

ESSEX PRIMARY HEADTEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

**MINUTES OF THE EPHA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY
7 MAY 2026 at 9.15 am – 11.00 am at The Lion Inn, Boreham**

Distribution * indicates attendance

*Sue Bardetti	Tendring South
*Liz Bartholomew	Harwich and Dovercourt
*Dale Bateman	Epping Forest Rural
*Liz Benjeddi	Billericay
*Heidi Blakeley	Wickford/ South quadrant partnership lead
Amanda Buckland-Garnett	South Woodham Ferrers
*Luke Bulpett	South Vice-Chair
*Dida Burrell	Braintree/Mid quadrant partnership lead
*Terri Chudleigh	Basildon East & Pitsea
*Anna Conley	Witham
Aaron Cross	Castle Point and Benfleet
Matt Curzon	Uttlesford South
*Dawn Dack	Mid Chair/Maldon
*Richard Green	South Chair
*Nick Hutchings	EPHA Vice-Chair/North East Chair/ Colchester West
*Clare James	Dengie
*Chris Jarman	West Chair
*Becky Keitch	Tendring North
*Ian Kendal	Harlow
*Pam Langmead	EPHA Professional Officer/County Treasurer
*Ian MacDonald	Tendring Mid
*Kerry Malcolm	North East quadrant partnership lead
*Richard McIntosh	Chelmsford South
*Carl Messer	Tiptree and Stanway
*Mark Millbourne	Colchester East
Samantha Murrell	Canvey Island
James Newell	Tendring North
Jinnie Nichols	Halstead
*Matt O'Grady	Brentwood
Lisa Patient	Basildon West
Nicky Patrick	North East quadrant partnership lead
*Harriet Phelps-Knights	EPHA Chair
*Richard Potter	North East Vice-Chair
*Colin Raraty	West quadrant partnership lead
Amanda Reid	Mid Vice-Chair/Chelmsford North
*Marne Reynecke-Raybould	North Uttlesford
*Claire Smith	Rochford
*Gary Soars	Rayleigh
Nick Taylor	Chelmsford West
Joanne Willcox	Epping Forest South
vacancy	West Vice-Chair

Also in attendance

Rachel Pritchard	Lyons Hall Primary/Essex Research School
Sarah-Louise Johnstone	Essex Research School

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Action

Harriet Phelps-Knights, the EPHA Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from:

- Amanda Buckland-Garnett South Woodham Ferrers
- Aaron Cross Castle Point and Benfleet
- Matt Curzon South Uttlesford
- Samantha Murrell Canvey Island
- James Newell Tendring North
- Jinnie Nichols Halstead
- Lisa Patient Basildon West
- Nicky Patrick North East quadrant partnership lead
- Amanda Reid Mid Vice-Chair/Chelmsford North
- Nick Taylor Chelmsford West
- Joanne Willcox Epping Forest South

Harriet noted that a number of Executive members were leaving headship at the end of the school year, including Matt Curzon, Carl Messer and Liz Bartholomew. James Newell and Richard McIntosh are both moving schools (though Richard explained that he would be very keen to stay on the Executive if that was possible).

Harriet thanked all of the headteachers for their commitment and contribution to EPHA for many years, and for supporting their colleagues in their local areas. The resulting vacancies (including the vacancy for West Vice-Chair) will be addressed at the Area AGMs in June.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Executive meeting held on 22 January 2026 were confirmed as an accurate record. There were no matters arising from this meeting.

3. EPHA REPRESENTATION ON GROUPS AND COMMITTEES

i) Representation on meetings or groups

There were no additional reports from headteachers.

ii) Chair’s report and Schools Forum feedback

Harriet Phelps-Knights, the EPHA Chair, reported that she, the EPHA Area Chairs and the Professional Officer met with Clare Kershaw and the Assistant Directors (and Jo Barclay, Education Safeguarding) on 24 April 2026.

She noted that Clare Kershaw had given some information about the outcome of the SEND local area inspection in January 2026, saying that it had been fair and that there

were no surprises in the outcome. The report will be published by the end of May, following the local council elections.

Clare noted the Government's "minded to" notice to introduce five councils across Greater Essex, to replace the existing fifteen unitary, borough and district councils. The LA is cautious about making any decisions until the future arrangements are clearer.

The LA is running a series of workshops to inform the LA SEND Reform plan which must be submitted by 19th June; if this is agreed by Government, it will release the High Needs Stability fund.

Harriet noted that at a recent meeting of the Finance Review Group (a sub-committee of the Schools Forum) the headteacher representatives questioned the 1% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, following the announcement from the Government that 90% of council's deficits will be written off through the High Needs Stability fund. A recent article in Schools Week referenced this announcement, suggesting that headteachers were challenging the continued proposal to transfer funding. This article featured Vic Goddard, headteacher at Passmores Academy, who argued that the transfer should not take place. Harriet noted that Clare Kershaw had responded to this question at the Finance Review Group meeting, and it was **AGREED** that she would be asked to explain her view at the meeting with LA Officers later in the day.

The EPHA Chairs also questioned the implementation of a whole county LA SEND Reform plan once LGR restructure has taken place. Clare noted that the SEND reforms are a national strategy which will introduce statutory requirements for all authorities, regardless of the make-up of the county. She also confirmed that the ESSET Outreach will continue, and is likely to morph into the Expert at Hand service, part of the SEND Reform plan. Harriet stressed the importance of ESSET retaining the identity of the outreach service, rather than it becoming an LA run organisation.

Clare also noted that there are a number of long term absences due to sickness in the quadrant teams, and asked headteachers for their understanding if there are current vacancies.

iii) **Professional Officer report**

The report gave details of the meetings attended by Pam Langmead on behalf of EPHA. In addition to the attendance at meetings (and writing follow up reports), her work for EPHA has included:

- Information, emails and communications with all headteachers;
- Advice to headteachers, clerks and governors, particularly in relation to complaints, exclusions, headteacher recruitment and where to access support for a range of issues;
- Responding to queries and actions from the Executive, ECC, other association officers, interested companies;
- Individual support for headteachers when issues arise, including attending complaints panel meetings;
- Identifying and supporting new headteachers, maintaining lists;

**Executive
meeting
with LA
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- Managing the Colleague Supporter programme and capacity support opportunities;
- Briefings to headteacher groups – 27 partnerships/clusters hold termly briefings – researching and writing briefing notes and presentations –and keeping them up to date as new directives, guidance and documents are introduced;
- Termly online education briefing to governors, based on the headteacher briefing notes;
- Managing the Small Schools Support Group, running those meetings, planning October conference;
- Facilitating the Small Schools Governor group and organising and running future meetings;
- Working with the National Head Teachers' Association Network, on their administration group, liaising with Schools Week;
- Writing and delivering training to staff, governors and clerks, focused on exclusions and complaints;
- Planning and organising the Deputy Headteacher conference, EPHA wellbeing conference and WEPHA conference;
- Planning and organising Helen Youngman Ofsted training (February and June events);
- Planning the annual Headteacher conference;
- Updating support materials for schools, including statutory policy lists, website checklists, Ofsted checklist and the Support Directory;
- Writing new 7 minute safeguarding staff meetings (Use of reasonable force) and updating existing material;
- Organisation and management of the area meetings in the spring and summer terms;
- Managing requests for headteacher wellbeing support;
- Managing the EPHA finances: paying claims and invoices (including from Colleague Supporters), supporting area treasurers, producing reports, paying in cheques, managing venue bookings;
- Updating EPHA records and website;
- Other tasks as required.

Nick Hutchings, EPHA Vice-Chair, noted the value of the termly headteacher briefings, and thanked the Professional Officer for writing and delivering these each term to heads and governors.

iv) Small Schools Support Group

Jinnie Nichols, Chair of the Small Schools Support Group, was absent from the meeting. On her behalf, the Professional Officer reported that the last meeting in March had focused on a number of issues of concern to small school headteachers including the use of apprenticeship funding and the inclusion framework. Jason Buckley, the Philosophy Man, also attended the meeting to share a number of ideas and strategies to support oracy in small schools. One of the small school headteachers gave a useful update about her recent Ofsted inspection.

The small schools' governor network group continues and they run twice termly online

meetings, on a variety of themes. These give those governors an opportunity to share their experience and the good practice in their schools, which is proving valuable for the governors who are involved. Their last meeting focused on succession planning on the governing body.

v) Supporting headteachers

Harriet reported that Alan Garnett, NAHT Branch Secretary, had recently met with Clare Kershaw to discuss whether the Local Authority should offer supervision and support to a headteacher following Ofsted inspection. Clare had discussed this idea with the EPHA Chairs at the Super Exec meeting. Her view was that headteachers were able to access support if they needed it, for example from the School Effectiveness Partners, the Education Safeguarding Team or the Critical Incident Team. There was some concern that offering this supervision following every inspection might give the impression that the process will always be negative, which is not the case. However, one Executive member did note that a poor inspection experience does undermine and challenge the leadership decisions made by the headteacher, and they may need support post-Ofsted.

It was noted that some Headteacher Associations are notified by their LA of upcoming Ofsted inspections each week, and this would be helpful in order to offer support to headteachers. It was **AGREED** that this would be raised at the meeting with LA Officers later in the day.

The Professional Officer argued that headteachers do need more support around the most stressful aspects of their job, such as managing complaints and the sheer scale of responsibilities when leading a school. One of the Executive members noted that the headteachers in her consortium had discussed this at length, and they wanted to know if the model policies provided were robust. It was noted that the HR policies from Juniper are legally correct. The EPHA model Complaints Policy is based on the DfE's non-statutory guidance, but has also been shared with a barrister who was confident that the policy was fit for purpose.

One headteacher noted that on occasion when headteachers have asked for support from the LA, they have been told that this is the role of their governors. It was agreed that this can be problematic, not least because governors have relatively few powers and resources to support their senior leaders. It was generally agreed that headteachers simply don't want their governors to make their life harder! The Professional Officer suggested that she could write and deliver training to governors about how they could support their headteachers; this offer was accepted enthusiastically.

There was a discussion about the role of the Colleague Supporter. One headteacher asked if they needed formal training to carry out that role effectively. It was noted that they are not formal counsellors or advisors, and the role is about giving a new headteacher an open door and an opportunity to ask questions and access support. The Colleague Support information document sets out the expectations of the role and is sent to new heads and the Colleague Supporter at the start of an arrangement.

Executive meeting with LA Officers

Professional Officer

4. FINANCE REPORT

- a) The following finance report was circulated to EPHA Executive members in advance of the meeting.

Current account income and expenditure 05.01.26 - 24.04.26

	Expenditure	Income	Notes
DSG		£0.00	
Subscriptions		£0.00	
Misc income		£65.00	WEPHA payment
Miscellaneous -HT conf	£8,375.07		Includes AV & merchandise
Supply	£2,358.23		
Travel & mileage	£343.94		
Professional Officer	£20,661.76		Jan, Feb, March
Meetings	£17,570.46		Venues and presenters
Colleague Support	£1,945.60		
Headteacher wellbeing supervision	£235.15		Subsidy for wellbeing and
EPHA Chair expenses	£2,353.00		
EPHA Chair supply	£2,050.00		
Totals	£55,893.21	£65.00	

The Professional Officer expenditure for January 2026 – March 2026 is broken down into

- professional fees £18,900.00
 - mileage £722.90
 - expenses paid on behalf of EPHA £1,038.86
- £20,661.76**

Part of the PO expenses paid on behalf of EPHA is a monthly Zoom subscription of £103.19 which supports the online meetings, briefings, conferences and webcasts run by the Association.

Bank statements for account 00795978

16.12.25 £152,163.70

17.04.26 £89,153.08

Conference account Income and Expenditure 02.01.26 – 31.03.26

	Expenditure	Income
Headteacher conference 2026	£13,771.68	£17,770.00
WEPHA conference January 2026	£4,890.00	£2,660.00
Training events (Helen Youngman)	£12,730.96	£550.00
Bank service charge	£20.34	
Totals	£31,412.98	£20,980.00

The WEPHA conferences are opened up to headteachers from other areas.

Bank statements for account 17215168

30.12.25 £20,313.69

31.03.26 £12,905.35

- b) The Executive discussed the current funding arrangement for EPHA, that all Essex primary maintained schools and academies contribute £400 per annum, top-sliced from the Schools Block. It is uncertain whether this arrangement will be able to continue after local government reorganisation in 2028, so the Executive will need to consider the future organisation, funding and viability of the Association.

5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION (LGR)

The EPHA Chair noted that she and the Professional Officer met with Debora Donaghue, Chair of the Southend Primary Headteachers' Association (SOPHA), in November, to discuss the possibility of working in partnership in future. She had agreed to discuss the proposal with Southend headteachers, but has not been in touch since that meeting. Harriet noted that she and Pam are meeting with Jo Sawtell-Haynes, the Chair of Thurrock Primary Headteachers' Association on the 18th May, and will follow up with SOPHA after that meeting.

The Executive agreed that it will be valuable to have an umbrella organisation that understands the operation of all five unitary authorities following LGR, and is keen for EPHA to continue after April 2028. The Professional Officer noted that she is getting similar feedback from headteachers during the recent briefings.

6. CONCERNS TO TAKE TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

a) Family First Partnership Programme

One Executive member noted that he had attended a meeting which had referred to the introduction of the Family First Partnership Programme, and his concern that this would lead to greater workload and responsibility for schools. His understanding was that the Family Solutions service would no longer be available to schools. It was **AGREED** that this would be raised at the meeting with LA Officers later in the day.

Executive meeting with LA Officers

b) My Care Bridge Portal

Another Executive member noted that her partnership headteachers had discussed the My Care Bridge referral system, and were concerned about the increasing numbers of referrals that GPs defer to schools. The school is expected to complete a complex online form, with around 70-80 questions, within a limited timeframe, that is also dependent on the parent making a referral (which the school is unable to access). It is felt that the system is unreasonably time consuming and onerous for schools. It was **AGREED** that this would be raised at the meeting with LA Officers later in the day.

Executive meeting with LA Officers

7. SAFEGUARDING FORUMS

The Executive discussed the value of the current safeguarding forums, delivered by Jo Barclay and the Education Safeguarding Team, which are held on a termly basis. It was agreed that the regular bulletins that are sent out are very helpful, but the in-person and online forums are not always so useful or convenient. It was agreed that it would be particularly helpful if the online session was recorded, so that headteachers and DSLs could watch it at a time that worked for them. It was **AGREED** that this would be discussed with Jo Barclay at the meeting with LA Officers later in the day.

Executive meeting with LA Officers

8. ESSEX RESEARCH SCHOOL

Rachel Pritchard, Headteacher at Lyons Hall Primary, and Sarah-Louise Johnstone, Director of the Essex Research School, were welcomed to the meeting. They shared the following information about the Essex Research School.

Who we are

Essex Research School is part of the national Research Schools Network, a group of 32 schools supported by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) to help educators put research evidence into practice.

We are based at Lyons Hall Primary School in Essex supporting teachers, leaders and governors to improve outcomes for all pupils, particularly those facing disadvantage.

Our work is rooted in a shared moral purpose with the EEF: to break the link between family income and educational attainment by improving the quality of teaching and leadership through evidence-informed practice.

What we do

At [Essex Research School](#), we translate high-quality research into practical, accessible support for schools. We do this by:

- Delivering evidence-informed professional development for teachers and leaders
- Supporting school and trust leaders to embed research into strategy and improvement planning
- Designing and leading regionally-relevant programmes that respond to local needs and disadvantage
- Sharing learning through blogs, resources and events that are rooted in classroom and leadership practice
- We work closely with schools, trusts and system leaders to move beyond “what works” and focus on how evidence is implemented well in real contexts.

‘Spell It Like It Is’ pilot

We are currently leading an evidence-informed spelling intervention pilot across Essex and the wider Eastern region.

The pilot focuses on:

- Improving pupils’ spelling and writing accuracy
- Strengthening the application of disciplinary vocabulary
- Building pupil confidence in written outcomes

The programme has a strong track record in KS2 and is now being tested in KS3 classrooms. Early evidence shows increased confidence and measurable improvements in pupils’ spelling and writing.

Looking ahead: We plan to scale this work next year, recruiting 15 to 20 additional schools from both primary and secondary phases.

East Coast Collective: Leadership and Disadvantage

The East Coast Collective is a two-year leadership programme bringing together 30 Primary headteachers and CEOs from across Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk.

The programme:

- Focuses on reducing educational disadvantage in coastal and underserved areas
- Combines evidence-informed leadership learning, collaboration and coaching
- Builds capacity in senior and middle leaders to drive sustainable, whole-school change
- Year 1 focuses on leadership strategy and systems, with subsequent years shifting the emphasis towards classroom practice and teaching quality.

Professional development and events

We deliver a rolling programme of professional development events, designed to be practical, evidence-aligned and immediately useful for schools.

Upcoming events include sessions on:

- [Leadership and disadvantage](#) , 1 June 2026, 4pm – 5pm
- [Effective assessment in KS1 mathematics](#) - 6 July 2026, 4pm -5pm.

Alongside our programmes and events, we regularly [publish blogs and articles](#) written by our team and [Evidence Leads in Education](#). These draw directly on classroom experience, leadership practice and current research and cover areas such as:

- Assessment and feedback
- Literacy and spelling
- Leadership through the lens of disadvantage
- Belonging, culture and high expectations

Clips from the Classroom:

We also produce videos that exemplify classroom practice. We have a series in the making surrounding [Primary Maths Assessment](#). Our next video in the series will be released in June 2026. You can also access a wealth of videos via the [Clips from the Classroom](#) webpage. These short videos cover a range of topics and can be great tools to support in-school PD.

Get involved

Schools, trusts and individual educators engage with Essex Research School in many ways, including:

- Attending events and webinars
- Taking part in pilot projects and programmes
- Working with us on leadership or school improvement priorities
- Accessing blogs, resources and evidence summaries
- Get involved with [EEF funded Promising Projects](#)

[and Programmes](#) To stay connected, [subscribe to our newsletter](#) or visit our [website](#).

Direct contact: Sarah-Louise Johnston, Director of Essex Research School:
s.johnston.essex@researchschool.org.uk.

Sarah-Louise confirmed that she is always happy to meet for a one-to-one call to discuss future partnerships

9. AIR EDUCATION PRESENTATION

Due to a misunderstanding, Dave Surman, the founder of Air, did not attend the meeting as he thought that he was joining online. The Professional Officer **AGREED** to follow up with him after the meeting.

**Professional
Officer**

10. ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED AT THE SUMMER TERM AREA MEETINGS

It was noted that Peter Stonier will attend the summer term meetings in June to talk about Ofsted inspections so far under the renewed framework. There will also be input from the Essex Research School and another support group, Emotionally Healthy Minds.

10. DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS FOR THE 2026/27 SCHOOL YEAR

Executive meetings (The Lion Inn, Boreham)

Thursday 1st October 2026 (including the AGM)

Thursday 21st January 2027

Thursday 6th May 2027

Termly headteacher meeting dates

Summer term 2026

N-EAST	Wednesday 17 June	Colchester Community Stadium
SOUTH	Thursday 18 June	The Lion Inn, Boreham
WEST	Wednesday 24 June	Manor of Groves, Sawbridgeworth
MID	Thursday 25 June	The Lion Inn, Boreham

Autumn term 2026

WEST	Wednesday 4 November	Weston Homes Business Centre, Takeley
SOUTH	Thursday 5 November	The Lion Inn, Boreham
N-EAST	Wednesday 11 November	Colchester Community Stadium
MID	Thursday 12 November	The Lion Inn, Boreham

Spring term 2027

N-EAST	Wednesday 3 March	Colchester Community Stadium
SOUTH	Thursday 4 March	The Lion Inn, Boreham
WEST	Wednesday 10 March	Weston Homes Business Centre, Takeley
MID	Thursday 11 March	The Lion Inn, Boreham

Summer term 2027

N-EAST	Wednesday 16 June	Colchester Community Stadium
SOUTH	Thursday 17 June	The Lion Inn, Boreham
WEST	Wednesday 23 June	Weston Homes Business Centre, Takeley
MID	Thursday 24 June	The Lion Inn, Boreham

Conferences

Deputy Headteachers' Conference
Friday 9 October 2026 Weston Community Homes Stadium

Small Schools conference
Wednesday 14 October 2026 The Lion Inn, Boreham

Headteachers' Conference
Friday 19 March 2027 Chelmsford City Race Course

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Harriet Phelps-Knights
Chair of EPHA

Pam Langmead
EPHA Professional Officer