



Dear Parent / Carer,

I hope that you have had an enjoyable and restful half term break. I am writing today to welcome your child back to school, and to share some exciting developments at The Portsmouth Academy (TPA), as well as within the wider Thinking Schools Academy Trust.

We are pleased to have seen the whole Trust grow and truly flourish over the last two years. To ensure we can continue to offer focused local leadership of the highest standard across the Trust, we are making some adjustments to the leadership structure.

From September, each of our four 'Hubs' – Portsmouth, Rochester, Chatham and Strood – will have a dedicated Director of Education, instead of our previous model of having Directors of Primary and Secondary Education. Claire Stevens, our Director of Primary Education, will be retiring this summer, after more than four years with Thinking Schools. We are incredibly grateful for everything Claire has achieved in her time with us – her contribution across our primary schools has been invaluable and she will be very much missed.

We are delighted to announce that for Portsmouth, Natalie Sheppard, who has been Principal since 2013, will be stepping up to the newly created role of Director of Education for the Portsmouth Hub. Natalie has shown exceptional leadership throughout her six years at TPA – under her direction and since joining the Trust, TPA has moved from being in Special Measures to be judged by Ofsted as Good with Outstanding leadership and management. The school has also received some of its best-ever GCSE results in recent years – with its latest Progress 8 score making it the second highest performing school in the city. We're delighted that with the expansion of her remit, Natalie's outstanding leadership will continue to benefit TPA but also benefit the other Thinking Schools across our Portsmouth Hub – Newbridge Junior School, Moorings Way Infant School, Meon Junior School, Isambard Brunel Junior School, and Meon and Meredith Infant Schools (from March).

To ensure that TPA continues on its upward trajectory in the coming years, we are delighted to announce that Rachel Grey, whom many of you will know as the current Deputy Headteacher, will be stepping up to the role of Principal. We know Rachel will continue to provide excellent leadership and look forward to seeing TPA go from strength to strength under her direction.

Three further Directors of Education will oversee the Thinking Schools in our other Hubs. Our primary schools in Strood and the Maritime Academy, scheduled to open in 2021, will be directed by Jody Murphy, whilst Rochester Grammar School and Goodwin Academy will be directed by Gwynn Bassan – who will also lead the Teaching School and talent management for Thinking Schools. The Chatham Hub will be led by Mandy Gage.

Lastly, as you know, The Portsmouth Academy is delighted to have received £5m in funding from Portsmouth City Council. The school has proven to be immensely popular and is oversubscribed, so this funding will allow it to take 50 extra students a year, and provide new, state-of-the-art facilities including an additional drama studio, art classes, music facilities, and science labs. The works have now started, and are due to be completed in time for the 2020/21 academic year. Any disruption to



students and staff will of course be minimised during this time, and we are very much looking forward to the enhanced facilities.

I hope you will all join me in welcoming these positive developments. If you have any questions, or would like to discuss any aspect of this letter further, please do get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Gardner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "S".

Stuart Gardner  
Chief Executive  
Thinking Schools Academy Trust