

COMPOSITE MINUTES OF THE 2023 SPRING TERM AREA MEETINGS OF THE LA AND ESSEX PRIMARY HEADS' ASSOCIATION

West	Wednesday 1 March 2023	online
South	Thursday 2 March 2023	Greenwoods Hotel, Stock
North East	Wednesday 8 March 2023	Colchester Football Stadium
Mid	Thursday 9 March 2023	The Lion Inn, Boreham

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:

West

Dean Beaumont	Tanys Dell Primary
Amy Reis	Great Sampford Primary (Acting head)
Andrew Price	Manuden Primary

South

Lynn Cooney	Oakfield Primary
Melanie Clayton	St Anne Line Catholic Infants
Lucy Fynn	Hadleigh Infant and Nursery

North East

Gemma Chester	Dedham Primary
Natasha Bennett	Millfields Primary
Karen Jones	Two Villages Primary (Executive Headteacher)

Mid

Liz Bartholomew	John Bunyan Primary Executive head)
Samina Metson	Finchingfield Primary Academy
Jinnie Nichols	Wethersfield Primary (Executive head)
Sandra Ledwith	John Bunyan Primary Acting Co-head
Claire Nicholls	John Bunyan Primary Acting Co-head
Ana Da Piedade	Belchamp St Paul (Acting head - spring and summer terms)
Danielle Welsman	Stisted Primary (Head of School)

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

West

Simon Rance	Ashdon Primary
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South

Christine Redpath	Robert Drake Primary
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North East

Nathan Kempster	Ardleigh St Mary's CE Primary
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Mid

Alison Cole	St Peter's CE Primary, Coggeshall
Maire O'Regan	Roxwell Primary Life Education Trust
Andrew Smith	Lyons Hall Primary
Lisa Waters	East Hanningfield CE Primary

2. LOCAL AUTHORITY UPDATE

Clare Kershaw, Director of Education
Stephen Chynoweth (North East meeting)
Lisa Fergus and Maz Norman (South meeting)
Nicola Woolf and Ashley Milum (West meeting)
Catherine Hutley and Alison Fiala (Mid meeting)

a) DIRECTOR'S WELCOME

Clare welcomed the headteachers to each meeting, noting that the West meeting needed to be held online as this was one of the days of planned industrial action. She thanked headteachers for their efforts in managing the strike action, acknowledging that the impact is different for every school.

Clare was invited to meet the Queen Consort during the royal visit to Colchester, and was able to showcase the Essex Year of Reading. She congratulated the pupils from Braiswick Primary on their excellent performance.

b) WHERE WE ARE AS A COUNTY – OFSTED OUTCOMES

Clare congratulated Essex schools on continuing to perform exceptionally well in Ofsted inspections; there are between 7 - 10 inspections a week at the moment across the county.

There are 557 schools in Essex, 42.2% of these are LA maintained.
Currently, 90.9% of schools are graded as good or outstanding by Ofsted.

	Academies	Free Schools	LA maintained	Grand Total
Nursery			2	2
All-through	1	1		2
Primary	223	4	220	447
Secondary	69	6	4	79
Special	12	3	6	21
PRU	2	1	3	6
Grand Total	307	15	235	557

Source: Get Information About Schools, 24 01 23

	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate	Not yet inspected	Grand Total
Nursery	1	1				2
All-through			1		1	2
Primary	59	354	23	8	3	447
Secondary	12	49	10	5	3	79
Special	7	11	1		1	20
PRU	1	3	1	1		6
Grand Total	80	418	36	14	8	556

Source: Ofsted Monthly Management Information - published inspections as at 31 01 23

* The Hawthorns School has since opened January 2023

c) KEY MESSAGES FROM JONATHAN DUFF, REGIONAL DIRECTOR

The Regional Director gave an update to Essex Secondary Heads in January 2023, and Clare explained that she was keen to share the key messages with primary headteachers.

The DfE Ministerial Team currently includes the following ministers:

- Gillian Keegan – Secretary of State for Education
- Nick Gibb- Minister for Schools

- Robert Halfon – Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education
- Claire Coutinho – Minister for Children Families and Wellbeing
- Baroness Barran – Minister for the School System and Finance.

Jonathan Duff noted that the Schools White Paper, published last year, remains “at the heart of the agenda”, but Clare noted that this is in spirit rather than in legislation. There is no longer a strong drive towards a fully trust-led system, although Jonathan Duff noted that *“the multi-academy trust model is the structure that we think is going to make the biggest difference for children.”*

There is an increased focus on high-quality trusts, and the definition of strong trusts is being developed.

Clare noted that the Local Authority’s stance remains the same; schools that are considering joining a MAT can continue with that journey, but the LA no longer needs to plan for a fully-trust led system. Schools that are looking to join a MAT should be asking key questions, including “Why this particular Trust?” and “Does it have the capacity to support the school?”.

The LA continues to strongly encourage and support partnerships of schools and agrees that that schools should not be isolated.

One headteacher noted that some governors are still concerned about the need to convert to being an academy, and Clare agreed to reassure them that this is no longer an issue.

The East of England data about academies was shared by JD:

East of England – January 2023

In numbers:

- **2,354** schools and **941,364** pupils
- **1,375** schools (54%) are academies (47% nationally);
 - 46% of primaries (40%)
 - 92% of secondaries (81%)
 - 58% special (44%) / 69% AP/PRU (47%)
- **635,302** or **68%** of pupils in the East are taught in academies (58% nationally)

Trusts

- **173** multi-academy trusts (1,348 nationally)
- **152** single-academy trusts (1,091 nationally)

Ofsted performance

- **82%** of academies Good/Outstanding (83%)
- 76% of sponsored academies are now Good/Outstanding (up from 69% last January)

Clare noted that there has been an increased number of responsibilities for the Regional Director, which now include the responsibility to implement the Children’s Social Care Strategy and the SEND Improvement Plan. There is a particular focus on the 3 priority areas, Norwich, Ipswich and Fenland and East Cambridgeshire, and more broadly on the 7 Education Investment Areas: Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Bedford, Central Bedfordshire, Peterborough and Luton. These areas don’t benefit from much additional resource, but are regularly scrutinised and are given ambitious targets.

The regional provisional KS2 2022 outcomes were shared by JD:

LA	% reaching expected standard in RWM 2022
All England	59%
East of England	56%
Bedford	49%
Cambridgeshire	57%
Central Bedfordshire	53%
Essex	58%
Hertfordshire	59%
Luton	60%
Norfolk	49%
Peterborough	52%
Southend-on-Sea	56%
Suffolk	54%
Thurrock	62%

Essex is faring well, and is only one percentage point below the England average.

d) SEND IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES

Clare acknowledged that the challenges in relation to SEND are tough for both schools and the Local Authority. There is a focus on continued improvement of the statutory process, including Annual Reviews.

The quality of EHCPs continues to be an improvement objective and there is an open invitation to attend the initiation and resourcing panels in order that heads and SENDCos can be involved with the decision making process.

The LA is reviewing the sufficiency and capacity around the capital programme, which has more or less been delivered subject to the two further special free schools coming on stream. The capital programme work started 10 years ago and the needs have shifted, so the LA continues to look at the capacity in the system. The LA is involved with the ESSET proposal to facilitate support to mainstream schools, and is keen to ensure that the whole system, including the specialist experience and knowledge in the PRUs and enhanced provisions, works together effectively.

The LA continues to work on its approach to inclusion, and the Inclusion Framework and inclusion strategy very much underpins that work.

3. AUTISM UPDATE

Ondrea Bloom has been within the Essex team for 15 years, formally as a SEND navigator working with families. She was appointed in January as the SEND Strategy Lead for Autism.

Ondrea shared the current data in relation to EHCPs and Autism:

- ECC currently has 11,489 EHCPs
- 4,292 EHCPs primary need is listed as Autistic Spectrum Disorder, which is 37% of the EHCP population – 2,137 in mainstream.
- Autism Spectrum Disorder is the highest proportion of our EHCP population with Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) needs having the second highest proportion (16%)
- ECC currently has 24,081 pupils on SEN support; 2,608 (10.8%) of these children and young

people have their primary need identified as autism. This is an increase from 2015, when ECC has 684 CYP identified with autism on SEN Support (£%)

- The majority of CYP with a diagnosis of autism are currently being supported in mainstream schools and Ondrea acknowledged the challenges this brings.

Training

With that in mind, Ondrea is conducting a review of training to ensure schools are fully equipped to support the Ordinarily Available offer.

The Autism Education Trust packages have been revamped to include strategies that schools can use, as well as the theory around autism. A new module, focused on anxiety, is included.

Ondrea has worked with Jo Barclay and Corrinne Twomey (Senior EP for autism) on developing some autism training for the summer term, focused on the complexity of autism and related vulnerability, including the impact of bullying, online bullying, vulnerability to suicide, anxiety. This will be delivered in the summer term.

The 10 week course has been run by EPs. This has been repurposed and will be available from September. This is a course for professionals from education, health and social care.

Procured Autism training

The LA is working to make licences available to be able to offer training that is currently expensive or difficult to access, such as Social Stories.

The aim is to produce an electronic brochure of training, in the summer term.

Access support

AET

<https://schools.essex.gov.uk/pupils/SEND/Pages/SEND-Training---Specific-Areas-of-Need.aspx>
for County wide places or contact you Inclusion Partner for whole school training

10 Week course

Email Corrinne.Twomey@essex.gov.uk

Good beginnings

<https://send.essex.gov.uk/search-support-groups-and-activities/good-beginnings-course>

Peer to peer support

TheSENDNavigators@essex.gov.uk

Training and events for parents and carers

Support and information for parents of autistic children is critical. The LA offers a range of packages, including:

Good beginnings – once again face to face.

Peer to peer regional support hub – Essex has just won a bid to be a hub and will employ a regional hub director.

Online learning event – held in November. This was not specifically focused on autism, but around 80% of those who attended were parents of neuro-diverse children.

SEND roadshows – a chance for parents to meet with professionals from the LA, social care, health. These are published in Education Essex.

Headteachers accepted the importance of parents being well informed and supported in relation to autism, but asked that any training and events also gave a clear message about the capacity of schools to offer support. It is also important to stress that if a child has a diagnosis of autism,

this doesn't excuse poor behaviour, and they, and the parent, need to accept that behaviour management strategies must be used by the school.

Headteachers also shared examples of paediatricians or other health professionals who are advising parents to direct the school to apply for an EHCP where it may not be necessary, or determining resources that are beyond the capacity of the school. Clare asked for any examples of this to be sent to her, so that this could be fed back to health colleagues.

Enhanced Provisions for autism

Ondrea is conducting a review of the autism provisions. She noted that there is some inconsistency with the provision, and all settings will have a support visit between now and June. She welcomed feedback from headteachers who have experienced the service. The review will include consideration of entry and exit criteria, service level agreements, good practice and provision and outreach work.

Ondrea confirmed that she is working with Emily Welton on the ESSET outreach proposal, to ensure that the whole system is joined up and that work and support isn't duplicated.

Use of terminology

The current recommendation is that the term Autism Spectrum Disorder is used as a term for diagnosis, and is thereafter referred to as autism. (Lots of parents are uncomfortable with the word "disorder".)

There are mixed views about whether to refer to children and young people as "children with autism" or "autistic children". A recent series presented by Chris Packham, "Inside our Autistic Minds", which was very insightful, along with research, tends to prefer the latter. Ondrea advised asking the parent and child their preferred terminology, and to use that preference.

One headteacher asked if Ondrea and the team were considering the experience of autistic girls, who can be adept at masking their autism. She confirmed that they are delivering training for IPs and Eps about girls and autism.

Ondrea can be contacted at Ondrea.bloom@essex.gov.uk

4. SET THERAPIES PROGRAMME – BALANCE SYSTEM

Kate Martin, SEND Provision Lead: Commissioning and Contracting, was welcomed to the meeting. She works on the Balanced System programme, which is focused on therapies and with the aim of developing a fair, equitable and sustainable system of therapeutic support across the county.

Kate explained the scope of the system in Essex, Southend and Thurrock. This includes:

1 Local + 2 Unitary Authorities
Commissioners of Statutory Therapy Services

3 Integrated Care Boards
Commissioners of NHS Therapy Services

5 Providers
of Children's Therapies

800+ Schools and Settings
Providers of Children's Therapies

3 Parent Carer Forums

535791 Children & Young People 0-25

c.102,812 Children across SET needing a level of support from the system.



The drivers and aims of the project are well known:

Drivers

A specific area of weakness identified in the 2019 SEND Inspection.

Fragmented delivery that is inequitable and inconsistent.

Failure to support the outcomes for our children and young people.

Families are left confused and dissatisfied.

Aims

To understand the therapy needs of our children and young people and the systems of Health, Education and Care that surround them.

To promote join up & reduce variation to enable all children's therapy services to work to a common framework

Right support at the right time, delivered by the right people, in the right numbers with the right skills to support our children and young people.

To improve experiences for families and the achievement of positive outcomes for children and young people.

The therapies within the system include:

- Speech and language therapists
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy

There are increased pressures as a result of the Covid pandemic, and an insufficient number of therapists both in Essex and nationally.

The programme is based around an approach of: understand, plan, review, do, with a focus on 5 key strands:

- Workforce
- Environment
- Family support
- Identification
- Intervention

Kate noted that this is a slow, organic process, which has taken 2+ years so far. She noted that they now know the number of therapists that are needed and the number in post in the Local Authority, but there also needs to be an understanding of what additional therapy is being used by schools, that may be employing independent therapists. Headteachers were asked to share that information with Kate at kate.martin@essex.gov.uk

Kate was asked to reassure headteachers that schools outside the identified areas of greatest need would be supported with therapies. She explained that every school will have a linked therapist. However, the timeline for this is 3 – 5 years.

To find out about the background of the project <https://www.thebalancedsystem.org/>

For support with therapy provision. SENTherapies@essex.gov.uk

<https://essexfamilywellbeing.co.uk/services/west-essex-specialist-services/>

<https://send.essex.gov.uk/> - Essex

Summarising the project so far:

- The system is aiming to improve and maximise therapy services across the county
- Kate has now mapped the population of each ward with the level of needs and understands the LA provision
- They are aiming to attach a therapist to each school by 2028.
- The system aims to provide training for schools in various therapy areas to enable schools to identify low to moderate needs pupils and put support in place.

5. SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS

a) Statutory assessment – changes for 2023

- Change to **KS2** test schedule due to additional bank holiday on 8 May. Tests take place in the same week from **Tuesday 9 May to Friday 12 May** following the usual test order but each taking place one day later than originally planned.
- The timetable variation window (TTV) for each **KS2** test has been moved back one day to take account of the change in dates this year. If schools have booked events for Friday 12 May, where possible schools should look to rearrange or delay the start to the events so the **maths** paper can be taken. Where it is not possible to change plans, exceptionally for 2023, STA will approve applications for TTV arising from booked **residential**, trips or similar events scheduled for Friday 12 May only. Schools will need to reschedule the date of the test for the affected pupils to one of the following 5 school days..
- New criteria added that pupils should not take **KS1** and **KS2** tests if they are not in a fit physical and mental state at the time of the tests.
- School level data from **KS2** assessments will be published in 2023.
- No further science sampling tests at **KS2**. Schools will still submit TA data for **KS1** and **KS2**.
- The multiplication tables check (MTC) period has changed from a 3-week period to a 2-week period. The MTC should be administered between Monday 5 June and Friday 16 June. The third week from Monday 19 June is only applicable for timetable variations for absent pupils or where schools have experienced technical difficulties.



The new criteria added to determine whether a pupil is in a fit physical or mental state at the time of the tests is vague, and decisions are reliant on the headteacher's professional judgement. Following the meetings, Jacky Castle shared the following information:

I have been advised that, if a school decides ahead of the tests that a pupil won't take the test because they are not in a fit physical and mental state at KS2, the school must still register the pupil for the tests and use code 'U' (unable to access the test) on the attendance register. At KS1 schools would just teacher assess the pupil.

If a pupil attends school on the day of the test and doesn't take the test as they are not in a fit physical and mental state, the school could administer the test later the same day (until 7 pm) or up to 5 days later from the scheduled date. To administer the test up to 5 days later the school must apply to STA for a timetable variation and get their permission before the pupil takes the test. In both of these situations the pupils who hasn't taken the test must not have any contact with pupils who have already taken it.

Please do contact Jacky Castle at Jacky.Castle@essex.gov.uk if you need any more clarification.

b) Key dates

- Deadline to complete **KS2** pupil registration – Friday 10 March
- Deadline for apply for early opening of **KS2** test papers – Friday 10 March
- **KS1** and **KS2** Test administration guidance published – Monday 13 March
- Schools receive **KS1** test materials – Monday 20 March to Friday 24 March
- Deadline to apply for additional time and compensatory marks for spelling in **KS2** tests – Monday 24 April
- Schools receive **KS2** tests materials and stationery – Monday 24 April to Friday 28 April
- Schools notified of **KS1** and **KS2** moderation visits – Friday 12 May
- LA external moderation visits – Monday 5 June to Tuesday 27 June
- Multiplication tables check (MTC) administration period – Monday 5 June to Friday 16 June
- Phonic screening check administration period - Monday 12 June to Friday 16 June
- Deadline for **KS1** data submission to the LA – Tuesday 27 June
- Deadline for **KS2** data submission on Primary Assessment Gateway – Tuesday 27 June
- Deadline for **EYF5 GLD** data to the LA – Friday 30 June



c) Transition

ECC has developed a booklet – Starting School in Essex - which has been shared with Early years settings and will be shared with schools.

The booklet can be found at

https://eycp.essex.gov.uk/media/1304/g-early-years-provider-website-contents-16-schools-ds17_6017school-readinessbookletpages.pdf

More information at <https://eycp.essex.gov.uk/the-early-years-foundation-stage/how-do-i-become-an-outstanding-practitioner/transition/>

Universal Year 6 – 7 transition arrangements with Essex secondary schools

ASHE and EPHA have worked together to agree universal Year 6-7 transition arrangements for the majority of Essex primary and secondary schools. Historically the timing of transition events and requests for paperwork have varied widely, along with the information that has been required by secondary schools. At the recent EPHA Executive meeting the following arrangements were agreed with ASHE and secondary headteachers across most of Essex:

- The jointly agreed universal transition form will be circulated sometime after 1st March (when secondaries are informed which pupils will be transferring to their school) and will be completed by primary/junior schools by summer half term;
- Secondary schools will contact primary/junior schools to initiate further conversations about individual pupils, as indicated on the form;
- All Year 6 transition visits will be held in the week commencing 26th June and secondary schools will plan to hold these in the last week of June in future years.

Harlow schools are doing things slightly differently having previously agreed a template for information, but they are also running transition visits in the last week of June.

EPHA and ASHE will review these arrangements in the autumn term, but it is hoped that this will promote effective and efficient transition as pupils move on to their secondary school.

d) School Improvement 2023/24

ECC's School Effectiveness team will be making changes to the way its school improvement service to schools will be offered from September 2023.

Maintained schools will continue to receive a core offer of support provided to them through their School Effectiveness Partner. This core offer will continue to be linked to the level of support they receive. Additional support will also come through a core partnership model that is currently in development. There will also be the option to select additional support from a traded services menu.

Academies will retain a named SEP for immediate contact purposes. School Improvement services will be available through the traded services menu. The core partnership model will provide some support that will be available to all Essex schools.

The Traded Offer to schools will reflect prices that remain highly competitive.

ECC remains committed to providing a best-in-class service to all schools through its new bespoke offer.

The School Effectiveness Team are committed to developing this further through engagement with headteachers on what they would like to see developed.

All schools will be able to contact their named SEP to discuss any type of bespoke traded support that may be needed.

Examples of current popular Traded Activity:

- Headteacher performance management with/without a mid-year review
- Subject or themed review – e.g. Sequence of Learning/Curriculum RSE/Inclusion/Disadvantaged
- Self-evaluation sustainable schools' toolkit
- Selection of focussed Local Authority reviews including Teaching and Learning, SEND, safeguarding, governance, Early Reading and
- Phonics
- Assessment and Moderation
- Middle and senior leadership development
- Bespoke Governor training and support
- Statutory assessment support (administration of KS1 and KS2 statutory tests, phonic screening check, KS1 & 2 assessment writing clinics, moderation health checks)
- Sixth Sense
- Flying start (new headteacher support)
- Data packages for schools to purchase

Indicative Pricing Model

The model will allow all schools to benefit from an 'Early Bird' discount model where days of support are purchased in advance of **Friday 20th October 2023**.

In addition to this, the traded model will have a further discount applied to prices linked to the number of days a school, or partnership, purchases.

All days purchased will have to be used within the academic year or they will be lost; there will be no carry-over of unused days.

Packages

Package	Cost	Number of days
Bronze	£650 <small>(per day cost)</small>	Individual days
Silver	£1240	2 days
Gold	£2340	4 days

Any school purchasing more than 4+ days support will automatically receive these at a discounted rate of £585.00 per day.

'Early Bird' Discount - 5% off prices if these are purchased before 20th October 2023.



SEP support for partnership meetings will continue and schools will be able to indicate if they have a preferred adviser to deliver support. Schools will be sent a letter in September explain the support that they will receive and their named SEP.

6. REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN ESSEX SCHOOLS

The values of Trauma Perceptive Practice are going to be very important to hold in mind when engaging with and supporting refugee children and their families. It is everyone's responsibility to ensure they experience:

- Compassion & Kindness
- Hope
- Connection & Belonging

Headteachers were thanked for the welcome and support they have extended to refugee families and their children across the county.

7. LOCAL AUTHORITY CONFERENCE FOR GOVERNORS

17th June 2023, 8.30 am – 4.00 pm
Colchester Stadium

Key note speakers include:

Clare Kershaw, Director of Education

Derek Redmond

Ralph Tabberer – former Director General of the Department for Education

The Gilbert School – guest speaker and choir

The booking link can be accessed at

<https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/workforce-development-1/5e26ef19/>

8. DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

North East EPHA –Colchester United Football Stadium

Wednesday 21 June 2023

Wednesday 15 November 2023

Wednesday 6 March 2024

Wednesday 19 June 2024

South EPHA – Greenwoods Hotel and Spa, Stock

Thursday 15 June 2023

Thursday 16 November 2023

Thursday 29 February 2024

Thursday 13 June 2024

West EPHA – Manor Suite, Manor of Groves, Sawbridgeworth

Wednesday 14 June 2023

Wednesday 8 November 2023

Wednesday 28 February 2024

Wednesday 12 June 2024

Mid EPHA – The Lion Inn, Boreham

Thursday 22 June 2023

Thursday 9 November 2023

Thursday 7 March 2024

Thursday 20 June 2024

EPHA Conferences

Headteachers' Conference

Friday 24 March 2023 Chelmsford City Race Course

Deputy/Assistant Headteachers' Conference

Friday 13 October 2023 Colchester Football Stadium

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