

**THINKING SCHOOLS ACADEMY TRUST**  
**COMPANY NUMBER: 7359755**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Meeting of the Board of Directors</b>	<b>Date</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> April 2025
<b>Room</b>	Medway Boardroom & Via Teams Call	<b>Time</b>	5pm
<b>Present</b>	Gerard Newman (GN) (Chair), Peter Martin (PM), Stuart Gardner (SG), Kaye Bettey (KB), David Glassey (DG), Steve Geary (SGE), Derek Morrison (DM), Ashley Hall (AH), Andy Minchin (AM), Krysia Butwilowska (KBA), Lirette Mill (LM)	<b>Clerk</b>	Jennifer Coates
<b>Apologies accepted</b>	Clive Star (CS)	<b>In attendance</b>	Lee Miller (LM), Mandy Gage (MG), Michelle Smith (MS), Jay Davenport (JD), Kelly Denton (KD)

<b>Key Points Discussed and Action Items</b>				
<b>No.</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Action/Discussion</b>	<b>By whom</b>	<b>When</b>
1.	<b>Declaration of business interests</b>	No additional declarations of business interest were declared.		
2.	<b>Welcome and apologies for absence</b>	The chair welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies accepted from Clive Star. Steve Geary will be leaving the meeting at 6pm.		
3.	<b>Minutes and matters arising</b>	Governors reviewed the minutes from the 18 <sup>th</sup> December 2024 and 10 <sup>th</sup> February 2025 and unanimously approved they were an accurate record of the meetings.  The Board acknowledged the remote decisions made since the last meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Appointment of Kate Lewis to South RAB</li> <li>- Procurement of Bailey Partnership for RAAC removal at HGS</li> </ul>		
4.	<b>Executive Update</b>	SG, LM & MG presented the Executive Update which contained the following key information:  <div style="background-color: black; height: 1.2em; width: 100%;"></div>		

[illegible]



Finance strategy – to **discuss** progress on the financial strategy and receive updates on the latest financial forecast

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- Removed reinvestment pot 4 from the strategy and re-invested back into the revenue position.
- Capital allocation has come through significantly higher than anticipated causing a further review of any more opportunities to reinvest capital into revenue.
- Celebrate implementation of Arbor MIS system. This new system allows us to review our existing systems.
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

Discussion point: Should we move our cost-of-living assumptions from 3% to 2% to respond to this? If we move to 2% this would create an on paper saving of £1m. It is my recommendation to do this as I do not think at this stage I can go back to schools and ask them to find any more savings.

**Gov Comment – I think the rationale is right and it is right to not look to schools to make these savings.**

**Gov Comment – Are we just masking the problem as you do not believe it will be 2%?**

**LM Comment – I am not suggesting it will be 2% but if it is going to be more than 2% the sector will require more funding. Whether more funding comes through or not is another matter. From my point of view, I do not think the sector can cope with more than 2% unfunded cost of living, hence my recommendation.**

**Gov Q – At the moment, you have 3% in the budget. Does that assume any funding?**

**LM A – No.**

**Gov Q – Is the delta between the cost of living that will be funded and what it will be settled at, likely to be more than 2%?**

**LM A – 2% is a common number among other CFOs.**

		<p><b>Gov Comment – As opposed to this being about percentages it seems it is about timing. By using this method, you delay the need to immediately go back to the schools and the centre to find more savings.</b></p> <p><b>Gov Comment – My personal view to support the 2% cost of living is a reasonable way to go.</b></p> <p><b>Gov Comment- Very sensible way forward otherwise you are going back to schools and we have just We have come through quite a challenging time. I think this is a sensible decision to wait until you have more certainty and I am supportive of this.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reached milestone of £1m of income generation from lettings.</li> </ul> <p><u>Trust Development Plan (TDP) – to <b>discuss</b> progress on 24/25 objectives and <b>decide</b> on the 25/26 objectives based on feedback from February strategy day and Exec review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Last years progress was reviewed and all actions are on track excluding creating the coaching culture due to staff leavers.</li> </ul> <p><i>MG proposed the decision to agree the 25-26 strategic delivery plan objectives.</i>  <i>Decision: Trustees unanimously agreed via a show of hands vote to approve the 25-26 strategic delivery plan objectives.</i></p> <p><u>Little Thinkers OFSTED – to <b>discuss</b> the recent OFSTED outcome and review the actions taken to respond to this</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The re-visit for the welfare requirement notice has taken place and the nursery met the necessary requirements.</li> <li>- Little Thinkers board are meeting at the start of next term to go through the action planning to remove the inadequate judgement.</li> </ul> <p><b>Gov Q – Will the WRN be published?</b></p> <p><b>MG A – It will be referenced as part of the report.</b></p> <p><b>Gov Q – I think we need to look at the Governance arrangements for Little Thinkers and consider whether one or more Trustees need to join their Board. The obvious risk in reputational damage to the Trust if things are not going right.</b></p> <p>KD Comment – Will circulate details for anyone willing to put themselves forward.  <i>Action KD to circulate details about Trustee Vacancies on the Little Thinkers Board.</i></p>	KD	05.05.2025
5.	<b>Reports from Committees</b>	Committee chairs presented the one-page reports from the Board Sub-Committees which contained the following key information:		

		<p>6A. Curriculum &amp; Quality Assurance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some schools not on track to meet target outcomes.</li> <li>- Attendance impact on outcomes.</li> <li>- Year 4 MTC check outcomes are on track.</li> <li>- New QA tracker is useful for Trustees.</li> <li>- Positive Ofsted visit at Goodwin Academy. Directors provided their thanks and congratulations to Michelle Smith and Phil Jones at Goodwin Academy.</li> </ul> <p>6B. Operations Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Successful migration to Arbor. Directors provided their thanks to Dan High for his leadership of this project.</li> <li>- Committee was receptive to the new retained funding proposal for primary and secondary schools.</li> <li>- Committee expressed their disappointment about the impact of the budgeting error regarding utilities but this personnel issue has been addressed.</li> </ul> <p>6C. People Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff restructures and risk with potential strike action.</li> <li>- Risks with payroll transfer to new system.</li> </ul> <p>6D. Governance &amp; Compliance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attendance remains a concern but some of our secondaries have made material improvements including Plympton, Brixham and Holcombe.</li> <li>- Attendance was discussed with Deputy South East Regional Director.</li> <li>- Success of Governance restructure and KD presented this to CST and we were recognised as an 'Innovator' in the sector.</li> </ul> <p>6E. Finance Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concerns around lower levels of DFE funding and impact of NI.</li> <li>- Congratulations to all involved in Lettings on the £1m milestone.</li> <li>- Assured that the Trust is compliance with all aspects of the new Procurement Act.</li> </ul> <p>6F. Audit &amp; Risk Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No further comments.</li> </ul> <p>6G. Pupil Voice Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Only 2 schools attended the last meeting. Need more awareness about calendars which</li> </ul>		
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		<p>provides limitations to schools joining.</p> <p><i>Action MG to address the number of schools able to attend the Pupil Voice Committee meetings.</i></p>	MG	18.06.2025
6.	<b>Resource Management Self-Assessment Tool Checklist</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Board confirmed they had read this document and had no further questions or comments.</li> </ul>		
7.	<b>Communication from the Board to the Trust Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- These are now being included in our bi-termly Governor Newsletter.</li> </ul>		
8.	<b>Any Other Business, Correspondence to the Chair &amp; <u>Chair update</u></b>	<p><u>Correspondence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ofsted complaint regarding Paignton Academy which was closed by Ofsted.</li> <li>- A general complaint which came through South East regions group about a series of complaints that have been made. The response that went back to the DFE which was agreed to be satisfactory.</li> </ul> <p><u>Trustee visits</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trustee Visit from KB and AM to Goodwin Academy.</li> <li>- Trustee Visit from GN and PM to Maritime Academy.</li> </ul> <p><u>Chair update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Letter which has gone out to all Accounting Officers from ESFA about transfer of their functions to the DFE from yesterday's date.</li> </ul> <p>AOB: PM: I am part of the catering tender evaluation. Thanks to Nick Forward and Sarah Daffey for robust the process. The scoring process consisted of food, student voice, sustainability, compliance, finance and staffing. The scoring reduced the number of tenders down to 5. We have now had presentations from 5 organisations. No decisions have been made at this stage and contractors have further time to submit their best positions.</p> <p>AOB: KB: Shared a proposal with Board and Exec about TSAT becoming involved with a KCC initiative regarding phones in schools.</p> <p><i>Action MG to discuss engagement with the KCC initiative regarding phones in schools with regional</i></p>	MG	ASAP

		<p><i>directors.</i></p> <p>AOB: GN: Many thanks to KB whose connections have secured a place for Sara Dedman at TPA to attend a special garden party for education at Buckingham Palace.</p> <p>AOB: GN: Acknowledge the retirement of Jess Humphries who transferred into TSAT as part of the BET Transfer. Also, to acknowledge the retirement of Karen Denton as Head of School at Penbridge. The Directors asked to record thanks to Jess and Karen for their leadership and wish them all the best.</p>		
9.	<b>Items for next agenda</b>	To review prior to next meeting.		
10.	<b>Date of next meeting</b>	<p>Date of next meeting: Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2025, 5pm</p> <p>The formal meeting closed at 6.50pm.</p> <p>One confidential item recorded in confidential minutes.</p>		

	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>By When</b>
1.	4	Action KD to circulate details about Trustee Vacancies on the Little Thinkers Board.	Kelly Denton	5 <sup>th</sup> May 2025
2.	5	Action MG to address the number of schools able to attend the Pupil Voice Committee meetings.	Mandy Gage	18 <sup>th</sup> June 2025
3.	8	Action MG to discuss engagement with the KCC initiative regarding phones in schools with regional directors	Mangy Gage	ASAP