

**COMPOSITE MINUTES OF THE 2020 AUTUMN TERM AREA MEETINGS
OF THE LA AND ESSEX PRIMARY HEADS' ASSOCIATION**

North East	Wednesday 11 November 2020
South	Thursday 12 November 2020
West	Wednesday 18 November 2020
Mid	Thursday 19 November 2020

Action

1. WELCOME, THANK YOU AND NOTICES

- a) Clare Kershaw, Director for Education, and the Area Chairs, welcomed those present, extending a particular **welcome** to the new (or new in post) headteachers in each area, who are:

North East – Autumn term

Koulla Anslow	Lakelands Primary School
Alice Constantine	Kingswode Hoe School
Alex Candler	Gosbecks Primary (interim)
Mark Carter-Tufnell	Mistley Norman Primary
Becky Maguire	St Joseph's Catholic Primary, Dovercourt

North East – Summer term

Anthony Cosans	Unity Primary Academy
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South – Autumn term

Steve Bowsher	Larchwood Primary, (Interim headteacher)
Annie Bristow	Wickford CE Infants, Hearts Academy (Joint acting head)
Sandra Dorrington	Canvey Island Infants
Pippa Edlin	Downham CE Primary (Acting Co-head)
Ben Figg	Northlands Primary and Nursery
Miriam Gould	Buttsbury Infants
Vicky Gray	South Green Infants
Jo Hickey	St Teresa's Catholic Primary
Noreen Hurley	Holy Family Catholic Primary (Acting)
Lynne Kapovic	Rayleigh Primary
Becky Tarplett	Wickford CE Infants, Hearts Academy (Joint acting head)
Val Wisdom	Blackmore Primary (Acting headteacher)

South – Summer term

Donna Dry	Bardfield Primary
Jen Govier	South Green Infants (Acting)
Gill Marrion	Long Ridings Primary
Sue Twaites	Kelvedon Hatch Primary
Lucy Wass	Holt Farm Juniors

West – Autumn term

Dale Bateman	Dr Walker's CE Primary, Fyfield
Claire Kearney	William Martin Schools (Head of School)
James Kenyon	Water Lane Primary Academy
Ann Grisley	White Bridge Primary
Sami Taylor	Limes Farm Infants (Acting head)
Helen Russell	Chipping Ongar Primary

Charmaine Ward	Newhall Primary Academy
Barry Watkins	Water Lane Primary Academy (Acting head)
Nikki Willis	Flitch Green Academy, Dunmow

West – Summer term

Renette Fourie	Hereward Primary
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Mid – Autumn term

Andy Chambers	Kings Road Primary (Acting head of school)
Nick Cockburn	Baddow Hall Juniors
Pippa Edlin	Downham CE Primary (Co-head)
Nick Hancock	St Peter's CE Primary, Sible Hedingham
Hannah McCann	St Peter's CE Primary, West Hanningfield
Lois Osbourne	Larkrise Primary
Melissa Raymond	Finchingfield CE Primary (Acting head of school)
Neil Stotter	Purleigh Primary
Kirsty Stuart	Ridgewell CE Primary
Theresa Walker	St Mary's CE Primary, Woodham Ferrers
Cath Williams	Oaklands Infants

- b) Thank you and farewell** to those headteachers who are retiring or leaving their current post this term:

North East

Julia Hunt	Brightlingsea Primary
Jackie Irwin	Stanway Fiveways Primary
Lorraine Laudrum	Braiswick Primary
Claire Russell	Cann Hall Primary
Jakki Sibley	Fordham All Saints Primary

South

Gill Marrion	Long Ridings Primary
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West

Julie Lorkins	St Andrew's CE Primary, North Weald
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Mid

Margaret Amery	Latchingdon CE Primary
Nicola Morgan-Soane	Trinity Road Primary
Karen de Pietro	St John the Baptist Primary, Pebmarsh
Melanie Vine	Earls Colne Primary

2. LOCAL AUTHORITY UPDATE

Clare Kershaw

Philippa Holliday (North East meeting)

Lisa Fergus (South meeting)

Nicola Woolf (West Meeting)

Catherine Hutley (Mid meeting)

Clare noted how pleased she was that these meetings had resumed, albeit virtually. She acknowledged the extraordinary challenges that headteachers are facing, and stressed the support that is available from both the Local Authority and EPHA.

a) Covid 19 update

Headteachers were reminded that support and guidance is updated regularly and continues to be circulated via the School Comms emails.

i) Contact with Essex Track and Trace

Clare acknowledged that there had been some issues with the Essex Track and Trace voicemail system. She advised callers to email the team if they don't get a response to a voicemail.

ii) Lateral Flow Tests

Essex County Council has been identified by the Department of Health as an authority that will be asked to undertake lateral flow tests of positive (adult) cases. These will identify asymptomatic positive cases which may, in turn, have an impact on schools. More information will follow.

iii) Extending the list of Covid symptoms

Clare noted that it had been brought to her attention that the DfE helpline was occasionally advising schools to consider a wider range of symptoms as potential coronavirus symptoms during the contact tracing process. These included headaches, nausea and vomiting. A number of headteachers confirmed that they had been advised accordingly. Clare has now discussed this with the DfE and they confirmed that the government guidance on symptoms remains the same. The official list of symptoms are as per the NHS website (high temperature, a new continuous cough, and a loss or change to sense of taste or smell).

iv) Clubs and after-school activities

The [Education and childcare settings: national restrictions from 5 November 2020](#) guidance has been updated to clarify the position regarding clubs and activities and wraparound childcare, which has not changed. It remains that schools and colleges can continue to offer clubs/activities in order to enable parents to work, seek work, attend education or training, or respite care (for vulnerable children). Where schools and colleges are offering these activities they should advise parents that they should only be using them for these purposes. All clubs and activities not for these purposes should be suspended during the period of national restriction.

v) Winter Hardship Fund

The LA is working through the details of the additional funding being made available following the campaigning by Marcus Rashford. It is intended for families suffering hardship during the Christmas period rather than specifically for those pupils who are eligible for free school meals. The LA will provide more information so that schools can advise families about the fund, but there is no expectation that schools will provide vouchers (or meals themselves) as happened during the summer holiday period.

vi) Claiming Covid-related costs

ECC has received the second tranche of funding to pass onto schools for additional Covid-19 costs that were claimed for the last academic year. Therefore if your school is still waiting for the claim to be reimbursed, the funding should be with you this month.

vii) Letter from Councillor Ray Gooding to Secretary of State

Working in partnership with ASHE and EPHA, last week Cllr Ray Gooding sent a private letter to the Secretary of State for Education – Gavin Williamson. This letter was copied to Education Ministers Nick Gibb and Vicky Ford. The letter was in support of the continued request from headteachers for further information about tests and

examinations, Ofsted and league tables. Cllr Gooding has decided that the letter will have maximum impact if it remains a private letter from the Conservative Lead Member for Education and Skills at ECC to the Secretary of State, and therefore we will not be sharing the letter directly with schools. This approach was discussed last week with Pam Langmead and Simon Thompson. The letter lobbied on the following points:

- The concern of the impact of tests and exams on the 2021 cohort and the disruption to their education across last academic year and this academic year.
- The request for urgency and clarity around the contingency arrangements for tests and exams for the 2021 cohort given the above.
- The request that Ofsted do not reinstate full inspections in January 2021 due to the immense pressure on the education system at the moment.
- The request that performance tables are suspended again for 2021.

Clare noted that Councillor Gooding has not yet received a reply, but that she will let headteachers know when there is any feedback.

viii) Rumours around early closure of schools in the autumn term

A national petition is on the government website and this issue has also been raised by the NAHT locally. The petition is asking the DfE to consider closing schools early for the holiday period to minimise the potential number of positive cases in the last week of term and the ensuing disruption during the Christmas holidays, which could impact on staff, as well pupils and their families.

b) Payroll and Occupational Health novation

Essex County Council has made the decision to novate the delivery of payroll to a new provider. Clare confirmed that Juniper Education has been awarded the contract to deliver payroll services to both the Council and schools from 1st April 2021. Juniper will send information to schools, to support those that choose to novate to their system (other providers are also available). The Professional Officer was involved in the bidding process to choose the new provider.

Occupational Health will novate to Innovate Healthcare, and information will be sent to schools in due course.

c) ECC Education – Our Strategic Priorities 2020-2021

Clare mentioned the current strategic priorities, with a focus on four key strategies. These are all strategies that have been put forward during the academic year, in addition to the ongoing work of supporting schools during the pandemic.

- Continue to work with all schools and MATs to improve the quality of education and also support the full curriculum recovery work and assessment of learning
- Refresh the **School Partnership Strategy** and embed a culture of partnership working across school improvement and outcomes for children and young people
- Continue to work with the Headteacher Roundtable to develop a suite of tools and expectations to ensure every school can be as inclusive as possible for all pupils
- Publish an Inclusion Framework which will incorporate the work achieved on the Essex Inclusion Statement
- Embed the new SEND teams to ensure the highest quality of support to schools and families for pupils with EHCPs and those identified as requiring SEN Support
- Deliver against the actions required in the Written Statement of Action following the LA SEND inspection 2019, which will include a full review of the EHCP processes, and the High Needs Block spend
- Continue to promote the safety and emotional wellbeing of all children and young

people across Essex

- Accelerate the roll out of Trauma Perceptive Practice across all schools and education establishments.
- Launch the **Headteacher Wellbeing** programme across primary, secondary and special schools.
- Launch the renewed **disadvantaged strategy**
- Publish a new **Early Years Strategy** towards the end of the Spring term 2021
- Review all of our processes that are in place for children not in full time education and will publish an action plan in response to this review during the Spring term.

d) **School Funding**

- The consultation on proposed changes to the Essex School Formula took place at the end of September. Not all schools had the capacity to engage with the consultation, given the pressures on schools, but the responses were considered by the Finance Review Group and the Schools Forum.
- Proposals are to move towards the National Funding Formula (NFF) over a 2 year period (3 years for the primary lump sum), to mitigate a “cliff edge” when the NFF is introduced.
- Rationale and key difference - The NFF places more funding on deprivation characteristics and less on the AWPU.
- Schools Forum Extraordinary Meeting held 10th November voted to agree the proposed changes to the Essex Formula.
- Individual School allocations and further details can be found here:
https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/ef/school-funding-consultation-2021-22-to-2023-24/consult_view/

e) **Strategy for Sustainable Schools**

The strategy is building on the learning from the Small Schools Strategy. Small schools are defined as under 120 pupils, but the strategy also includes some schools with under 200. These schools are vitally important to their local communities, and the LA recognises the financial and resource pressures on these schools. The strategy is being re-launched in January 2021 and the LA will be writing to headteachers and governors, looking to undertake some school-based reviews during the spring term.

The strategy takes into account:

- Impact of National Funding Formula and reduction in Lump Sum
- a falling roll in some localities, expansion in others which is impacting on forward planning including staffing
- a proactive approach to keeping sustainability at the heart of decision making
- a process map co-designed with internal and external review using several relevant quantitative and qualitative indicators to support leaders and governors evaluate viability
- consideration of sustainability criteria and indicators does not mean that where problems are identified, closure or amalgamation needs to be pursued. However, difficulties with one or more factors should draw attention to the need for a more detailed review and evaluation.

f) **The Essex Teaching Awards**

A celebration of the talent, hard work and commitment of all staff working across Essex
The Essex Teaching Awards are now entering the 8th year of recognising the hard work and commitment of teachers, support staff and governors across the county from EYFS-KS5. Teachers and school support staff make a huge difference to the lives of children in Essex and it is important they get the recognition they deserve.

This year we will be recognising all schools and settings for their sterling work during the recent unprecedented times.

There will also be an opportunity for the school community to nominate individuals. Nominations will be open in November 2020.

For more information and details, visit: <https://www.essex.gov.uk/essex-teaching-awards>

g) Maximising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Essex

Our vision is for all learners' needs to be understood, that every person working within our schools, colleges and settings is a champion of the disadvantaged and that every pupil receives high quality teaching and learning.

The strategy, led by Philippa Holliday and Carole Farrer, aims to

- To improve confidence in schools to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils.
- To deliver high quality support and challenge for schools and settings in removing barriers to achievement at a strategic level.
- To accelerate progress for disadvantaged pupils (including pupils eligible for PPG), improve readiness to learn, develop personal and cultural capital and develop self-efficacy.

The LA slides showed the overview of the strategy, produced to aid discussions with senior leadership teams and governors, and with resources to support schools further. The areas covered by the strategy were set out on the slides.

In January more information will be sent to schools and heads are being asked to identify a member of the Senior Leadership Team to be the school's Disadvantaged Champion, to work with other champions from the partnership. They will be asked to attend two 2-hour training sessions in the spring and summer term, and a SEP partnership clinic to support the rollout of the strategy. It was stressed that this is vital work, but the LA understands the pressures that headteachers are currently under.

More information and support from

Philippa.Holliday@essex.gov.uk

Carole.Farrer@essex.gov.uk

mrowland@unitysp.co.uk

h) School Partnership Strategy

The LA officers noted that partnerships between schools are more important than ever. Collaboration is so important and that feeling of connection and belonging is hugely valued. If not collaborating and working in partnership now with others, when would you be? The following update was given:

Strategy being relaunched summer 2021

Core outcomes of the strategy:

- A county-wide partnership system in which every child can attend a school which is at least good and improving.
- A culture in which each Headteacher has aspirations for all the children in their partnership to achieve their highest outcomes.
- Partnerships that take responsibility for their own improvement by using regular external challenge; promoting cohesion, confidence and skills through networking with colleagues
- Governing bodies and Trust boards with the skills, knowledge and understanding to accelerate school improvement through the promotion of

- partnership working
- Link and be a vehicle for other strategies such as the Disadvantaged strategy, Trauma Perceptive Practice and the Inclusion Framework
- School Partnership Strategy to encompass all school partnerships i.e. LA and MATs

School Led Improvement Project Board renamed - School Partnership Board has met twice since March 2020

- Reviewed the impact of Partnership working during this time
- Revised the vision for school partnerships
- Considered priorities for the coming year
- Discussed outcomes, indicators and measures
- Reviewed Strengths and challenges

This term instead of a Partnership Board meeting, meetings will take place with

- Groups of Board members, Partnership Leads, Quadrant Chairs, ECC staff

To discuss

- Effectiveness of the Partnership System
- Roles and Responsibilities within the system
- Steps needed to strengthen Partnership working

These conversations will feed into the revised School Partnership Strategy

Nicola Woolf, Lead for School Partnerships- has emailed Partnership Leads and MATs to meet on Wednesday 9th December to reconnect virtually to discuss this in more detail and to share the resources available to support Partnership working in the current climate.

The School Partnership Board has rewritten the vision to drive the work and the formulation of the new strategy going forwards:

- We believe that every school in Essex should actively engage in a formal school partnership with a number of schools. Children and families of school communities will benefit from the strength of schools working in collaboration with each other rather than in isolation, particularly in these challenging times.
- The type of partnership is less important than its ability to share practice and capacity, hold schools within the partnership to account in mutually reinforcing ways, and enable schools to access the support they need. The aim is to have a positive impact on school improvement and outcomes for children.
- Within these partnerships, schools will work together to develop and share best practice, utilising a system of peer reviews and self-evaluation. System Leaders will play a key role in enabling schools in the partnership to improve and empower schools across Essex to own and develop their own future.

A reminder that Essex schools continue to have access to the Education Development Trust Peer Review resources at <https://www.schoolspartnershipprogramme.com/> Where you will find (when you are ready) resources to support virtual peer reviews that have been tried and tested

- ❖ Blog – How Peer Review can be an asset in uncertain times
- ❖ Peer review materials
 - Covid-19 rapid response - Example Covid-19 lines of enquiry
 - Covid-19 curriculum review- Recovery curriculum example lines of enquiry
- ❖ Advice on process - face to face, online, blended
- ❖ Webinar recording with a Headteacher who has undertaken a virtual peer review

❖ 3 Short Videos

- Support for Peer Reviewers - Giving feedback and gathering evidence in a virtual environment
- Support for Improvement Champions - Using familiar SPP Facilitation Tools in a virtual environment
- Virtual Improvement Workshop in Action - Highlights from Yealmpstone Farm Primary School (Sep 2020)

i) **Early Years and Childcare Strategy**

The Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2015–2018 set out the specific commissioning and operational approach that delivered the strategic direction for the Authority.

A multi-disciplinary team was put together to review this strategy, understand the current landscape, produce and implement a new 2021 version.

Activity so during the Discovery phase (supported by a number of primary headteachers) has included:-

- An analysis of the Essex GLD data
- Initial engagement with schools, early years settings and parents
- Initial review of the impact of Covid-19
- Horizon scanning of other local authorities strategies and approaches
- A series of internal workshops with key ECC staff

The Discovery phase has identified that these are the 5 aims the new EYCC Strategy should focus on:

1. Increasing the number of children who make expected or better than expected progress from their starting points in the Early Years.
2. Supporting every child to be the best they can be
3. Developing the early years workforce to provide the expertise and knowledge to support children's early learning and development
4. Ensuring Sufficient Childcare places to support early learning and childcare for working parents
5. An effective, connected whole early years system that has a clear vision, purpose and direction – with primary focus on elements that will deliver strategy aims

Clare reiterated the importance of the Early Years strategy noting the impact of settings in the EY sector, and the importance of supporting the school readiness agenda and engagement with more than 2000 providers in the sector. The take up of free-entitlement is good in Essex and the providers have a critical impact on the early development and education of children. Their accountability is first and foremost to Ofsted, but their success (or otherwise) has an impact on the progress and attainment of all children. The quality of the sector is vital, ensuring that they understand the expectations of schools as well as families. The LA is working to map and extend the partnership working between early years' settings and schools.

It was noted that it would be helpful to include a nursery headteacher in the focus group.

j) **5 Stages of the Wellbeing in Education Strategy, with an initial focus upon headteachers**

Stage 1 **Acknowledge**

The LA acknowledges how Headteachers have risen to the challenges of Covid. LA Training for consistent wellbeing messaging to schools. (Summer term 2020)

Stage 2 **Support**

Training sessions for Headteacher wellbeing with support tools for leaders. LA Adviser support to schools. (Summer term 2020)

Stage 3 **Governance** Training: for duty of care, wellbeing appraisal and recruitment. (Autumn term 2020)

Stage 4 **Capacity Building**

Training for a cohort of headteachers to become wellbeing coaches. (Autumn term 2020/Spring term 2021)

Stage 5 **Wellbeing Coaches**

available to schools for peer coaching support (from Summer term 2020)

A headteacher wellbeing seminar is being held on the afternoon of 19th November, led by Steve Whitfield and Stephen Chynoweth.

The Professional Officer reminded heads of the existing Colleague Supporter programme, which offers support from experienced headteachers to new and acting heads, and can be extended to support anyone who would find this helpful.

At the Mid meeting, the Area Chair noted that, whilst she recognised the importance of the key strategies that had been presented during the meeting, she also expressed her concern about the capacity of headteachers to take these forward in their schools at the current time, given the huge and relentless pressures of the Covid19 pandemic, and the expectation that they and other staff members would commit time and energy to these new and ongoing strategies. She asked if schools were obliged to be part of these strategies. Clare made it very clear that the strategies would be “waiting and ready” for schools when they were ready and able to engage, but if they are not a priority for the time-being there is no requirement that a school must become involved immediately.

All of the Area Chairs expressed their thanks to Clare and her team for the excellent advice, guidance and invaluable support that they continue to offer schools and headteachers.

k) Close of LA section

Clare echoed the thanks from other LA officers, recognizing the brilliant job that headteachers are doing. She noted that “headship doesn’t get any harder than this.” She wants to, metaphorically speaking” wrap the arms of the Local Authority around schools and ensure that this support continues, and urged heads to look after their own wellbeing as well as that of everyone else.

She ended the LA part of the meeting with the following quote:

Frodo: I wish the ring had never come to me.

Gandolph: So do all who live to see such times, but that is not for us to decide. All we have to decide is what we do with this time that is given to us.

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Lord of the Rings

3. RECOVERY AND RETURNING: PART 2

Steve Whitfield

Steve noted that the Recovery and Returning programme started back in July. Part 1 produced two webinars that have been well-used:

- **Looking after adults** - 1254 views to date
- **Children/young people's wellbeing** - 1968 views to date.

These were aligned with the Trauma Perceptive Practice programme being rolled out to schools. The SEND teams and EPs received training to ensure they were aligned with the recovery materials made available to schools.

In August the DfE announced, with no warning, the Wellbeing to Education Return funding and materials that have been distributed to LAs. Much of the material had already been used by the LA in the part 1 information, so the materials have been used to inform 6 webinars that have been made available to staff:

- Bereavement and other loss
- Long term whole school approach
- Neuroscience of the stress response
- Anxiety and low mood
- Psychologically informed first aid
- 5 Rs and one-planning

An additional resource has been produced about accessing local and national support.

In addition, the team is organising multi-agency panel Q&A sessions, based on the themes. These will run between now and March, and can be booked via Eventbrite.

On 27th November there is a free online conference, Developing Trauma Perceptive Cultures, with an excellent keynote speaker. Please book via Eventbrite on <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/trauma-perceptive-practice-virtual-conference-registration-97327833169>

At the Mid meeting the Chair, Dawn Dack, asked Steve to explain how children might be involved with the development of recovery webinars. Steve noted that the team was not at this stage of development yet, but had learnt from national research that children and young people were particularly receptive to this way of receiving information, and this was beneficial to their mental health and wellbeing. An organisation, Kooth, has provided useful information following research into children and young people's wellbeing, and how they can be supported. Dawn offered the expertise and participation of primary headteachers and their pupils; Steve noted that this would be most welcome.

4. DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Area Heads Meetings

Spring term 2021

N-EAST	Wednesday 3 March	online or venue to be advised
SOUTH	Thursday 4 March	online or venue to be advised
WEST	Wednesday 10 March	online or venue to be advised
MID	Thursday 11 March	online or venue to be advised

Summer term 2021

N-EAST	Wednesday 16 June	Colchester Football Stadium (tbc)
SOUTH	Thursday 17 June	Holiday Inn, Basildon (tbc)
WEST	Wednesday 23 June	Weston Homes Business Centre, Takeley (tbc)
MID	Thursday 24 June	Chelmsford City Football Club (tbc)

EPHA Conferences

Headteachers' Conference

Friday 19 March 2021	to be held virtually
Friday 25 March	Stock Brook Country Club

Deputy/Assistant Headteachers' Conference

Friday 8 October 2021	Weston Homes Community Stadium
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Pam Langmead

EPHA Professional Officer

pam@langmead.me.uk

01621 786359

07791 143277