger number of "Good" schools with experienced heads, and approach needs to vary. The Board held a discussion on what the next step of a trust model should look like, considering a relationship and influence approach vs a structured framework, monitored through KPIs and indicators. The Board explored the impact on speed of school improvement with each approach, as well as the risk of lack of oversight without a clear framework. The Board summarised, that they want to keep the existing approach and delegated responsibilities, but need a clearer framework to identify areas of support improvement. SG will action this. | SG | 23/24 |
| 6. | Total Education | Total education has been broadly defined and schools are engaged and supportive. The Board & Executive now need to decide how this is measured and the interventions needed in delivery of this strategy. | | |

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| | | The Board identified there are challenges with measuring areas of Total Education such as emotional intelligence and measurements would work across all schools for all elements of TE. The Board discussed if there should be trust wide measures and agreed Total Education must be reported to the Board, but it needs to allow local variances. SG will work with the Executive and Rachel Grey on reporting to the Board | SG | 23/24 |
| 7. | Operational Delivery | SG presented different roles introduced to middle management to support school improvement, and the Board discussed the measure of their impact and how they are held to account through the governance structure. It was agreed that their impact would be reported through JM's new role and through to the Curriculum and QA Committee | | |
| 7. | SEN Provision | The Board held a detailed discussion on the TSAT Board role with LA and SEN provisions. It was noted that currently each school deal with LA directly, but the Board felt working in regional hubs could have more impact and influence – potentially through the Board or RGBs. It was agreed that the Executive should work with LA. SG to implement. A discussion was held with regards to the challenges of the regional LA SEND provisions with a number being RI. It was agreed that the Board need data on SEND data – specifically on the provision currently in place/funded, the requirement (for each school, and consolidated on an LA basis), and the gap. SG to ensure Board receive this The Board felt there is a risk that SEND children are being failed by “the system” and agreed we need a TSAT solution to address the LA issue to support our children. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Data to Board - what is the size of the issue 2. Set out strategy - to positively influence for our children Board asked for Max Hall to pull together a document on what the need is and the gap and options for a TSAT strategy is to address this. It was agreed that a review should be undertaken in respect of how SEND link governors have an awareness of this occurs. KD to action | SG SG SG/MH KD | 23/24 23/24 23/24 Dec 23 |

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| 8. | Financial Stability | <p>The Board received an update on the trust financial position, with focus around the influence of staff pay increases and utilities costs and the strategy to address these. The initial budget was for a small surplus but the current position is an expected £500k deficit for 22/23. The main factors are an unexpected variance [REDACTED]. The Board asked for an update at the next meeting on the budget for 23/24. LM to action</p> <p>The Board asked for the 23/24 budget to allow for additional spend on pupil mental health support.</p> | LM | July |
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| 9. | | <p>The Board agreed that the next full meeting will be held at the Leadership Conference on 5th July, and that the budget/financials should be covered in the 12th July meeting with a shorter remote meeting</p> <p><i>Meeting ended at 3.50pm</i></p> | KD | July |

| Actions | | Who | When |
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| Consolidation: Review of current number of RGBs and bring to board a proposal for RGB structure and external governance review | | KD | Jul 23 |
| How TSAT operates: To produce a framework which identifies areas of intervention needed with schools to support school improvement and performance | | SG | 23/24 |
| Total Education: Provide the Board with localised performance data on Total Education strategy performance | | SG/RG | 23/24 |
| TSAT SEN Strategy: Executive to work regionally with the LA on addressing SEN issues, needs and solutions to support schools | | SG/Exec | 23/24 |
| TSAT SEN Strategy: Board to receive SEND strategy paper, covering the provision currently in place/funded, the requirement (for each school, and consolidated on an LA basis), and the gap. Then a proposal for a TSAT strategy to address this. | | SG/MH | 23/24 |
| TSAT SEN Strategy: Review to be undertaken in respect of how SEND link governors have an awareness of GDC outcomes and patterns of levels of interventions | | KD | Dec 23 |
| Financial Stability: The board to receive an update on the budget for 23/24 in the next meeting | | LM | Jul 23 |
| Financial Stability: Addition spend in the 2023/24 budget for Pupil Mental Health | | SG/LM | 23/24 |

