

THINKING SCHOOLS ACADEMY TRUST
COMPANY NUMBER: 7359755

Subject	Extraordinary Meeting of The Board of Directors	Date	17 th June 2020
Room	Via Teams Video Call	Time	4.00pm
Present	Stuart Gardner (SGa), Steve Geary (SGe), Rachel Jordan-Evans (RJE), David Lycett (DL), Peter Martin (PM), Ian Mason (IM), Derek Morrison (DM), Gerard Newman (GN), Linda Randall (LR), Lee Trimby (LT)	Clerk	Sandie Davenport
Apologies accepted	Michael Bailey	In attendance	Gwynn Basson (GB), Kaye Bettey (KB), Matthew Fleet (MF), Mandy Gage (MG), Lee Miller (LM), Stuart McIntosh (SM), Jody Murphy (JM), Natalie Sheppard (NS)
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 the agenda.		
2.	Welcome and apologies for absence	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received and accepted from Michael Bailey.		
3.	Trust response and provision throughout pandemic	Mr Gardner gave a presentation to the Board, discussing the following matters. <u>Role of the Board in Health & Safety</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board reviewed whether it had fulfilled its role in relation to health & safety and what level of engagement there had been at Board level. It was agreed that there had been a good level of regular contact between the Chair and SGa; the Board had been able to review plans for schools and had had contact with the Headteachers and RGB Chairs. There had 		

		<p>also been a wide range of contact between the Board and the Executive Team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair commented that he had been very impressed with the way the senior team and the headteachers had put the plans together. KB added that she had been impressed with the level of communication from the Trust and the level of engagement from GB. DL reported that communication with Portsmouth Academy had been excellent. DM advised that he had been in frequent communication with Mr Cormac at All Faiths and had been impressed with the risk assessments. • SGa noted his thanks to James Fenlon for his assistance with the risk assessments. LM added that his input had been very helpful. <p><u>Planning for reopening</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SGa advised that the Trust had consulted with headteachers and set 5 tests for the reopening of schools. After the announcement to reopen, the following principles had arisen: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Child Safe, Adult Safe. - We are not medically trained. - We should deliver the government’s ambition as far as possible while keeping children and adults safe. • Child Safe – schools had created family units (bubbles) of children and adults; each bubble was visibly identifiable; bubbles wouldn’t interconnect; if one member of a bubble had symptoms, the whole bubble would isolate; social distancing would be maintained as much as possible; cleaning would take place around the bubble’s timetable e.g. during breaks. Secondary schools had a Remote Learning Plus offer which included curriculum and pastoral support; ¼ of the year 10 cohort was in school on one day each week; deep cleaning took place on the 5th day. • SGa reported that 3 bubbles had isolated so far but all had tested negative for Covid-19 so had returned to school. • LR asked if it was proving possible to maintain a 2 meter distance within bubbles. SGa replied that the aim was “best endeavours” but that maintaining 2m distances was clearly more of a challenge with primary school children. MG reported that secondary pupils, including those with challenging behaviour, had been great at maintaining 2m distances. <p><u>Review of provision – key health & safety themes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • James Fenlon had led on the risk assessments for reopening. • Deep cleans. • Guidance on PPE. No face masks for students. Optional for staff. • Each bubble had its own timetable and staggered start times. • Increased contracted cleaning hours and cleaning fitted around each bubble’s timetable. • Flowmap of processes in place if anyone had symptoms. JM reported that the processes 		
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		<p>had worked well and had been effective. One bubble had had to isolate the day after the school reopening; testing had been carried out within a day; the bubble had returned within a week. Parents had reacted positively and said they had felt well informed. SGe commented that this would be more of a challenge with children aged under 5 as they couldn't be tested.</p> <p><u>Review of provision – students and parents</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the children who had been expected to come in to schools, did actually come in. • Each bubble had an appropriate spread of pupils with additional needs. • Template letters were produced for communicating with parents. • Lee Lucas provided mental health training via video for staff. <p><u>Review of provision – workforce and HR</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR tracked staff capacity to return. Where staff were unable to return, HR had enabled remote working. • CPD to all staff returning; daily reviews of learning sessions. • Engagement with trade unions had been very positive. <p><u>Review of provision – curriculum and timetable</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each bubble had its own timetable. • Schools had planned for a return to school curriculum and a great deal of work had been done to encourage students to engage. • Children of key workers had their own bubble. • Schools had communicated with the parents of students who were continuing with distance learning. • The Executive Team were currently looking at the recovery curriculum to ensure that students would be able to catch up on the learning they had missed. • A Governor asked how schools were monitoring the engagement of students and the work done at home. SGa replied that nationally about 1/3 of students were engaging positively, 1/3 of students were engaging some of the time and 1/3 of students were not engaging at all. Levels of engagement within the Trust were broadly similar to national and the level of engagement was broadly in line with prior attainment and level of deprivation, with students who had higher prior attainment tending to engage positively and those students with higher levels of deprivation not engaging. • GB reported that 80% of students at RGS were fully engaged. The school was conducting a weekly audit and pastoral teams were contacting parents of students not engaging. Those students would be supported from September with additional catch-up sessions after school. • NS reported that engagement had been variable in Portsmouth and particularly challenging 		
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		<p>in Year 9. The school hadn't had great success with MS Teams and needed to look at improvements to its digital classrooms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MG reported that levels of engagement were good at HGS and that there were strong interventions in place for those that weren't engaging. The position at Victory was more challenging, particularly around lack of parental support. Monitoring, however, was robust and all efforts were being made to improve engagement and get the students back in including around 200 phone calls being made each week to parents. SGa advised that none of the schools had received the IT equipment for Pupil Premium students that had been promised by the Government. • JM reported that there had been a mixed response to engagement within the primary schools. Engagement at New Horizons was better in the lower years but not so good in Year 6 which had a higher level of SEN pupils. Efforts had been continuing, however, and half of the Year 6 pupils were now back in school. Cedar had also reported a higher level of engagement in the lower years but less so at All Faiths. Schools had been contacting parents of pupils who hadn't engaged and SEN resources had been sent home to help support SEN pupils. • A Governor asked if the 1/3's split in engagement mentioned earlier was the same for primaries and secondary's? SGa replied that engagement from primary pupils was more related to age as the younger children needed more parental involvement. • A Governor asked about provision at All Faiths for the deaf pupils. JM replied that all the deaf pupils had EHCP's so were all in school; there was one bubble for the KS1 pupils and one bubble for KS2. JM advised that the Nurture Group provision had been made available 5 days per week (previously 4 days per week). There had been 4 children attending consistently during lockdown and the number was now increasing. • A Governor asked about engagement of Year 12 pupils. GB reported that they too had their bubble groups with subject specific staff in school each day and face-to-face meetings with students for bespoke support on a one-to-one basis. He added that UCAS was also providing support for Year 12 students with virtual university tours online. MG reported that schools had implemented a strong Remote Learning Plus offer and there was an intervention package for each bubble. 65% of pupils were either attending or planning to attend. • A Governor asked how the depth of engagement was measured. SGa replied that the current systems in place couldn't really measure the depth of engagement, for example how long a student logged on for each day just the numbers. MG added that schools were following up on students with intervention calls so this complemented the data on login levels. <p><u>Review of provision – policies and procedures</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various policies and procedures had been updated to reflect the Covid-19 situation 		
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including absence policies, recruitment policies and behaviour for learning expectations.

Review of provision – supply chains and contracts

- Extended catering hours to accommodate each bubble’s individual timetable.
- Extended contracted cleaning hours.
- Free school meals provided in school for children, with all FSM children still receiving their FSM voucher in addition through the Government’s scheme.
- Lee Miller was reviewing the building projects scheduled for the summer. A Governor asked if any critical projects were at risk. LM replied that the main risk was to the 3 additional classrooms at HGS; the planned adaptations at Victory should be able to go ahead as planned; the new building at Portsmouth would open in September, a delay of 4 months.

School closures Term 6

- Headteachers would inform LM, SGa and their Director of Education if any bubbles needed to isolate.
- If any school needed to close during Term 6, the decision would be taken by SGa in consultation with the Headteacher and RGB Chair.
- The Trust would be led by guidance from Public Health England.

[Mrs Jordan-Evans joined the meeting at 4.54pm].

Assumptions for September and beyond

- Decisions on September reopening were not likely to be made until late summer.
- It was expected that primary schools would reopen in full.
- It was likely that some schools could be locked down again so preparations needed to be made to deliver Distance Learning 2.
- “Normal” school would resume for all.
- Increased school provision for more year groups with continued distance learning for some.
- Arrangements to be the same as at the end of Term 6.
- A Governor asked if there were any contingency plans to use other buildings (e.g. the gym) to increase capacity while social distancing remained in place. SGa replied that other Trust schools had been used where a school had reached capacity for key worker children but this wouldn’t be practical for all other students as there wouldn’t be enough staff.
- A Governor asked if there was scope to increase capacity by arranging the school day in a different way, for example by compressing learning hours. SGa replied that they were restricted by the Government’s advice to keep the integrity of the bubbles and to only have ¼ of a year group in on any given day. Schools would, however, be asking parents to confirm whether their children would be coming in to school so that, for example, if only 8 children were expected in out of a bubble of 15, bubbles could be rearranged to maximise

		<p>capacity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Governor asked if it was likely that pupils would only be expected to attend school part-time from September and move to a part-time school/home-working model. SGa replied that they were awaiting Government guidance but that it was possible that there would be some type of blended learning for some children. <p><u>Lockdown 2 aspirations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the event of a second lockdown, the aspiration would be to deliver a high quality, engaging curriculum for students via distance learning. This would include the following. • Use of appropriate assessment to monitor progress. • Use of Seesaw in primaries whilst also developing MS Teams; continued use of MS Teams in secondaries. • Engagement with parents to review IT resources available at home. • Review of budgetary impact. • Launching of the digital workflow platform. SGa noted his thanks to NS for the excellent work she had done to accelerate the Trust’s digital journey and bring it forward by around 18 months. <p><u>Questions from Governors</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Governor asked about plans for hosting exams in September. SGa replied that schools were still awaiting guidance from Government and would also need to review the Covid-19 situation nearer the time. • A Governor asked about the implications for Ofsted inspections. SGa replied that Ofsted was currently paused and questions would need to be addressed around Ofsted’s role in assessing digital provisions (not currently part of its framework), the statutory timetable for inspection as some schools had now missed their statutory window, and how the framework might need to be reviewed (the focus was currently on schools delivering a broad and balanced curriculum but the focus for schools from September would be on a catch-up curriculum for the core subjects). • A Governor asked how new staff would be inducted in September. SGa replied that two days had been set aside before the start of the September term for induction which would be reviewed nearer the time and that the key Trust induction was also available online. The Directors of Education were also working with schools for school-based inductions. • A Governor asked about whether the Trust expected any significant changes to pupil numbers in September and whether some pupils may not return. SGa replied that schools with a high proportion of Eastern European children were expecting a reduction in numbers as those families had largely returned to their countries of origin due to the lower levels of Covid-19. One of the main factors for other pupils seemed to be around how safe parents thought schools would be for their children. Another factor would be around the 		
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		<p>practicalities of some parents home-schooling their children or returning to work. As discussed earlier, the Trust's schools would be asking parents to confirm if they were planning on sending their children back to school.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Mr Gardner for his detailed presentation. He commended the senior leadership team and Headteachers for the tremendous professionalism they had shown in planning the continuing provision of education and he expressed confidence that the students would benefit in terms of their life chances.</p>		
4.	Any other business	There being no further items of business the Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and input and closed the meeting at 5.30pm.		