

THINKING SCHOOLS ACADEMY TRUST
COMPANY NUMBER: 7359755

Subject	Meeting of the Board of Directors	Date	12.10.2022
Room	TSAT Board Room/Via Teams	Time	3pm
Present	Stuart Gardner (SG), Peter Martin (PM), Gerard Newman (GN), Derek Morrison (DM), Julie Spurgeon (JS), Steve Geary (SGE), Michael Bailey (MB), Ian Mason (IM), Natasha Hurtado (NH)	Clerk	Jennifer Coates
Apologies accepted	Clive Star, Kaye Bettey	In attendance	Lee Miller (LM) & Kelly Denton (KD)
Non-attendees			

Key Points Discussed and Action Items				
No.	Agenda Item	Action/Discussion	By whom	When
1.	Declaration of business interests	Welcome to Natasha Hurtado, new Non-Executive Director. Declaration of business interest, Natasha is the CEO of Rainham Mark Education Trust (RMET). No other declarations of business interests were made.		
2.	Welcome and apologies for absence	Apologies received from Clive Star and Kaye Bettey.		
3A.	Strategic Session Review red rated strategic goals, including where support is required	SG presented an update on the review of Trust strategic goals which contained the following key information: - SG explained this will focus on the strategic goals that were not delivered last year, the reasons why and any actions moving forward. <u>Great curriculums</u> <u>Projects dropped</u> - Project for subject knowledge for non-specialists was dropped due to lack of demand. We will review the need to run subject knowledge for non-specialists on an annual		

		<p>basis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project for a coordinated KS3 assessment system. Upon review, we have decided to allow schools to follow KS3 assessment model of their choice. If the schools KS3 model ineffective, there is a Trust model from JM that can be put in place. - Project for 'MAT Meets' to bring teachers together. At local hub level, teacher meets worked well but making people travel further than that was a challenge. <p>Governor Q – In reference to the subject knowledge courses, how do the staff development programmes work in these areas? Have you dropped it in every area? SG A – There is capacity to run subject knowledge courses centrally but there was not the demand from the schools as they were able to run these. In the event this is needed we would draw on the subject leads to put in this support.</p> <p><u>Projects delayed</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maths delivery within our Trust. Trust Maths approach and resources have been created but it had not been launched in schools. All Primary schools in the Trust have started this from September. Gordon and Penbridge Ofsted visits inspected Maths and the inspectors were pleased with what they were seeing and how this curriculum focuses on embedding key foundations of core maths skills. - Joint planning use of corner stone's project was being led by Headteacher at Penbridge but has been delayed due to lack of capacity. Interesting challenge to try and develop a consistent way of working to the value of everyone. The strategic plan for this year is focussing on core subjects due to high level of engagement and collaboration in core subjects. - Skeleton planning project delayed due to lack of staff capacity. Science are going to pilot creating the skeleton curriculum resources this year. Our aim is to create a coordinated and cohesive safety net of planning for curriculum areas. <p>Governor Q – Do you foresee any further delays on those projects? SG A – They will not be further delayed but there has been a change in the timelines of these projects to ensure they are rolled out effectively across the Trust.</p> <p><u>Trust of Choice</u> <u>Projects dropped</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - External recognition programmes such as TES awards. From survey, it was evident that staff wanted Trust level recognition. New TSTARS project is being launched. - The use of single trust home screen for computers project has been dropped. The work required to make it happen was way in excess of the benefit we would gain. 		
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		<p>beneath us and ensure the reporting processes mean we catch those outliers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - That we need to ensure each governance level understand their responsibilities e.g. with PP the RGB have to look at strategies the school has in place and at with Curriculum & QA what is the Trust wide patterns. Discussed possibility to amend through Terms of Reference. - Ofsted's expectations of the Board members level of knowledge and understanding of how each school in the Trust is performing. Relative to the size of the Trust, the board could view it that the board should be able to talk about where the schools are not performing as well as they should and the actions in place to ensure we improve. - That the one-page reporting system from the Committees to the Board highlights the areas where the Board need to be aware of issues and ensure appropriate actions are in place to prevent any school falling behind. <p>Discussion outcome – The board would like to receive an essential document which is by exception and then additional supporting documents with all of the information available. <i>Action SG to change Board reporting to reflect whole trust picture and the exceptions board need to be aware of and wider/context information available in supporting documents.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School to School support framework project delayed as schools did not have capacity because of level of staff absence. Financial changes have resulted in us altering that plan, so we will have to reconsider the model of school to school support moving forward. - Increasing Alternative Provision expertise in the Trust project delayed. Successful AP provision at Penhale and now launched AP provisions at TPA, Goodwin and Brixham so knowledge in Trust is developing. However, we have found it challenging to build partnerships with external AP providers. Hard for us to put in a measurable plan for further development of that. <p><u>Exceptional Central Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delayed development of a Staff Health and Safety Committee due to Covid. On the agenda for this year. - Had to re-think strategy around thinking creative due to staffing changes. Uncertain on future progress due to financial situation. - Thinking Fitness at Rochester was hampered by delay of building works. Has had a knock-on effect around wider lettings strategy, significant impact from Covid last year. - Did not move forward on the sustainability agenda. James Fenlon has provided updates to Ops committee and DFE have now published strategy. Will see this gain 	SG	14/12 /22
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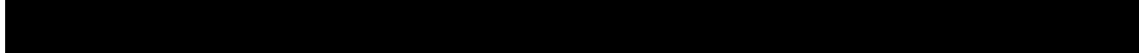
		<p>pace this year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HR system that is in place is not fit for purpose. Strategy will change from trying to improve the system to finding a new system that is right for the size of the organisation. <p>Governor Q – When was that HR system implemented and what is the system called? LM A – It was 4 years ago, PSP. Due to the size of the Trust now it is not fit for purpose. Governor Q – Are you going to come back to us with your actions in sorting out this issue? LM A – We will provide updates throughout. We are going to ensure that a plan is in place to make the right decision but the process will take time and we are facing financial difficulties. It is difficult to change a HR and payroll system midway through a year. Also factoring in the pilot of an alternative MIS system. Governor Q – Do the issues you describe apply to payroll system? LM A – It is the same system and Payroll faces the same issues. Governor Q – Given the importance of payroll, reputationally, could this be an issue for the Trust? LM A – To give an example we are about to put through backpay awards to September. Any normal system would do it automatically but with ours they have to calculate each amount and manually input it in.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delayed additional work around measuring metrics of efficiencies of schools that join us and look to understand the value for money journey a school goes on when they join. We have completed some work including cost per pupil model however the schools that have joined recently are not the best examples. On the agenda for next year. 		
3B.	<p>Strategic Session</p> <p>Reflection on understanding the challenges facing our schools, including increased challenge of SEND, behaviour etc with finite resources. Clarify the Trust position.</p>	<p>GN invited Directors to partake in a reflective discussion on understanding the challenges faced by our schools of SEND, Alternative Provision and Behaviour with finite resources with the aim to clarify the Trust position.</p> <p>GN explained that Governors supporting with GDCs have identified a frustration from schools around not having support for students required which would help with manage certain situations or behaviours. We recognise Local Authorities are working in difficult circumstances with restrictive financial and human resources.</p> <p>GN presented proposals for discussion:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is there anything Directors or Governors can do to improve the coordination and 		

		<p>interaction with local authorities to demonstrate the gap between what requirement schools have versus. What they are actually receiving. The aim would be to try and emphasise the support required by the schools in the Trust and from the local authority but due to the local authorities' limitations potentially they cannot provide what we need.</p> <p>2. Is there anything more we could do as a Trust to provide additional SEND or Alternative Provision e.g. developing our own Alternative Provision, partnering with other providers or setting up our own school to provide that specialist provision.</p> <p>Directors had a detailed discussion following GN's proposals which contained the following key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of representation from local authority at GDC panels across the Trust. - A variance between support and processes provided from local authorities that the Trust works within. - The long-term potential of working in collaboration by setting up a specialist facility and able to provide the support required by the local authorities, that would possibly gain funding or contributions from them. - 2 prong strategy, more engagement from Directors and Governors with the local authority to get the best we can for our schools and a longer-term strategy to us providing that provision. - The Trust need to work with the local authorities to support that engagement for schools. - Medway Local Authority is changing ways PRU's work and another provider to become turn around centres, students will attend the provisions for fixed periods of time to support children to become successful in mainstream schools. Unsure if there would be engagement from them for us to run a similar provision whilst this is happening and from our perspective this is not always successful for children. - We have looked to build links with Rowans, already working closely with Victory, to form a collaboration but they remain as a SAT. - AP needs in Medway is 0.1% of students whereas in England it is 0.8% of students. Concentrating challenging students in a smaller number of schools and low levels of external AP provision available for those students. - Would need to ensure in the circumstance of an agreement with the local authority the funding was ongoing rather than reviewed annually. - Biggest risk to children is inertia and the lack of availability of alternative provision for children in the Medway area. A big established Trust such as TSAT could make change with the local authority and then taking wider proactive action due to surge of SEMH challenges from Covid. Need to research and review other Trusts who have put in place an AP provision that is not a PRU and review what the funding model looks 		
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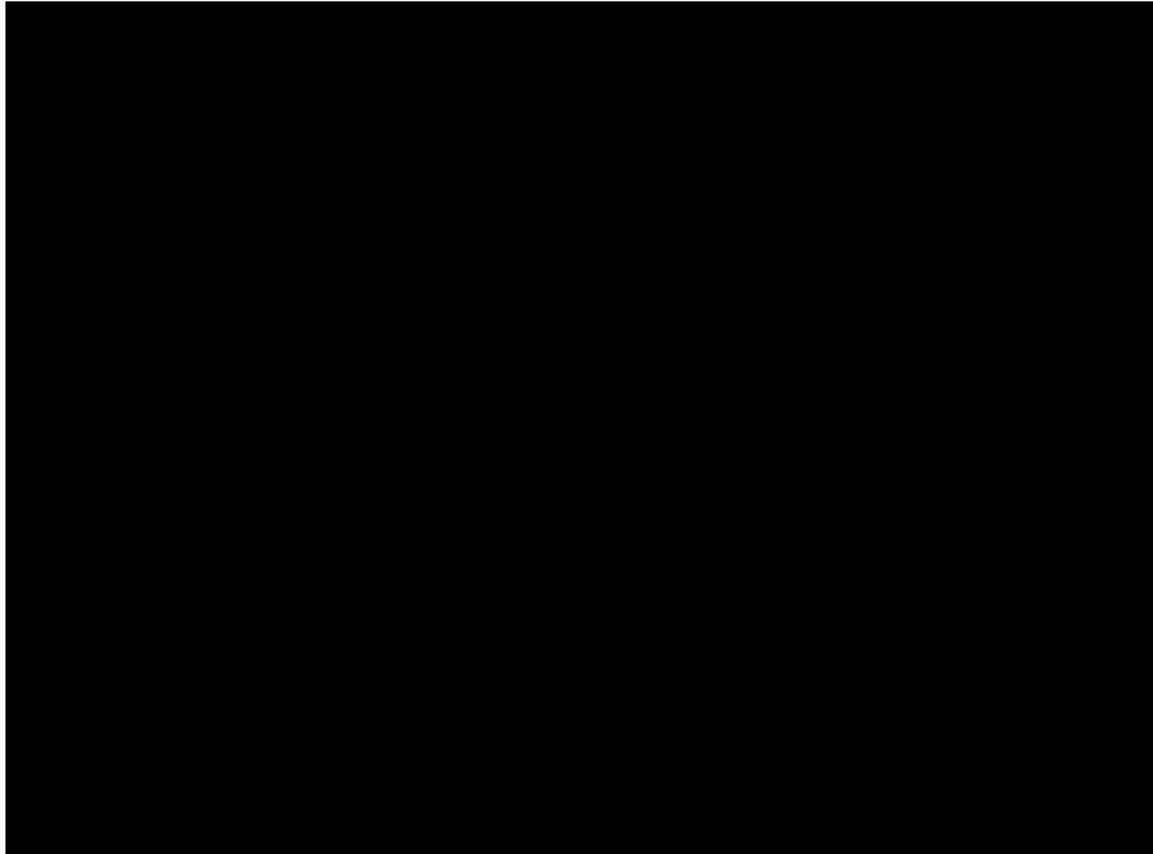
		<p>like. Enables leaders in schools to be proactive and purchase places in the provisions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social responsibility as a bigger MAT and our ethos to ensure child first and transform the life chances of our pupils. - Currently working with Victory on development of an AP provision. - Would require support from local authorities on commissioning a new provision to ensure they can remain long standing. Other Trusts have seen difficulties in getting Medway to commit to longer term agreements. <p><i>Requests from Directors to LM:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide Directors with information from across the schools within a local authority, what our SEND/AP requirement is versus what we are getting to have some data for a discussion with the local authority about the gap and what the local authority could do about that. 2. To work up a concept/discussion paper to take to Medway (in the first instance) about different models for providing this sort of provision ourselves and the estimated cost per pupil. <p><i>Action LM to complete a gap analysis of need from schools and local authorities and costs that we are incurring to fill these gaps and then look at models of what a provision could look like.</i></p> <p>JS left meeting at 4.10pm. MB & SGE left meeting at 4.20pm.</p>	LM	
3C.	<p>Strategic Session</p> <p>Reflection on critical risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial - Site <p>delivery/opening readiness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ICT capacity - Ofsted 	<p>LM presented an update on critical risks which contained the following key information:</p> <p><u>Financial position 22-23</u></p> <div data-bbox="607 1023 1738 1262" style="background-color: black; width: 100%; height: 150px; margin: 10px 0;"></div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Announcement of 6-month energy relief has resulted in a saving of approx. £860k. <p>Governor Q – How do we get that energy relief?</p>		

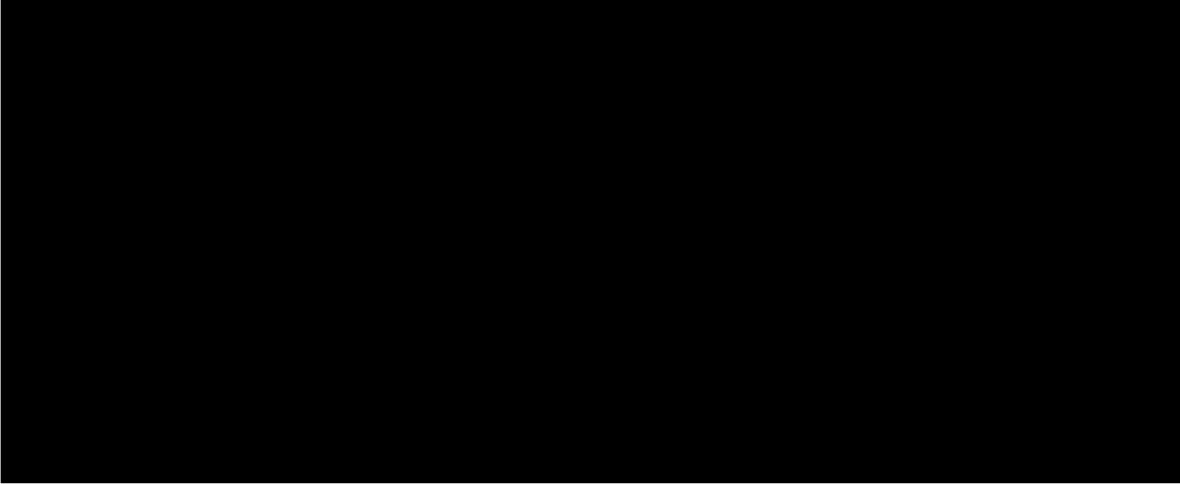
LM A – The suppliers cap their tariffs for a 6-month period. Still based on estimated usage.

- National Insurance reversal decision.
- Unsuccessful for TCAF bid which was a challenge.



- At this stage confident 22-23 we will be in no worse place than where we originally planned based on those savings. This does not solve the financial situation for 23-24.



		<p><u>Capital projects</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Over the course of this year we have had a number of significant capital projects which have been challenging including Maritime. Plans are in place going forward to further mitigate risk of failure. Project tracking system needs to become more sophisticated, easy to use and provide reporting. <p><u>IT Capacity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Amazing work completed over the summer period. They have completed 3 huge projects as well as day to day updates over the summer in Maritime, Plympton & Brixham. Challenges faced on those projects and have not started the year in the best position with I.T. in Plympton and Brixham. Actions in place to mitigate risks of failure and to improve for the future. <p><u>Ofsted</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 inspections so far this year, 1 S8 and 1 S5 this year. 	<p>SG/ LM</p>	<p>14/12 /22</p>
3D.	<p>Strategic Session</p> <p>Summer results and</p>	<p>SG presented the strategies in place following the summer results which contained the following key information:</p>		

	strategies to address issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Primary is broadly in line with national average. JM completing a lot of work with those schools. Boys agenda is on the horizons. - Secondary (non-grammar) P8 scores is the biggest risk. The issue is compounded by an understanding of where the Year 10s are at. At TPA and Victory if those schools get to a point of being better -0.5 will be an improvement on this year. Brixham believe 0 but we do not have enough information. Plympton will need to get closer to 0. - Work that we are focussed on is around those schools to ensure those pupils make as much progress as possible during Year 11 and that Year 10s are at -0.1 by the end of year mocks so there is a bigger chance at achieving 0 at the end of Year 11. 		
3E.	Strategic Session Trust growth principles and plan	<p>SG shared the Trust Growth Principles and Plan which contained the following key information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Original focus was to build hubs of schools, connecting our hubs and being a safe home for Grammar schools that wanted to be part of a MAT but in a different model. <p>Directors discussed the principles and plan which contained the following key information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do we need to stop focussing on growth and focus on our own schools who are not meeting the standards required? - If appropriate we want to continue growth but in the right geographical areas that do not put too much strain on the Trust. - We must not lose sight of improvements required of our schools, but there are few Trusts of 20 schools that are all good and we have always improved schools between each inspection. We need to ask ourselves about when a school might join us how does that add value to the wider trust. - Must consider the qualification of the opportunity early on so we have an early view of the feasibility or realism of the school/trust joining us. - All growth is opportunistic, we do need to consider what is right and cost-effective, but we also need to consider the opportunity to improve the other local schools or hubs. - As a successful Trust of 20 schools, should you have clarity of parameter's around the growth plan moving forward? - Need to consider each opportunity individually as it will depend on many circumstances. 		
4.	Governor Membership	<p>To decide by vote on the following appointments & dismissals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept resignation of David Lycett from the Board of Directors 		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint Alex Hall-Chen to Kent RGB • Appoint Debbie Mercer to South West RGB • Remove Thabi Hollingsworth from Kent RGB <p><i>Directors conducted a vote by show of hands and unanimously agreed the approval of the decisions required.</i></p> <p>Directors expressed their thanks to Dave Lycett for his valuable contributions to the Board.</p>		
5.	Any other business	<p>SG shared that there are 3 current discussions we are engaging with, Grammar school in Essex, Salterns Education Trust (2 secondary schools in Portsmouth) and BAE Secondary Trust, (1 secondary and 2 primary schools) in Torbay near Brixham.</p> <p>KD presented changes in committee membership.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PM now chair of Audit & Risk Committee. - GN taking on chair of Finance Committee. - Dave Lycett is remaining as a co-opted member of the Curriculum & QA Committee. - Ian Mason joining Audit & Risk Committee. - Natasha Hurtado is joining the Curriculum & QA Committee and Governance & Compliance Committee. 		
6.	Date of next meeting	<p>The next meeting will be on 14th December 2022. Meeting closed at 5.55pm.</p>		