

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

Subject	<b>Meeting of Board of Directors</b>	Date	Wednesday 30 <sup>th</sup> October 2019
Room	Trust Board Room	Time	5pm
Present	Lee Miller; Stuart Gardner; Lee Round; Derek Morrison, Steve Geary, Michael Bailey, Dave Lycett  Rachel Jordan-Evans (RJE) ; Lee Trimby (LT) (Vice-Chair) (via VC)	Clerk	Jasmin Chudasama
Apologies accepted	Peter Martin; Gerard Newman; Linda Randall,	In attendance	Kelly Denton (KD), & Natalie Sheppard (NS) (via VC), Jody Murphy (JM), Gwynn Bassan (GB), Mandy Gage (MG)
Non-attendees			

No.	Agenda Item	Action/Discussion	By whom
1.	<b>Business Interests</b>	No additional business interests were given	
2.	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>	Apologies were given for Peter Martin, Gerard Newsman and Linda Randall.	
3.	<b>Minutes and Matters arising</b>	The minutes from the previous meeting were reviewed and deemed a true reflection of the previous meeting. The vice chair signed the minutes.	
4.	<b>Company Secretary Report</b>	LM recognised KD for her work in recent months to secure high quality governors for the organisation's many governing bodies. Members reviewed the revised governor membership document and were supportive of the updated structure.  All governors agreed to confirm the new RGB appointments.  LM informed members that Annette Beard has tendered her resignation of the Trust Board of Directors	

		<p>due to her professional commitments meaning she does not have the time or capacity to fulfil her role at Director. The Board of Directors accepted with letter of resignation with regret.</p> <p>LM explained that AB was an Education specialist Director, but with the new Directors of Education taking their seats as non-exec Directors and two additional Directors with Education experience, the Board should now reflect on which areas of expertise are needed when appointing AB replacement. The Board agreed that the skills profile missing would be a Director with a Marketing and PR background to add to the compliment of skills around the table.</p>	
5.	<b>CEO Verbal Update</b>	<p>SG welcomed the Directors of Education to their first Board Meeting. He explained that the Executive Team, since their August conference, have been working to convert the five year strategic vision for the Trust into KPIs per school; using a traffic light system to RAG rate them.</p> <p>SG suggested that the KPI document remain as a standing item for each Board meeting.</p> <p>Q - In perspective of the wider HR sector, is the name 'Thinking Personnel' is less progressive? We may want to reflect on the value add of the HR service.</p> <p>A – Schools have had a proactive HR service. After one term with the new model, the improvement in service feedback from Headteachers is substantive. The new service drive team model allows to strategically look at how we can get the best out of staff. This has proven to be essential in time of challenge with recruitment and retention within the sector. The name could be looked at, however the quality of the provision is not an issue currently.</p> <p>The Trust's five key pillars, will aid all in achieving the strategic goals. SG assured the Board that members should feel absolute clarity around the Trust's operational targets and strategic intent.</p> <p>All Members agreed and commented on the structure and clarity in the documentation provided. These tree maps will continue to be reviewed at every Board meeting and will be live documents.</p> <p><b>Ofsted preparations:</b></p> <p><b>IBJ:</b></p> <p>Isambard Brunel Junior School has still not been visited by Ofsted. The school is in its inspection window.</p>	

NS and KD were commended for their work in governor appointments for the school. In just over eight weeks two former Heads have joined the AAB, both have completed monitoring visits. Subject specialists have been recruited from strong primary schools in the local area, subject leads in writing and maths and their visit write ups are very promising in terms of the improvement journey that the school is on. Thorough safeguarding audits have been carried out and all actions have been rectified. Pupil behaviour and attendance are but better than its ever been and Lucy Carroll, the Headteacher, is working with the team to continue the journey.

Q – Has Year 6 progress improved?

A – The progress is much stronger, the involvement will heighten next term, as more data is available to track.

[REDACTED]

**AFS:**

The school's external review was conducted under the new Trust QA process, the school sits on the cusp of Good/Outstanding, it presents a few areas of challenge. The peer review also delivered the same outcome.

Cormac Murphy is prepared for the '90 minute phone call' with the lead inspector ahead of the Ofsted inspection. He will be highlighting improvements made since the last inspection. Maths outcomes have soared under his leadership, the personal development of young people within the school is excellent and the recent external review of the teaching of British sign language within the school was strong. Limitations for the school are that it is not above national for attendance, being a one-form entry school means that the travelling nature of some families has a big impact on attendance figures for the school. The phonics data is also weaker due to the deaf provision, however without the deaf provision in the data it is very strong. Teachers are coached and developed well, the school has many strengths.

		<p>Q - Referring to teaching being coached and developed, is this due to a weakness within the staff?</p> <p>A - The school in strong position, it hasn't had a change in teaching staff from last academic year, however there is a new Ofsted framework and expectation on pedagogy knowledge is higher. The school is preparing for this by providing staff with additional time for development and exposing them to wider opportunities across the Trust.</p> <p><b>Meon Schools:</b></p> <p>Both Meon Junior Schools and Moorings Way Infant Schools are due inspections at Easter 2020, both will be expecting Good outcomes. Sonia Nickerson is leading on these inspections.</p> <p>The exemption on inspections for Outstanding schools will also be lifted from 2020, meaning that Meon Infant School may be subject to inspection soon. [REDACTED]</p> <p><b>Curriculum:</b></p> <p>RGS is facing a dilemma around running a two or three year KS3. GB clarified the pros and cons of each approach. The school has become IB only from September and now needs to ensure its curriculum appropriately supports its students. The school is considering if incorporating a middle years programme to provide students with a good foundation for the IB diploma study. GB is meeting with local IB grammar schools to understand their curriculum and explore which KS4 courses could be brought in to compliment the sixth form. This could be an extended essay provision, which would justify a three year KS4. GB expects to be able to determine the right way forward for the school by the end of November.</p> <p>GB is working with DOEs to specify content across eight GCSEs within the secondary schools and to open up the Y5-Y8 curriculum design to meet the needs of a disadvantaged community, we are fortunate to have a structure with three Trust feeder schools. MG is passionate that TVA needs a three year KS4 due to the massive range of ability from 54 feeder primary schools; to consolidate learning and transform life chances, three year is needed. On the other hand, a three year KS4 for HGS would be more appropriate, especially as the cohort is changing.</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	
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		<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>Q - What are the next steps in regards to growth</p> <p>A - We will still submit a growth fund application to the RSC and await further opportunities</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	
6.	<b>Update on Financial Situation</b>	<p>LM confirmed that he will be providing the Board with a full financial update at the December meeting, after the audit and budget reviews.</p> <p>The team are currently in the process of finalising the 18/19 end of year accounts. Initial verbal feedback from the Auditors has been positive. LM confirmed that as per updates to the academies financial handbook, LT and PM have been receiving this directly monthly.</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	

**RGS -**

**HGS & VIC**

Both schools are growing and there is a very clear plan in place. The restructure within the school leadership team has been very beneficial and has created further economies of scale.

**TPA -** The deficit position for the school has now been taken into a positive position for the first time. The school is benefitting from in-year funding following the pupils directly now. The staffing structure needs to be managed carefully to maintain this.

**GA -**

The school also has a number of staffing challenges, which are to be expected within a school's first few years within a new MAT.

Q - What are the predicted pupil numbers for this year?

A - They should be healthier this year with Y11 at 97 and Y7 should be 177, the grammar stream has made the school a more desirable option for the local community. The open evenings this term were heavily attended, Y7 for next year should be at least 180, results are also improving which will aid

reputation.

[REDACTED]

**AFS** - [REDACTED]

**GCA** - Healthy budget with no concerns. Low pupil numbers will cause some challenges in the future. The Board is confident in the Headteachers ability to work with the EBM to find solutions for the school.

**NHO** - Healthy budget, continues to be high performing both educationally and financially. The school contributed £100,000 towards its summer capital developments and evidently operates a very efficient model.

**CCA** - Healthy reserves however its low pupil numbers indicate that challenges lie ahead. The EBM, DOE and Head will work to find solutions.

**IBJ/MER** - [REDACTED]

Q - When will the merge of the schools as New Horizons Portsmouth be confirmed?

A - It was due to be considered at the November Headteacher Board, however due to the general election this may not be reviewed until January 2020.

**MWI/MIS/MJS** - [REDACTED]

**NBJ** - An agreed £180,000 deficit budget was set to allow for additional staffing in Year 6 and capital works, this then improved by £95,000 so the in-year deficit is better. This is a high performing academy with a high level of reserves so this is not a concern.

**PEN** – The school had an in-year surplus last year and has healthy reserves. However moving forward, the school has unsustainable finances. It suffers with low pupil numbers due to being an infant school with no direct junior school and its location. [REDACTED]

**Census:**

On the first Thursday in October, all schools across the UK submit a snapshot of their pupil count to the ESFA, which drives funding decisions for the next academic year. Across the Trust, our census was 166 pupils below prediction. This is disappointing and now means there are further implications for the Trust and budgets to be considered, budgets were built around higher pupil numbers. [REDACTED]

Q - How much longer will NHO receive in-year funding for?

A – This usually would follow the first year group through the school until they leave. There may only be one year left of in-year funding for this school.

Q – If we underestimated by this much, can we get closer to accurate estimates next year?

A – The message been made very clear around the accuracy needed when estimating pupil numbers and the accountability that sits with this. LM is aware of his own level of accountability and further questioning is needed in future. The Board are to be assured this message has been communicated in further detail. Moving forward conservative estimates are preferred over optimistic ones. The schools who received lagged funding have a year to amend their budgets to respond.

GB added that schools with sixth forms present difficulty, as it is incredibly difficult to predict Y12 intakes.

[REDACTED]

The Trust must now focus on the next steps, LM will be holding financial review meetings in November and May which will be attending by Headteachers, EBMs, DOE, CEO and the F&S Committee Chairs. LM expects to identify additional savings. The outcomes of these meetings will feed into the finance and

		staffing committees and then into the December Board Meeting.	
7.	<b>Reports from Committees</b>	<p>By exception:</p> <p>Governance – The departmental development plan was reviewed and agreed. The Trust Safeguarding lead will be rolling out software to ensure that all files are held securely in response to the recent data breach. [REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>Compliance Tracker’s implementation was discussed continues to roll out across schools.</p> <p>Curriculum &amp; QA – [REDACTED] The committee is comfortable that the school has a suitable action plan and the Board were reassured. CCA did not deliver the expected progress lift between Easter and the Summer results.</p> <p>MJS outcomes were lower than targeted. [REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>The upcoming QA at RGS will have a focus on KS5 at RGS.</p>	
8.	<b>Communication to RGB &amp; AAB</b>	<p>An overview of communication and risks identified by the AAB to RGB, then onto the Board.</p> <p>Fratton – Pupil attendance at TPA is very low and the Chair of Governors felt [REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>Compliance Tracker – Further communication will be send to Headteachers and Governors over the coming months and it continues to be implemented across the organisation.</p> <p>The Portsmouth RGB highlighted the workload of M3 staff and have commissioned a monitoring visit to</p>	

		<p>identify where there are risks and what intervention could support. Sonia Nickerson has created a workload proposal, which SG has approved and this has since been actioned.</p> <p>The RGB also raised that environmental awareness is not a strategic goal of the organisation. The Board agreed that this is a priority and this is driven locally by Directors of Education and is incredibly important. Conversations regarding this</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>The Chatham Hub noted that communication from Jo Howcroft-Scott is to be circulated by KD</p> <p>Communication from Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Highlight the importance around pupil forecasting and the impact this has had on the financial position of our schools and budgets.</li> <li>- KD will ensure that the RGBs review the three tree map documents produced by SG which provide the operational and strategic overview for this academic year.</li> </ul> <p>The Kent RGB held their first meeting, having previously been the Goodwin IMB and RGS sitting with the Medway Secondary RGB. Kaye Bettey is chairing the RGB and they intend to meet by video call and alternate between schools.</p>	
9.	<p><b>AOB &amp; Correspondence to Chair</b></p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There are three key returns to ESFA approaching around land and buildings in regards to how we are running the leases or any arrangements with 3<sup>rd</sup> parties</li> <li>- The new curriculum financial model must be submitted by 14<sup>th</sup> November, this will be finalised at the Finance Committee</li> <li>- The annual audited accounts must be returned by 31<sup>st</sup> December, the draft was reviewed by the Board.</li> </ul> <p>AOB:</p> <p>The Trust is still in the process of consulting with Unions on the Teacher pay framework, we have</p>	

		<p>proposed a 2.75% uplift for teaching staff. No concerns have been raised by Unions.</p> <p>The Board gave formal permission to implement this uplift, 3% was factored into the budget.</p> <p>The Board agreed to this uplift.</p>	
10.	<b>Items for Next Agenda</b>	To be confirmed	
11.	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>	11/12/19	