

THINKING SCHOOLS ACADEMY TRUST
COMPANY NUMBER: 7359755

Subject	Meeting of the Board of Directors	Date	31 st March 2021
Room	Via Teams Video Call	Time	5.00pm
Present	Peter Martin – Chair (PM), Stuart Gardner (SG), Michael Bailey (MB), Steve Geary (SGe), David Lycett (DL), Derek Morrison (DM), Gerard Newman (GN), Linda Randall (LR)	Clerk	Sandie Davenport
Apologies accepted	Ian Mason	In attendance	Kaye Bettey (KB), Gary Chapman (GC), Kelly Denton (KD), Lee Miller (LM), June Leigh (observer), Cathy Brown (observer)
Non-attendees	Rachel Jordan-Evans		

Key Points Discussed and Action Items				
No.	Agenda Item	Action/Discussion	By whom	When
1.	Declaration of business interests	LM declared that he had been appointed as a member of the Skills for Life Trust. There were no further declarations of interest pertaining to items on the agenda.		
2.	Welcome and apologies for absence	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and extended a warm welcome to Cathy Brown from Mead Education Trust who was observing the meeting as part of the Trust's peer review. A warm welcome was also extended to Gary Chapman from Plymouth High School. KD introduced June Leigh to the Board; she will be taking over the role of minuting Board and Committee meetings. Apologies were received and accepted from Ian Mason. Rachel Jordan-Evans did not attend the meeting.		
3.	Minutes and matters arising	The Chair considered the minutes from the previous meeting There were no matters arising and the minutes were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting.		

4.	CEO report	<p>SGa gave a presentation on the key matters and discussions arising from his CEO report to the Board.</p> <p><u>Progress on strategic goals 2020/21</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress has continued against the pillars although Success Through Learning has been significantly impacted by Covid so will be addressed in the 2021/22 strategic plan. • Risks around strategic goals are loss of momentum, the meta-memory agenda not having progressed in Primary schools and potential burn out. Headteachers are very enthusiastic about progress for the rest of this academic year and next year but expectations need to be managed around what will actually be achievable. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Q: What measures are being put in place to implement the meta-memory agenda? - A: CPD training for staff around meta-memory will commence in September. <p><u>Potential Trust growth</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversations are ongoing around building a hub in the South West, including discussions with the RSC on how they can support the process in Plymouth and beyond into the Torbay area. • [REDACTED] • [REDACTED] • [REDACTED] • Q: If Plymouth High School became a remote satellite school, how would that impact the Trust financially? • A: The Trust is committed to providing the same quality of service and support to all its schools and any financial impact would be held at Trust level. LM added that financial modelling had taken place around the risk of Plymouth being a satellite school and plans had been developed for Portsmouth to provide support for Plymouth in this scenario. • Decision required: MB proposed that the Board give permission for the Exec Team to proceed with due diligence in the event of any of the schools discussed wishing to join the Trust. LR seconded the proposal. The Board approved the decision. <p><u>Strategic goals 2021/22</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The aim for 2021/22 is for it to be a consolidation year in terms of strategic goals and to build up momentum again within the Trust and its schools. • The 2021/22 strategic plan incorporates elements of the 2020/21 plan that had been 		
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		<p>deferred, elements that had come out of Covid that the Trust wanted to retain and other suggestions from the Headteachers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The risk is that it is an aspirational set of objectives and will need to be balanced against the ongoing and legacy challenges of Covid. • Comment: the Board agreed that consolidation is the right strategy. • Decision required: GN proposed that the Board approve the strategic objectives for 2021/22. MB seconded the proposal. The Board approved the proposal. <p><u>Performance management 2021/22</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Exec Team had recommended that the Trust should decouple Performance Management from pay progression during this cycle. Under-performance will still be challenged through the competency framework. The Trust will be providing a framework to recognise and reward outstanding contributions by staff. • Q: Will the link between performance management and pay progression be re-established after the current Covid situation has ended? • A: Yes, this is a temporary measure for this year only. • Q: How has this impacted NQTs and PGCE students? • A: NQTs aren't in the performance management cycle, they are supported under a different framework in their probationary year. There are no concerns from any of the schools around the current NQTs not passing their probationary year. Regarding the PGCE students, they are also not part of the performance management cycle. The Trust has been running its own SCITT in Kent and Medway this year which has been very successful and will be extended to Portsmouth next year. • Q: Is the competency framework impacted by the new performance management process being developed? • A: No, the competency framework is based around the statutory Teachers' Standards and is not directly linked to the performance management process. • Q: How is the new performance management process progressing? • A: The Staffing Committee recently received a presentation on the performance management process and how it is progressing. Two key considerations are to ensure that there is a robust system in place to track performance management (professional growth) conversations throughout the year and to ensure that the policies are updated to reflect an ability to start the capability process in an effective and timely manner. HR are currently in the process of separating the performance management and capability processes. The next Staffing Committee meeting will look at the new professional growth policy, the updated capability policy and the response to the pilot of the system development currently taking place. • Decision required: GN proposed that the Board retrospectively approve the decision to decouple this year's performance management cycle from pay progression. MB seconded 		
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the proposal. The Board approved the decision.

TSfE update (LM)

- LM updated the Board on the annual development plan for Thinking Solutions for Education and highlighted 4 key areas to celebrate.
- Covid support strategy: very proud of the teams and how they had worked together to support the schools during remote learning and the subsequent return to school. There has been a high level of uptake around testing. A great deal of work has gone on behind the scenes around risk assessments, communications to students and parents and the IT infrastructure to support remote learning.
- Plymouth: a great deal had been achieved with Plymouth High School in a short space of time and whilst Covid was ongoing. The Trust has already had a tangible impact on the school. Feedback from the Headteacher and senior leaders has been very positive.
- Middle leadership development programme: this was successfully launched in January and 18 staff have signed up from HR, Finance and Facilities.
- Heat maps: developing heat maps within the TSfE teams to ensure that the services continue to add value back to the schools. DH has led on a review of how key performance indicators are tracked and how impact is monitored. The heat map analysis will be launched after Easter with KPIs being monitored on a termly basis.
- Comment: very well done to Dan High and the whole team.
- External services: services offered by TSfE have been in high demand externally particularly around the Thinking Creative brand. The Diocese of Bristol Academy Trust have engaged a communication contract from TSfE and have extended the existing finance contract. Discussions are also underway with Portsmouth City Council to extend the Thinking Technology digital learning contract into 2021/22. LM has been asked to become the Interim Finance Director for another trust in Kent.

Ofsted

- Ofsted are now moving back to in-school visits for the summer term with full inspections returning from September.
- SG gave an overview of the schools and their current SEF judgements (a QA is booked in for Plymouth in Term 6 as the Trust has not yet been able to verify their judgements).
- The Trust could have 12 schools inspected during academic year 2021/22 (Goodwin a Section 5, all other schools a Section 8) which could lead on to a Trust review. KD and SG have recently attended training on what a Trust review would look like.
- Comment: KB had recently conducted a Pupil Premium review at Goodwin and felt that the leadership team was very strong. There would also be a 3-day external QA next term. The Chair agreed that the leadership team was very strong and very positive around outcomes for the children.

		<p><u>Student engagement with remote learning</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from Secondary parents had been good in terms of work being pitched appropriately around amount, challenge and support, although proportionally only a small number of parents had responded to the survey. <p><u>Centrally held catch-up funding</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A process is in place to allocate the funding to schools. The aim is to have a lasting and sustained impact on the outcomes and life chances of the students. • The risk is around the funding not impacting every school. <p><u>Primary KS1/KS2 provision</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SG outlined the risks around KS1 and KS2 provision. • Q: Will Year 6 have an internal assessment this summer? • A: Yes, it's essential that schools know where the gaps in learning are now and where they've managed to get the children to when they leave the school so that they can reflect on the effectiveness of the provision. The outcomes will also be shared with the secondary schools where the students move on to. • Q: Will Year 2 also have internal assessments? • A: Yes. • Comment: SGe – agree that some sort of informative assessment should be done. <p><u>Secondary – teacher assessed grades</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a great deal of cross-Trust working in terms of teacher assessed grades; Headteachers are confident around their approaches. The Trust's aim is to be fair, transparent and consistent. • There are some risks around appeals, FOI/SAR requests and potential legal challenges. However, the Trust has clear systems around how the data is being collected, how the evidence is assessed and around the quality assurance processes. Evidence portfolios will be created for each student which, in the event of an appeal, will be sent to the exam board. • It is important to ensure that appropriate assessment processes are in place for students with SEND; for example, in an exam, a dyslexic student will be given extra time so the Trust needs to ensure that something is in place with teacher assessment grades to account for their disability. • Comment: the approach by the Trust inspires great confidence on how the teacher assessed grades will be determined. • Q: How will this be managed by schools given that it's the school holiday period? We must ensure that the additional workload doesn't impact on staff well-being. 		
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5.	Reports from committees	<p><u>Staffing, Pay and Performance Management Committee (LM)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee had received a presentation around the move from performance management to professional growth. The Chair commented that the presentation was very well thought out and put together. KD will circulate the presentation to the Board. • The job evaluation framework has been completed for all but the senior management team. Roles for all support staff have been independently evaluated and the ranking is near completion. 	KD	

• [REDACTED]

Operations Committee (GN)

- The Committee discussed the commercial position with Chartwells and an agreement has been reached (details under AOB).
- Goodwin land sale: a report had been presented to the Committee around the two potential schemes (a housing development and a school development). LM has since received a letter from Kent County Council to say that they don't currently have a need for either option. LM will write to the ESFA outlining the measures taken to explore every opportunity to gain capital receipt from the land and to discuss next steps.
- School condition allocation projects: the allocation of just under £3million for projects over £10k in 2021 was approved.
- The additional spend of £157k for Plymouth High School technology procurement was approved.
- Area of concern: continuing impact of Covid.
- Appreciation noted for the support from all areas of operational staff during the pandemic.

Finance Committee (PM)

• [REDACTED]

Audit and Risk Committee (GN)

- The Committee approved the appointment of UHY as the Trust's auditors for the current year.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee received the first report from the Trust’s internal auditors, Cooper Parry. No significant issues around financial control. The subjects for the 3 themed visits this year were approved, the first being a review of the Trust’s cyber security provision. • Dan High has developed a new format for the risk registers. • The 5 highest risks at Trust level were reviewed, the most significant being Goodwin’s financial position in relation to pupil numbers which is being closely monitored. • Comment: KB – hopeful that Year 7 and Sixth Form numbers are now looking more favourable than originally anticipated. <p><u>Governance and Compliance Committee (MB)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding and attendance at Goodwin: the Kent RGB had received a full report of the review and were satisfied that previously expressed concerns had been responded to. • The ICO are taking no further action in regard of a data protection complaint. There were some minor suggestions for action that the Trust will review. • Concern had been raised over the number of schools that had not had a safeguarding visit. Some schools had had visits since and an update is awaited from Lee Lucas which will be circulated to the Board. • KD had addressed concerns raised around the large quantity of documents for AAB and RGB meetings. <p><u>Curriculum and Quality Assurance Committee (PM)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee had reviewed the remote learning provision. • SG had presented the operational strategic focusses around pupils’ return to school. • The Committee received reports on the QA reviews of Portsmouth Academy and Goodwin Academy. • The Committee had discussed concerns around catch-up curriculum and teacher assessed grades. • Directors of Education will reflect on how to mitigate learning gaps between pupils who had engaged remotely and those who hadn’t. <p><u>Regional Governing Bodies (KD)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Portsmouth, Strood and Kent RGBs had highlighted risks, opportunities and threats to the Board for information only. There were none requiring the Board’s action. • Decision required: the Fratton RGB, with the support of Natalie Sheppard, would like the Board to appoint Vicky Ferguson as the Chair of the RGB following the resignation of the current Chair. The Board approved the appointment. • Decision required: to appoint James Carr as a member of the Strood RGB. The Board approved the appointment. 		
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		<p>was approved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions have also taking place with Chartwells to extend the contract to include Plymouth High School. Chartwells have expressed a willingness to take this on from September and would add an additional £52k investment along with a 50% share of the profits above this. • Decision required: the Board were asked to approve the extension of the Chartwells contract to include Plymouth High School under the terms described by LM. MB proposed the contract extension as described. GN seconded the proposal. The proposal was approved. <p><u>July Board meeting (SG)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Trust has been long-listed for the Transforming Futures Trust in the South West. They have asked for an initial discussion with some members of the Board. GN has already volunteered. DM also agreed to participate. KD will approach Malcolm Parfitt and invite him to join the group due to his first-hand knowledge and experience around being the most recent school before Plymouth to have joined the Trust. <p><u>July Board meeting (KD)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was suggested that Members and the Board should get together informally before the July Board meeting (Covid permitting). The Board agreed that this was a good suggestion. 	KD	
9.	Items for next agenda	To be advised.		
10.	Date of next meeting	<p>The next meeting will be held on 14th July.</p> <p>GC thanked the Trust for all the support given to Plymouth High School and commented that there had been an immediate positive impact on the school.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Board members for their attendance and input. The meeting closed at 7.07pm.</p>		