

THINKING SCHOOLS ACADEMY TRUST
COMPANY NUMBER: 7359755

Subject	Meeting of the Board of Directors	Date	28 th August 2020
Room	Via Teams Video Call	Time	2.00pm
Present	Stuart Gardner (SGa), Michael Bailey (MB), Rachel Jordan-Evans (RJE), David Lycett (DL), Peter Martin (PM), Ian Mason (IM), Derek Morrison (DM), Gerard Newman (GN), Linda Randall (LR)	Clerk	Sandie Davenport
Apologies accepted	Kaye Bettey, Matthew Fleet, Mandy Gage, Natalie Sheppard, Lee Trimby	In attendance	Gwynn Bassan (GB), Kelly Denton (KD), Dan High (DH), Lee Miller (LM), Jody Murphy (JM)
Non-attendees	Steven Geary		

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 items on the agenda.		
2.	Welcome and apologies for absence	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received and accepted from Kaye Bettey, Matthew Fleet, Mandy Gage, Natalie Sheppard and Lee Trimby.		
3.	Minutes and matters arising	Board meeting 15 th July 2020 – there were no matters arising and the Chair approved the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting.		
4.	CEO report	<p>SGa gave a presentation on his CEO report to the Board.</p> <p>Summer results – overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SGA explained Student outcomes, the original process was centre-assessed grades (CAG), moderated by algorithm, option to retake exams in the Autumn. Algorithm unable to produce fair results on an individual student's level. Ofqual published guidance of appeals process for A Levels but withdrew it within hours. Final Government decision was for A 		

	<p>Level & GCSE students to take the higher of the CAG or the moderated grade, with the option to retake exams in the Autumn. Pearson delayed publication of Level 2 and Level 3 BTEC results. The Board noted how hard the Trust's secondary senior teams had worked in managing the process and supporting pupils through all the changes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using the 2020 data – the raw CAGs were not originally intended to be predicted outcome grades and there was no standardisation process across the country. The raw results and Progress 8 scores will not be used by the Trust as the data is not comparable to previous years; the only limited use may be for individual schools to compare their overall position to the previous year. Comparison to national – there was significant inflation of grades nationally, e.g. the proportion of pupils achieving grade 7+ increased by 30%. Within the Trust, schools' results were mostly in line with, or slightly higher, than the schools' historic norms. Grade inflation within the Trust's schools was therefore significantly lower than nationally. Schools followed a robust process in setting the CAGs and there was robust challenge to ensure accuracy and integrity around the outcomes. Consequences for the schools – a few students are now challenging their CAGs (particularly at Holcombe and RGS) but the schools are confident that they can robustly evidence the CAGs awarded. The outcomes have presented opportunities for staff to raise aspirations and for students to enhance their work ethic so that if the same events occur next year students will have completed a higher standard of work during the course of the year for schools to use as evidence for CAGs. The expectation is that exams will take place in 2021. A Director asked how schools would support any students who were experiencing emotional difficulties as a result of the recent issues around grades. SGa replied that there was a great deal of pastoral support for students, particularly in helping Year 13s with securing university places, albeit some needing to defer for a year. GB added that pastoral support had been ongoing throughout the Covid situation and would continue. Vulnerable students had been contacted on a weekly basis by the safeguarding team. Support was also continuing for students who had got their exam results, particularly in regard of securing university places for those students who were still awaiting BTEC results. <p>Summer results – school specific</p> <p><u>Holcombe</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> KS4 results were very good with 38.9% A*/A (80% of the cohort were high prior attainers). Retention into sixth form was high with 176 students having confirmed places for Year 12 (the school had budgeted for 140). Progress 8 score was 0.57. Progress for Pupil Premium children was higher than non-PP children and was the highest ever (0.88) so this was very positive. Progress for the Most Able was 0.5 although this was based on CAGs so the challenge would be to convert this 	
--	--	--

	<p>into actual progress when real exams take place in the sixth form.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress 8 in foundation subjects was good and still improving. SEN progress was -1.53; this was for 3 students and one non-attender. • KS5 results were higher than expected at 65% A*/B so the focus would be on delivering a similar level of attainment for the current Year 13s. • There had been a significant increase in the number of students going on to university, including all 10 Pupil Premium students, with over 25% going to Russell Group universities and Cambridge. • The ongoing Covid situation had left some students without secured apprenticeship so there was a risk of NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). <p><u>Victory</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KS4 results were 41.4% Strong pass (A*-C 5+) and 59% Standard pass (A*-C 4+) which was a significant achievement for the school and a testament to how the school continues to drive forward. • Progress 8 had risen from -0.15 to 0.15, albeit BTEC results had not yet come in. English and EBACC had performed particularly well. • Attainment had dropped but this had been expected as the cohort was a low prior attaining group of students. • The disadvantaged gap of -0.49 remained the same and this was still a priority for the school. • KS5 results were good with 99% A*-E which included the Level 3 BTEC results as most of these had been received. • 80% of students were going on to university, including an increase in the number going to Russell Group universities, which was very positive. This was also the first year where students who were also studying subjects at Holcombe did as well in their subjects at Holcombe as they did in their subjects at Victory. SGa commended Ms Gage for her incredible hard work on results day on behalf of a particular group of students who had received U grades from Pearson for a Level 3 BTEC (3 A Level equivalent) due to Pearson not applying the unit distribution, with the outcome that their U grades were reversed back to their original grades. • The Board acknowledged the positive results for the school this year and thanked Ms Gage and the staff for their hard work. <p><u>Goodwin</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Bassan presented the exam results for Goodwin Academy. • GCSE results – Progress 8 score was -0.13, an improvement on the predicted -0.3 and a significant improvement on the previous year's -0.78. The process for the CAG was robust 	
--	--	--

	<p>and curriculum leaders were rigorously challenged by the senior team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main focus going forward would be on English and Maths with the aim being to move the Basics (Eng/Ma 4+) Standard pass from the current 32% to 50% next year and an aspiration of 60%. The 5+ agenda would also be to stretch and challenge. A Levels – 2020 was the last year that the school would be offering A Levels. Outcomes were good with 76% A*-C. The focus next year would be on the BTECs and raising the percentage of Distinctions which would then raise the progress. The level of Passes and Merits this year were good but hadn't reached Distinctions. Mr Bassan would be collaborating with curriculum leaders at Victory and the aim was for the teaching to be at Distinction level from the start of the year. Another area of focus would be the More Able pupils with a More Able Plan to be written which would be applied consistently across years 9, 10 and 11. The grammar stream in Years 7 and 8 was very positive and would be monitored closely. The school would be developing a Pupil Premium barriers and solutions strategy to address the progress gap, albeit the gap was reducing. A mentoring programme would also be set up in Term 1 for underperforming boys to address the progress gap between boys and girls. The Chair enquired as to the reasons for the boys' lower attainment. Mr Bassan replied that there had been an element of apathy in the outgoing Year 11 cohort and it had been the most challenging cohort the school had ever had. There had been some exclusions with some boys being taught at the PRU. There was a much greater desire for progress in the new Year 11 coming up from Year 10. A Director asked about the readiness of the mentoring programme for Term 1. Mr Bassan replied that Matt Evans, the Vice-Principal, was leading on this so he would be catching up with him the following week. Overall, the aspirations for KS4 for the coming year would be to achieve a Progress 8 score of 0.2 by raising attainment and progress in underperforming subject areas and in underperforming student groups (Most Able, Ever 6 and Boys). <p><u>RGS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr Bassan presented the exam results for RGS. GCSE results were very strong across the board with A*/A (7+) 66%. Key areas of focus going forward would be increasing the 7+ attainment to 70% and a focus on levels 8 and 9 to stretch and challenge those students. Progress 8 for English and Maths were both good but were significantly lower than the school's average so a focus must be on closing the gap. Other key areas of focus were PP vs non-PP, albeit PP numbers were small, Most Able PP vs Most Able, and EFL which recorded negative progress in all three languages. IB initial average was 35.4 but increased to 36.9 after a review (equivalent to 3 A's at A Level so a strong outcome). A Level/IB combined 72% A*-B. The aspiration was to increase A Level A*-B to 75%+ next 	
--	--	--

	<p>year as it would be the last year of A Levels and to raise aspirations to Oxbridge and the Russell Group of universities. A Director asked why there seemed to have been a dip in aspiration. Mr Bassan replied that this was mainly due to the restructure and that he would be working with the senior team to ensure that standards and aspirations were consistent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Director asked about retention from Year 11 into Year 12 for September. Mr Bassan replied that a Microsoft form had gone out to students so the school would have more information once the responses had been collated; the target was for 100 students. 30 external students had applied to join the sixth form. • A Director asked if there had been any students indicating that they wanted to take GCSE or A Level exams in the Autumn and whether the schools would offer the tuition if the students had left the school. SGa replied that forms had gone out to students on results day for them to complete if they wanted to take the exams so schools were waiting for these to be returned. Schools would offer tuition but the mechanism for this would be looked at once numbers were known. Mr Bassan added that schools were also still waiting for further guidance from Government on the Autumn exam process. • Overall, the main areas of focus for the next year would be stretch and challenge, closing the gap between English and Maths, and a review of the Pupil Premium strategies. <p><u>Portsmouth Academy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GCSE results: 21% 7+ grades were submitted to the exam boards and increased to 24% once the algorithm process had been applied. Results overall were good, including the A*-C (5+) 62%, A*-C (4+) 77% and the Basics. • The school continued to have the challenge of students arriving during term-time in Years 9, 10 and 11 and there was a gap in attainment between those students and the students that had been in the school throughout. • The current Year 11 would be the last girls-only group so a key focus would be ensuring that the new Year 10, being the first mixed group, achieved the same outcomes as the girl-only year groups had achieved in the past. <p>The Chair, on behalf of the Board, extended his congratulations and thanks to all the staff who had worked so hard over this period for the benefit of the Trust's students.</p> <p>Covid update on guidance and preparations for September opening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SGa advised the Board that Dan High had been confirmed as Director of Service Delivery and he had led on preparations in relation to Covid. • Changes since the end of term board meeting included additional symptoms of Covid (loss or change in taste or smell), giving schools flexibility to use face coverings, changes to 	
--	--	--

	<p>isolation periods, and testing kits to be provided to schools. A Director asked if schools were compelled to only recognise the 3 symptoms of Covid as listed by the UK Government rather than the wider list of 11 symptoms published by the World Health Organisation. SGa replied that the Trust would continue to follow the recognised Government guidance as far as they could, including the potential change to smell or taste, but would pass the comments around the WHO list of symptoms on to the Trust's Health and Safety lead to keep under review.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Director commented that Portsmouth University would be offering its students Covid testing and wondered whether the Portsmouth schools could make use of this. SGa replied that this was a consideration for the future and that the Trust would monitor the availability of alternate testing sites for each of the schools. • The Board had previously received the risk assessments for all schools and the measures put in place in schools such as avoiding large gatherings, staggered lunchtimes and open evenings being conducted virtually. A Director informed the Board about new software for virtual conferences and promoting display stands as you might during an opening evening. She will pass the details on to the Trust for the media team to look at. • DH drew the Board's attention to the procedure for symptomatic and confirmed cases of Covid. For suspected cases, that staff member or student would be asked to self-isolate for 10 days, with members of their household self-isolating for 14 days. The school would then contact Public Health England for guidance on what to do next. Bubbles would not be closed based on a single case unless PHE advised otherwise. • Each school had an operational checklist and the Business Managers would be responsible for ensuring compliance with the checklist. One of the main logistical challenges had been ensuring plans for staggered lunch breaks but Chartwells had worked closely with the schools to put plans in place. • Secondary schools would be operating a system whereby students would access the full curriculum and move to different classrooms, which was contrary to the majority of other non-Trust schools where the children would learn in a limited number of classrooms in a designated zone. The secondary schools' operational checklists therefore included measures around hand sanitising stations outside classrooms and hand wipes on desks. • The Executive Team had met to discuss the issue of face coverings and concluded that this would be optional so that students who wanted to wear face coverings could do so. For staff members who wanted to wear a face covering, they would be able to wear a visor rather than a covering, after discussion with their Headteacher. <p>GN proposed that the Board approve the Covid measures as presented. MB seconded the proposal and the Board approved the measures unanimously.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Mr Gardner for his presentation.</p>	
--	--	--

5.	Due diligence	
----	----------------------	---



	<p>The Chair proposed that the Board approve the proposal to be taken forward for consultation. All Directors agreed.</p> <p>Catch up funding</p> <p>SGa advised the Board that the Government had allocated £1 billion catch up funding to support children. £650 million would be allocated directly to schools (around £80 per pupil), with the remaining £350 million being used to set up a tutoring programme for disadvantaged students. Early indications were that the Trust would receive around £700k from the £650 million. The Trust therefore needed to consider the best way of utilising that funding and SGa briefed the Board on information to consider.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20-25% of students had been highly engaged and made progress during lockdown. • 50-60% of students had had some engagement but not made further progress. • 20-25% of students had been disengaged and their academic position will have declined significantly during lockdown. These students were likely to be lower prior attainers, SEND students and students from disadvantaged backgrounds. These students would also be more likely to find it harder to catch up. • The older the child, the more likely it was that they would have been engaged. Infant school children were more likely to need a greater degree of catch up. • The two options were therefore to allocate £80 per student, regardless of need, with schools then choosing how to spend the funding, or to assess where the funding was needed most and allocate the funding into those areas. • There would be no formal reporting process to Government on how the money was spent. • The Chair had had discussions with Headteachers on how they felt the money should be spent. All Headteachers had felt that the money should be allocated based on areas of need rather than the £80 per student approach and that schools should put forward proposals to the Directors of Education. The Chair and SGa both recommended the same approach to the Board and noted that this fitted in with the Child First ethos of the Trust. <p>The Board discussed the proposals and agreed unanimously with the recommendation that the funding be targeted where it was needed most.</p> <p>Maritime Academy</p> <p>SGa informed the Board that plans for the Maritime Academy were ongoing and looked spectacular. Mrs Murphy gave a presentation and video on the external and internal architectural plans for the academy.</p>	
--	--	--

		<i>[Rachel Jordan -Evans left the meeting)</i>		
7.	Communication to RGB and AAB	<p>LM advised that communication to the RGBs and AABs should include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exam results. • Catch up funding. • AABs to look at School Development Plans. • AABs to look at schools' digital learning strategies and their readiness for online learning. <p>A Director asked about Governor visits into schools. SGa reminded the Board that they had previously agreed that Governor visits would restart towards the latter half of September.</p>		
8.	Any other business and correspondence to the Chair	<p><u>ESFA letter to Accounting Officer</u></p> <p>LM informed the Board that the ESFA had allowed extensions to the deadlines for returns for this year. A Director asked if the Trust would be able to meet the revised deadline for each return. LM replied that the Trust would meet the extended deadlines but the intention was to adhere to the original deadlines where possible.</p> <p><u>Delegated powers</u></p> <p>KD reminded the Board that in April they agreed to give delegated sign-off powers to the Exec Team until 31st August 2020. KD advised that this arrangement was coming to an end and would not be extended.</p> <p><u>Board development</u></p> <p>At the February Board meeting, Directors had discussed Board development and agreed an action for KD to look into charity and company legislation and the Board's responsibilities in relation to that. A session had been arranged for February. KD will send out an invite nearer the time.</p> <p><u>Safeguarding training</u></p> <p>A Director asked about the progress of mandatory safeguarding training for Governors. KD replied that the deadline for completion of training for Governors and staff was the beginning of September. Lee Lucas will update KD on progress next week and KD will pass this onto the Chair.</p>	KD	KD
10.	Items for next agenda	To be advised.		

11.	Date of next meeting	The next meeting will be on 21st October at 5pm. The Chair thanked Board members for their attendance and input. The meeting closed at 4.20pm.		