

THINKING SCHOOLS ACADEMY TRUST
COMPANY NUMBER: 7359755

Subject	Meeting of the Board of Directors	Date	7.2.2024
Room	Via Teams	Time	5.00pm
Present	Stuart Gardner, Kaye Bettey, Clive Star, Andrew Medhurst, Steve Geary, Derek Morrison, Peter Martin	Clerk	Kelly Denton
Apologies accepted	Natasha Hurtado, Ian Mason, David Glassey	In attendance	Jody Murphy Sam Flynn (SF) Lee Miller Lee Preston
Non-attendees			

Key Points Discussed and Action Items				
No.	Agenda Item	Action/Discussion	By whom	When
1.	Declaration of business interests	No declarations of business interests were declared		
2.	Welcome and apologies for absence	Apologies were accepted from Tash Hurtado and Ian Mason		
3.	The Victory Academy Significant Change request	<p>Sam Flynn highlighted the key aspects of the significant change proposal for SEN provision at The Victory Academy, detailing the consultation and feedback received.</p> <p>Q: Are Medway committed to paying full costs of outfitting A: Yes, everything needed</p> <p>Q: Are It specific what they need A: Yes, Nick O'Donoghue is working on this with Medway</p> <p>Q: What is the capacity of the unit A: 25 with a 5 additional each year</p> <p>Q: What is the cost (recognising this is externally funded) A: [REDACTED]</p>		

		<p>Q: Under risk you have said if spaces decrease in future but this is low risk, would you agree A: Yes, low risk given recent need</p> <p>Q: What would the Trust's position be if Medway stopped funding A: Issue doesn't tend to be the funding but funding the amount of space there is in provisions, so for example we will have same staffing if we have 20 or 25 pupils, but this is a significantly low risk</p> <p><i>The Board unanimously agreed this proposal</i></p>		
4.	The Victory Academy Significant Change request	<p>Sam Flynn highlighted the key aspects of the significant change proposal for 6th form provision at The Victory Academy which allows an increase PAN in the school. SF detailed the consultation and feedback received.</p> <p>Q: Cost is covered by Medway LA but what is the cost? A: [REDACTED]</p> <p><i>The Board unanimously agreed this proposal and agreed a good level of investment in The Victory Academy</i></p>		
5.	Admission policy (part one)	<p>Sam Flynn highlighted the key aspects of the paper on the Co-Ed proposal for Holcombe Grammar School and highlighted the consultation scope.</p> <p>The consultation took place in December 2023/January 2024 and was carried out on a far wider basis than previous consultations, having been distributed in Medway, Kent, Essex, Thurrock and all London boroughs from which any students had attended any of the three academies (HGS, Fort Pitt and Chatham Grammar), in the academic years 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24.</p> <p>In line with DfE guidance, there were two separate consultations sent out at the same time; one for the significant change to the academy, and one for the change to the admissions policy to admit girls into Year 7 from September 2025. There were 54 consultation responses - 32 for and 22 against the significant change; 32 for and 20 against the admissions change (with 2 stating no preference). Chatham Grammar and Fort Pit had a less favourable response but those two schools' boards have agreed to proceed.</p> <p>SF highlighted the consultation response which were taken in turn and the Board discussed and agreed the position of each of its responses:</p>		

		<p><i>Consultation response:</i> Single sex schools have better results than mixed schools. <i>Board agreed the response of:</i> There is no data to support this assertion. Progress 8 scores show a wide range of performance levels amongst both mixed and single-sex grammar schools.</p> <p><i>Consultation response:</i> Boys and girls benefit from a different teaching style. <i>Board agreed the response of;</i> There is no evidence to support this assertion.</p> <p><i>Consultation response:</i> Boys/girls of some religions need to attend single-sex schools. <i>The Board agreed the response of:</i> We are a non-denominational school which is welcoming and inclusive of all, regardless of faith, belief and background. We are proactively inclusive of all groups, across our student and staff community.</p> <p>We recognise that there are a small number of groups that would prefer single-sex schools to mixed schools, a concern raised by 4 respondents; however, as a Trust we are committed to being an inclusive educator and employer by enabling all students and employees to utilise the same facilities, take part in the same activities and experiences, regardless of whether or not they are disabled, whatever their ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, national origin, national status, gender or sexual orientation. We are committed to continuing to foster mutual respect and good relations between all genders.</p> <p>All three schools are already mixed in our successful Sixth Form and moving co-ed from Year 7 would provide a consistent all through secondary education experience.</p> <p>Furthermore, it is worth noting that there will still be one boys' and one girls' grammar school in Medway.</p> <p><i>Consultation response:</i> Girls would be a distraction to boys during puberty (and vice versa), and create additional social pressures. <i>The Board agreed the response of:</i> Mixed schools mirror a society where males and females work and socialise well together. There are numerous mixed schools where boys and girls work very well together. A co-education prepares young people with the skills, tools and experience to thrive in both work and society beyond school.</p> <p><i>Consultation response:</i> This will put additional pressure on the remaining single sex schools and lead them to oversubscribe more heavily. <i>The Board agreed the response of:</i> This would only be an issue if significant numbers of</p>		
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		<p>parents applied to these schools; however, the relatively low number of parents expressing concern about this indicates that this would not be a concern.</p> <p><i>Consultation response:</i> Does this solve the problem of Medway children not getting places in Medway schools? <i>The Board agreed the response of:</i> Alongside this proposal, adjustments are also planned to be made to the Medway Test pass mark, allowing more Medway students to pass the test.</p> <p><i>Consultation response:</i> There are already plenty of mixed schools in Medway. <i>The Board agreed the response of:</i> There is only one mixed Grammar school in Medway at present.</p> <p><i>The Board agreed this proposal for the co-education significant change and the 2025/2026 admission policy on a vote of seven for and one against.</i></p>		
6.	<p>Update on Trust Improvement Plan</p>	<p>SG updated the Board on how the Trust was progressing against the TIP objectives with the significant majority of objects on track. One aspect will be delayed and some with have a readjustment of scope as detailed in the paper.</p> <p>Q: In the Trust improvement plan, point 6d regarding producing case studies and demonstrating impact is “Red” and expected to be delayed. Completely appreciate the reason given for the delay, I would just stress that from an external PR and reputation management perspective, these could be very valuable marketing tools - so all I would really be wanting to encourage as short a delay as possible. A: We have deployed Mandy Gage into TPA and so this has impacted her work on this project, but Thinking Creative will be producing something just not to the extent of what was planned.</p> <p>Q: What is the timing of this delay A: It will be delayed based on Mandy Gage’s length of deployment, so likely to next academic year</p> <p>Q: What is the delay of the behaviour hub work A: This will delay on the role out of best practice across the Trust not the work in those behaviour hub schools and is impacted by the number of schools that can sign up to behaviour hub, which is an external factor</p>		

		<p>Q: Any comment on the role out of MIS systems and suitable companies A: We need to look at the suitability of each MIS system, what processes we have in place and the risks associated with each MIS company</p>		
7.	Trust Risk Assessment	<p>SG highlighted in the report the schools that were on track and performing well and those which have a small amount of support needed which is being delivered though the Regional Director.</p> <p>The schools highlighted that need additional support were discussed;</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>Maritime has a risk of not being open for 1st September and this is being managed closely with influences outside of the Trust control particularly around the road works now. Q: What has caused this and will the road works be stopped, what is the risk? A: Local councillors and the MP are involved and making public their views on the road closures, there is a risk of the road works impacting the opening date of the school Governors agreed that they would be involved in the communication if needed as there is a need to open the school on time for Medway pupils and our current Maritime pupils.</p> <p>The Regional Director covering The Portsmouth Academy Headteacher role has left and this has been communicated to staff and stakeholders today. There is a significant amount of leadership support put in to the school to ensure that the school improves rapidly regarding its challenging circumstances in respect of behaviour.</p> <p>Governors recognise the resources that are being deployed to TPA. Chair of the RGB attended the AAB last night and fed back that he recognises the school is in a vulnerable position but the support plan is positive.</p>		

		<p>Q: How long do you expect the support to be in place for TPA? A: It will be dependent on the new leadership appointment which will be role combining headteacher and regional director) and that could be between June – September, then there will need to be a transition of support to ensure the improvement plan continues and transitions effectively with a new leader</p> <p>Q: Cost viability is having an impact on Central Services, so should it be green? A: Yes, this applies more to Central Services ability to manage the process within every school and the financial planning of the Trust.</p>		
8.	<p>[REDACTED]</p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>Q: [REDACTED] A: [REDACTED]</p> <p>Q: [REDACTED] A: [REDACTED]</p> <p>Q: [REDACTED] A: [REDACTED]</p> <p>Q: [REDACTED] A: [REDACTED]</p> <p>Q: [REDACTED] A: [REDACTED]</p>		

		<p>Q: [REDACTED]</p> <p>A: [REDACTED]</p> <p><i>The Board unanimously agreed this proposal</i></p>		
9.	Admission policy (part two)	<p><i>The Board unanimously agreed this admission policies for the following schools, noting they agree some future wording changes on the back of the DfE letter and LA advice to clarify the policy, but which will not change the admission criteria for Primary Schools;</i></p> <p><i>MIS, MJS, Moorings Way, All faiths, Brixham, Curledge St, Kings Ash, Furzeham, Goodwin, Gordon's, Maritime, New Horizons Primary, Penbridge Infant & Junior, NHCA, Paignton, Plympton, RGS, Lodestar and TPA.</i></p> <p>The Board reviewed the admission policies that were consulted on and the consultation feedback where applicable.</p> <p><i>The Board unanimously agreed the admission policies for, Cedar, CRGS, TVA and PHSG</i></p>		
10.	A.O.B	<p><i>The Board unanimously agreed the proposal for Andrew Medhurst to be appointed to the Torbay RGB</i></p> <p>There being no other business, the meeting closed 18.50</p>		