

ESSEX PRIMARY HEADTEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 9 JULY 2020 from 1.15 pm – 3.30 pm

The meeting was held virtually, as a conference call, as a result of the lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic.

* indicates attendance

Distribution	*Lois Ashforth	Dengie
	*George Athanasiou	West Vice-Chair
	*Dawn Baker	Chelmsford West
	*Sue Bardetti	Tendring South
	*Nicky Barrand	South Chair/Basildon East & Pitsea
	*Isobel Barron	West Chair
	*Liz Bartholomew	Harwich and Dovercourt
	*Liz Benjeddi	Billericay
	*Heidi Blakeley	Wickford
	*Amanda Buckland-Garnett	South Woodham Ferrers
	John Clements	Uttlesford South
	*Anna Conley	Witham
	Dawn Dack	Mid Chair/Maldon
	*Ceri Daniels	Colchester South
	*Emma Dawson	Castle Point and Benfleet
	*Paula Derwin	Colchester East
	*Richard Green	South Vice-Chair
	*Mary Jo Hall	West Treasurer/Uttlesford North
	*Nick Hutchings	EPHA Vice-Chair/North East Chair/ Colchester West
	*Pam Langmead	EPHA Professional Officer/County Treasurer
	Julie Lorkins	Epping Forest Rural
	Ian MacDonald	Tendring Mid
	*Kate Mills	Braintree
	*Nicola Morgan-Soane	Mid Vice-Chair/ Chelmsford South
	*Jinnie Nichols	Halstead
	*Hayley O'Dea	Rochford
	*Matt O'Grady	Brentwood
	*Donna Parker	Tendring North
	*Richard Potter	North East Vice-Chair
	*Harriet Phelps-Knights	EPHA Chair
	*Amanda Reid	Chelmsford North
	*Angela Russell	Basildon West
	*Gary Soars	Rayleigh
	*Karen Tucker	Canvey Island
	Jonathan Tye	Harlow
	*Joanne Willcox	Epping Forest South
	*Liz Keeble	Vange Primary

LA Officers

Clare Kershaw
Jo Barclay
Lisa Fergus
Alison Fiala

Director of Education
Schools' Safeguarding Manager
Assistant Director, South quadrant
Head of EY and Education, Mid quadrant

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Action

Harriet Phelps-Knights (EPHA Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Joanne Willcox, the new representative for Epping Forest South. She also welcomed Liz Keeble, headteacher at Vange Primary.

Apologies were received from:

- Dawn Dack

It was noted that the meeting would be recorded for the purposes of the minutes, but the recording would not be retained or published.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of the meetings held on 9th June and 18th June 2020 were approved as an accurate record.

Matters arising:

a) 9th June

- i) *Minute 2biii)* The webcast with Dr Matt Butler took place on with 135 headteachers and colleagues in attendance. The Coronacast can be accessed online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXsWp4Qib3k> and has, so far, had 1366 views.

ii) Minute 3 Opening up to other year groups

It was noted that this was discussed with Clare Kershaw at the follow up meeting (minute10v), and that, following the publication of DfE guidance, Essex primary schools were supported by the LA in opening up to more year groups if they had the capacity and it was safe to do so.

iii) Minute 3 External sports clubs

At the afternoon meeting (Minute 10ii) Clare explained the guidance around external sports clubs. There is clear guidance about some sports clubs: they can now re-establish training groups of up to 6 participants, which must retain 2m social distancing. They are not allowed to play games, but may, for example, pass a football between players.

iv) Minute 3 Childcare funding

At the afternoon meeting (Minute 10ii) Clare confirmed that schools do not have to refund parents for unused childcare hours, even if the provision is currently unavailable.

b) 18th June

- i) *Minute 7 Violence and Vulnerability operations board grant*
It was confirmed that Pam will meet with Alison Fiala and members of the Violence and

Vulnerability operations board on Tuesday 14th July to discuss the proposal to work with primary schools in targeted localities, to support longer term prevention, intervention and diversion with primary aged children.

3. PROFESSIONAL OFFICER UPDATE/FINANCIAL REPORT

The Professional Officer gave the following report:

As you are aware, my key focus this term has been the three times a week conference calls with Clare Kershaw and ASHE, focusing on the Essex response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Alongside this I have been advising heads by email and phone, all of us trying to make sense of the DfE guidance and our changed world.

I have continued to attend many meetings, all online this term. They have included Essex Safeguarding Children's Board, main and area Children's Partnership Board meetings, School Led Improvement Board, meetings with police, Schools Forum and sub-groups etc. As you know, we have held several Executive meetings, and of course the Coronacast with Matt Butler. This was well attended (135 logged on) and has now had 730 views after 6 days online. I have asked Clare Kershaw to approach Mike Gogarty, ECC Director of Public Health, to do a webcast for us before the end of term, focusing on the Essex response to the health crisis.

I have been planning the deputy and assistant heads conference, which will be held virtually on Friday 2nd October. This will include a number of key note speakers, as well as workshops. I am sure that the take up will be good, and hopefully will be a reasonable substitute for the usual conference. I will send the programme and booking form out before the end of term; we have agreed that there will be no charge for the conference.

I have also meeting managing the EPHA finances and membership – as you all know, we are now at full strength on the Executive which is great news. I will organise cards and bottles for our departing headteachers and distribute these before the end of term. It has been the strangest term imaginable for us all, but as always has been a privilege to support and work with the amazing primary-phase headteachers in Essex.

FINANCIAL REPORT TO THE EPHA EXECUTIVE

Bank statement for account 00795978 (current account)

08.04.20	£181,696.11
18.06.20	£164,971.25

We are waiting for a payment from ECC for the annual de-delegated funding - £320 per school/academy – likely to be around £149k

Bank statement for account 17215168 (conference account)

31.03.20	£35,933.11
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Pam confirmed that she had spoken to Yannick Stupples-Whyley who has confirmed

that the annual funding will be paid into the EPHA account in the next few days.

4. ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

a) Webcast with Mike Gogarty and Clare Kershaw

The Professional officer noted that she has discussed with Clare Kershaw the possibility of running a webcast with Mike Gogarty, ECC Director of Public Health, but that is unlikely to take place before the end of term. Instead, she suggested it would be helpful to set up an event early in the autumn term, to explain the public health situation and guidelines at the beginning of September.

b) Online training

Executive members discussed the use of online platforms for both meetings and training. One headteacher asked if Juniper (and other training providers) were considering offering their future training programmes online, as this would be welcomed by schools. The Professional Officer **AGREED** to contact Keren Prior (Juniper) to discuss this.

Professional
Officer

Keren Prior sent the following response:

Re online training, Juniper is moving the majority of its training on line/to be delivered remotely.

They already have the Juniper App, which is a whole suite of training resources available online that are focused on different parts of the school workforce and their needs, leadership, governance, teaching assistants, compliance and a set of courses for colleagues in pastoral roles.

Primary schools can buy the whole suite for £1,575 +VAT or in bundles from £200 +VAT. The license gives the school access to the courses for all members of the workforce for a year, and leaders can track progress particularly useful in relation to any courses related to compliance.

There is also free content on the App including a wellbeing course.

Details are available on the Juniper website.

<https://junipereducation.org/product-category/juniper-education-app/cpd-library-bundles/>

All of the training in the autumn term will be delivered remotely, including the new NQT programme which will be a fully blended learning programme, with delivery sessions taking place between 4 and 6 in the afternoon, to minimise time out of class.

<https://junipereducation.org/nqt-training-and-support/>

c) Return to school with confidence – summer campaign

Executive members were referred to information about a “return to school/college with confidence” campaign, being run in the summer by the ECC Commissioners. It was agreed that this would be helpful, though schools will not be able to send out information during the summer break. The Professional Officer **AGREED** to feed this view back to Clare Burrell (ECC Commissioner).

Professional
Officer

The Executive members also discussed the end of term letter to parents that Clare Kershaw has agreed to write (signed by Helen Lincoln, Councillor Ray Gooding, Mike Gogarty and herself); one headteacher felt strongly this must be a way to thank schools and staff for their response to the Covid-19 pandemic and to emphasise that schools have had to respond and implement a varied offer, depending on their individual circumstances. The group also discussed the issue of attendance, and what messages should go to parents; it was felt important that schools are understanding about potential anxieties, but that the message should be clear that pupils are expected to attend school.

d) Link programme

Information about the link programme workshops, which will resume online in the autumn term, was circulated in advance of the meeting. The Executive agreed that there will be a real need for mental health support services to work effectively together, and that holding these workshops online was an effective way to link and coordinate schools and partner organisations. The Professional Officer **AGREED** to feed this view back to Clare Burrell (ECC Commissioner).

**Professional
Officer**

5. CHAIR'S REPORT

Harriet Phelps-Knights, EPHA Chair, gave the following report:

It's been a very strange term. The amazing work that primary headteachers and schools have done has been recognised across the county, including online learning, key worker and vulnerable pupil provision, welfare checks, cleaning, Edenred vouchers as well as food parcels, not to mention planning and organisation – and then reorganisation as a result of ever-changing government guidance.

The Matt Butler Coronacast was very successful and the Executive meeting on 18th June was a dry run for the event, enabling us to manage a wide range of issues. We spoke as a group about what the educational landscape could and should look like in future. This was fed back to Clare Kershaw and a meeting set up with ASHE and LA Officers; the meeting was not quite as strategic as we had hoped. The notes have been shared with the Executive. Thank you to Nicky Barrand who shared her knowledge about DfE plans for the curriculum. We also discussed the need for efficient funding streams for children with SEND, particularly through IPRA funding.

On 8th July there was a Schools Forum meeting (attended by Harriet, Richard Green and Pam Langmead) – the main subject of discussion was around moving Essex schools funding towards the National Funding Formula, phased over 2 years (the reduction in the lump sum for primary schools phased over 3 years). There will be a consultation with schools (11th September – 11th October) which will be important to respond to.

6. SEPTEMBER REOPENING

The EPHA Executive discussed a number of issues that had arisen around the proposed full reopening of all schools in September.

Nick Hutchings noted that, in the latest Local Authority document- supporting schools for reopening in September - which summarises and interprets the DfE guidance, there

are a couple of areas that he felt needed correction. On page 4 of the LA guidance, it gives information about how teachers can be released for PPA time; he noted that assembly time cannot be used as an element of PPA time and this has been challenged by the unions in the past. This needs to be corrected.

He also mentioned the reference to “bubbles of 30” on page 14, which contradicts the new DfE guidance which says that groups can be of class size or year group.

Another headteacher questioned whether the School Effectiveness Partners should be asking schools to submit their risk assessments for approval. His school is regarded as needing support, due to poor results two years ago. He was contacted by his SEP and told that she needed to approve his risk assessment; he argued strongly that the risk assessment and previous school results are not linked, and his leadership should not be challenged in this way. There was also a question about how schools will be risk assessed by the LA despite the lack of data this year.

It was agreed that these points would be shared with LA Officers later in the meeting.

It was confirmed that a school’s risk assessment should be published if there are more than 50 employees; the DfE reopening guidance states:

Schools should share the results of their risk assessment with their workforce. If possible, they should consider publishing it on their website to provide transparency of approach to parents, carers and pupils (HSE would expect all employers with over 50 staff to do so).

The Executive discussed the Test and Trace system and whether schools would be able to ask to see evidence of a negative test result before a pupil is allowed to return to school. The DfE guidance suggests that schools cannot demand evidence, but it was felt that this is unreasonable and relies on parental goodwill and honesty.

2.00 pm Clare Kershaw, Lisa Fergus, Alison Fergus, Jo Barclay joined the meeting.

7. FOLLOW UP ISSUES FROM FIRST PART OF MEETING

The following issues were raised from discussions earlier in the meeting:

PPA time on a daily basis, including assembly

Clare accepted the argument that this PPA time is not legal, and will amend the LA guidance. In relation to this, and the other point about bubble sizes, she noted that following feedback from a number of headteachers she is happy to pick up points that aren’t correct or are confusing and will clarify these points in amended guidance and communications.

She explained that the guidance makes it clear that it is for the school to determine the size of the bubble in line with its risk assessment and management of the curriculum, but also states that where social distancing cannot be sustained, it is preferable to have a smaller bubble – this is why the guidance did suggest that for primary schools the bubble should be the class. She made it clear that schools are able to design larger bubbles that would have more than one class in them or organise bubbles by year

groups. If schools do this they should try to ensure some degree of distancing and incorporate (and increase) all of the other protective measures. Schools will also need to take into account that if a child was to test positive, then depending on the situation, the whole bubble may need to self-isolate – however that is not an automatic decision and will depend on the circumstances.

The Executive asked how the Local Authority will rank schools in relation to vulnerability, particularly without results.

Lisa Fergus explained that arrangements for those schools that are in statutory intervention, or have a (non-statutory) improvement board, will remain in place, at least for the autumn term. The Education Team has looked at the Level of Support document (Effective Support but this will not be used to assess schools in the autumn term. SEPs will be making phone calls to schools to have detailed discussion about context and support needed. There will be a review at the end of the autumn term/into the spring term.

Alison explained that all schools have been contacted, those that are at high risk have had regular calls. They have selected the key criteria, including vulnerable groups and Ofsted outcomes. So that the visits continue remotely, the priority order of contact will be:

- Schools with an intervention;
- Those with new or interim headteachers;
- Those categorised previously as high risk
- Where a recent conversation exposed vulnerabilities, e.g staffing, curriculum support, building issues.

It was **AGREED** that Alison would work with a small group of headteachers to review the levels of support and future assessment of schools (to include George Athanasiou, Elizabeth Bartholomew, Richard Potter, Kate Mills).

The Education Team will also write to all schools to let them know who their SEP and Early Years partners will be next term.

Harriet asked if the LA would be asking schools for their risk assessment and judging them. Clare said that they would not be. Firstly, the LA cannot assure 600 risk assessments, there is no expectation that they should, and the risk assessment is a fluid document. The LA has put in place a series of assurance measures, for example following the risk assessment template (as far as possible), offering the surgeries to give support and advice, and stressed that each school must make decisions based on their own individual circumstances. In a small number of cases there have been questions from, for example, unions or parents about wider opening decisions, and in these situations the LA has followed up those queries with the headteacher, to talk through the concerns raised. The SEPs have not been advised to ask to see the risk assessment, although schools can share them if they wish to.

Clare noted that SEPs will be reminded that there is no expectation that they should sign off the risk assessment.

Harriet mentioned the headteachers' concerns about the Test and Trace, and stressed

that schools need clear guidance about how the system should be implemented. Clare agreed that schools need clear instructions, and argued that schools do need the confidence that there is a negative test result to allow a pupil back, particularly when they themselves have sent that child home. Clare confirmed that she has asked Mike Gogarty to produce a clear set of checklists, flow chart, template letters (e.g to parents, informing them about isolation) around Test and Trace and any outbreaks in schools. She confirmed that if a test is positive, the Contact Tracing team will be in touch to advise the school about isolation of pupils, bubbles or potentially the closure of the whole school.

Schools do not now have to inform the LA of a case, as the Health Protection are now informed. Clare noted that she is in discussion with the Public Health team about how data can flow better, so that schools have a higher understanding about numbers of cases, infection rates, negative tests and so on, so that schools have greater knowledge and confidence about the local public health situation in relation to Covid-19.

All local authorities have had to produce an Outbreak Protection Plan; the Essex plan will be circulated to schools before the end of term.

Clare confirmed that she will write a letter to go out to parents. She agreed that she will include a message about the response to the pandemic from schools and how this has varied according to individual circumstances. She will also include information about testing, noting that if parents object to getting their children tested schools will simply need to hold the line, in order to respond to the public health emergency. She also mentioned the issue of attendance. The LA's view is to take a reasonable view of attendance at the beginning of next term, to encourage parents to talk through their anxieties and the arrangements made by the school to mitigate any risks. If parents are still adamant that they will not send their child back to school, then headteachers will have to make a decision about any penalties that might be imposed, which will partly be based on knowledge of that family.

8. UPDATE FROM CLARE KERSHAW

Clare stressed that all primary headteachers are doing a brilliant job, and it has got harder with the publication of the DfE guidance about full opening from September. The LA stance continues to be that how schools do this continues to be driven by the risk assessment; she knows that decisions about organisation and the curriculum are difficult and are based on the individual school's circumstances.

Transition rates in the community are very low, the majority of children tested (and indeed, all tests) are coming back as negative. The approach is to continue to be cautious and vigilant, and working differently with families in terms of expectations moving forwards.

Clare has raised a number of key issues with the DfE:

- transport,
- advice around staff who are currently shielding – heads will be aware that the government advice from the 1st August is simply to observe strict social distancing, which is not necessarily compatible for teachers, particularly those working with

young children. Schools will need to undertake an individual risk assessment for a member of staff, including possible adjustments. Those staff members will need to talk to their GP to get advice about how and when they can safely return to school.

She felt that there needs to be more nuanced approach to vulnerable staff. There was a discussion about whether schools should take on supply staff to cover vulnerable employees. Schools need to check their staff sickness insurance terms and conditions.

Clare argued that there should be a reasonable and proportionate response to attendance, but there will come a point when schools may feel they need to issue penalty notice. There is also discussion in the LA about a possible increased number of parents who decide to electively home educate, which may be on the back of their experience of home education and remote learning. In addition, the school may well have a response if the school decides to challenge parents about attendance.

It is important that families are aware that they won't be an automatic home learning offer, although the Professional Officer pointed out that the DfE guidance has quite complex guidance about a remote learning, and there is an expectation that schools will continue an offer either for children who cannot return to school on medical grounds, or on those occasions when/if a school has to close to a group of pupils or the whole school. She asked if the LA will provide support and guidance in this regard.

Clare noted that she has raised this issue with the DfE. She noted that, ultimately, the remote learning offer is a "Plan B" - "Plan A" is all children back in school. Schools cannot have an accessible or remote offer for all parents, it must be there as a back-up plan for continuity of education, not something that parents feel they can automatically access because they wish to continue home education. Clare confirmed that she has taken this issue back to the DfE.

Clare noted that she meets locally with regional colleagues, and they are meeting soon with Sue Baldwin (Regional Schools Commissioner) and currently have two items on the agenda: the issue of attendance (and the regional expectation that schools will not have 100% attendance from day 1), as well as transport. Alongside attendance, there is a sub-set of elective home education.

Another key issue for schools will be the likelihood that there will be an increased need for mental health and wellbeing support. Clare has alerted the DfE that there will be this increase, depending on children's response to the lockdown.

A headteacher asked if there was information about catch-up funding. The details have not yet been announced by DfE, but Clare's understanding is that this is likely to be funded on a per-pupil allocation (though no information about what that amount could be). Clare confirmed that it will NOT be a per-pupil fund linked to an individual child (one headteacher noted that he has been asked by a parent how their child will benefit!).

There is even less information about how schools should access the national tutoring programme, and we don't yet know the outcome of the Ofqual consultation around the end of year exams in 2021.

Clare confirmed that parents were not eligible to access EHCP funding that they felt might not have been spent on their child during this period. Schools have continued to make “reasonable endeavours” to support children with SEND and so parents have no recourse to that funding. Clare agreed to refer to the various funding streams (catch-up, laptops etc) in her letter to parents.

The group discussed the issue of staff taking holidays at the end of the summer holiday period that could result in them needing to stay at home in quarantine, depending on overseas travel guidance. She did confirm that schools should maintain a strict line with parents about term time holidays.

The Executive asked Clare if she would deliver a webcast with Mike Gogarty at the beginning of the autumn term to set out the public health measures at that stage. She was very open to this suggestion and the Professional Officer **AGREED** to liaise with Clare to arrange a date and publicise this to schools.

Professional
Officer/CK

Clare noted that the government announcement on 11th August is unlikely to affect the full (national) reopening of schools, but we may well experience local lockdowns in the coming months.

Clare confirmed that staff who are currently shielding a family member will be able to return to work, as long as appropriate social distancing is adhered to. She confirmed that more sophisticated and nuanced guidance will be provided by government.

In response to a comment by a headteacher about what schools can control in relation to social distancing (e.g. outside the school gates), Clare stressed that schools can only work within their own sphere of control. If the infection does come into school (and children are least likely to be affected) then there is a response through Test and Trace.

Clare noted that she has looked at the before and after school guidance and this states that they should follow the school guidance “where possible”. She agreed to provide clarification within the communications guidance. (The following advice was published on 13/07/20)

The guidance for before and after school clubs states:

“Providers who open should implement this guidance from the end of summer term, when state schools in their local area have closed. Until then, while schools are open in a provider’s local area, they should follow the same protective measures as schools to limit different groups of children mixing. This means that if a setting opens before the end of the 2020 summer term, they should ensure they are:

- *only caring for children from the eligible groups (children in early years, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6) and priority groups (children of critical workers and vulnerable children)*
- *only caring for children from one school or early years provider*
- *working closely with the school or early years providers that their children attend, to ensure that, as far as possible, children are kept in the same small*

consistent groups that they are in throughout the day, and otherwise maintain social distance”

Clare confirmed that the LA is not being prescriptive about how children return at the beginning of term; individual schools will make the decision about this depending on their individual circumstances.

Clare confirmed that the School Communications team will continue to work over the summer and will be available to support headteachers. The Professional Officer thanked that team for their support, as they have been very responsive and helpful to schools.

Harriet repeated that we are all appreciative of what Clare and the Education Team have done to support schools this term. Clare repeated her view that headteachers are all doing an outstanding job and that the LA officers are there to support and advise heads whenever they need that. She understands that headteachers are the ones that have to take the decisions, but she is always happy to discuss any issues.

She stressed that headteachers must take a break over the summer, as the autumn term is likely to be demanding!

9. UPDATE FROM JO BARCLAY, SCHOOLS’ SAFEGUARDING MANAGER

Jo noted that she will update the child protection training materials (Level 2 presentation) for school staff over the summer. She will also produce a new model Child Protection Policy for the autumn term.

The DfE has published a new (draft) version of Keeping Children Safe in Education for September 2020, and Jo will decide how to disseminate information about this early in the autumn term, possibly using a briefing or a dial-in session.

She confirmed that the safeguarding audit is not required this year.

She reminded headteachers about how to transfer child protection files – this information will be shared in a safeguarding briefing communication before the end of term.

Hayley, the Education Liaison Officer for the MARAC, will continue to work during the summer holiday period. She will send out templates to schools, but there is no expectation that schools will either complete these or dial into meetings, though they have the opportunity if they wish to.

Jo has continued to work on the Headteacher Wellbeing programme and will send out a communication to primary headteachers and Chairs of Governors, including a video and learning resource aimed at governors.

A national contract with Barnados has been commissioned and CCGs have commissioned additional support. Clare Burrell will share a briefing about what

provision is available.

Harriet noted that the LA has stopped using Egress for communicating confidential information, and is now using Google Secure. Clare confirmed that she will ensure that all schools are aware of the change.

Pam Langmead
EPHA Professional Officer