

LA /ESSEX PRIMARY HEADS' ASSOCIATION MID AREA
THURSDAY 22 JUNE 2023

MEETING SUMMARY: ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Agendas and minutes for these meetings available at www.essexprimaryheads.co.uk

Attendance List

DISTRICT AND EPHA AGENDA (a.m.)
(Notes below)
Dawn Dack, Chair

Welcome to the following Headteachers:

Johanna Bailey Ford End Primary (Head of School)
Rachel Pritchard Lyons Hall Primary
Lisa Stainsbury East Hanningfield CE Primary
Gill Marrion St Peter's CE Primary (Interim head, 3 days pw)
Vanessa Sullivan St Peter's CE Primary (Acting headteacher, 2 days pw)
Lisa Waters John Bunyan Primary

Farewell to the following headteachers:

Helen Castell Writtle Infants
Sue Dodds Woodham Walter Primary
Mary Gurr Hatfield Peverel Infants
Natalie Hawkes Newlands Spring Primary
Mary Nicholls Steeple Bumpstead Primary
Rachael Plunkett Priory Primary
Nick Rudman St Luke's Primary
Jane Scawthorn St John the Baptist CE Primary, Pebmarsh

NAHT update
MEPHA meeting and AGM
Election of Officers and Local Delivery
Group representatives
EPHA updates

Chair Dawn Dack (Wentworth Primary)
Vice-Chair Amanda Reid (Perryfields Infants)
Treasurer Dawn Baker (Lawford Mead Primary)
Braintree Dida Burrell (White Court Primary)
Chelmsford North Amanda Reid (Perryfields Infants)
Chelmsford West Dawn Baker (Lawford Mead Primary)
Chelmsford South Richard McIntosh (Baddow Hall Juniors)
Halstead Jinnie Nichols (SGASA)
Maldon Dawn Dack (Wentworth Primary)
Dengie Clare James (Maylandsea Primary)
Witham Anna Conley (The Howbridge Infants)
South Woodham Ferrers Amanda Buckland-Garnett (Collingwood Pri)
Round table discussion to gather ideas that support wellbeing

Headteacher wellbeing

p 1	AREA AGENDA LA updates on current priorities including:	
p 2	• Director's welcome and update	Clare Kershaw
p 2-6	• National Policy updates	
p 6	• School Communications update	
p 6 -8	• School improvement traded offer	Alison Fiala
p 8 -10	• SEMH support offer	Steve Whitfield
p 10	• LA Strategic Priorities	Clare Kershaw
p12 -14	Essex Year of Numbers	Natalie Banthorpe and Ian Fisher
p 15	Key dates	<p>MID headteacher meetings 2023/24 Thursday 9 November 2023 Thursday 7 March 2024 Thursday 20 June 2024</p> <p>Deputy Headteachers' Annual Conference 2023 Friday 13 October 2023 Colchester Football Stadium</p> <p>Headteachers' Annual Conference 2024 Friday 22 March 2024 Chelmsford City Race Course</p>

*Page numbers refer to the full minutes (posted on the EPHA website) of the Summer term Area meetings with LA Officers and Headteachers.

**LA /ESSEX PRIMARY HEADS' ASSOCIATION MID AREA
DISTRICT AND AREA MEETING
THURSDAY 22 JUNE 2023
ATTENDANCE**

Present

Katie Allen	Larkrise Primary
Dawn Baker	HERA Academy
Rebecca Black	St Andrew's Juniors
Justine Brooks	Great Waltham CE Primary
Phil Brown	All Saints CE Primary
Amanda Buckland-Garnett	Collingwood Primary
Dida Burrell	White Court School
Alina Clay	Stock CE Primary
Anna Conley	The Howbridge Infants
Dawn Dack	Wentworth Primary/Mid Chair
Lisa Dale	Howbridge Juniors
Sharon Derbyshire	St Pius X Catholic Primary
Anita Easton	Great Bradfords Infant and Nursery
James Garlick	Great Leighs Primary
Kate Garnett	Tollesbury School
Carol Gooding	Danbury Park Primary
Mary Gurr	Hatfield Peverel Infants
Maxine Harrington	Powers Hall Academy
Janet Hoy	Trinity St Mary's Primary
Vicky Jackson	St Francis Catholic Primary
Clare James	Maylandsea Primary
Jenny Kemp	Latchingdon CE Primary
Ann Kelliher	Holy Family Catholic Primary
Jane Landa-Arrese	Moulsham Infants
Claire Mills	Chancellor Park Primary
Richard McIntosh	Baddow Hall Juniors

In Attendance

Pam Langmead	EPHA Professional Officer
Nikki Batt	Moreton CE Primary
Penny Coe	Robert Drake Primary
Michelle Cole	Widford Lodge
Debbie Hanson	Clarity Independent School
Natalie Jackson	Robert Drake Primary
Alison Kerrell	Holy Cross Catholic Primary Academy
Sam Wilding	St Andrew's CE Primary, Marks Tey

LA Officers

Clare Kershaw	Director of Education
Catherine Hutley	Assistant Director, Mid
Alison Fiala	Head of EY and Education, Mid
Jo Barclay	Head of Education Safeguarding
Steve Whitfield	ECC
Ian Fisher	ECC
Natalie Banthorpe	Venn Maths Hubb
Nicola Morgan-Soane	School Effectiveness Partner
Caroline Gibson	School Effectiveness Partner

Sarah Manning	Galleywood Infants
Sarah Meares	Terling CE Primary
Emily Penkett	Cold Norton Primary
Jennifer Penney	Shalford Primary
Rowen Prigg	St Michael's CE Juniors
Rachel Pritchard	Lyons Hall Primary
Karen Riches	Kings Road Primary
Natasha Robson	Chipping Hill Primary
Lesley Roche	Our Lady Immaculate C Primary
Sarah Rowe	Holy Trinity CE Primary, Halstead
Stephen Saunders	Little Waltham Primary
Lesley Schlanker	Baddow Hall Infants
Heather Shelley	Broomfield Primary
Claire Smyth	Beckers Green Primary
Marie Staley	Moulsham Juniors
Lisa Stainsbury	East Hanningfield CE Primary
Kirsty Stuart	Ridgewell CE Primary
Nick Taylor	Writtle Juniors
Lisa Waters	John Bunyan Primary
Lyndsey Wood	St Cedd's CE Primary
Mike Wood	Elm Hall Primary

Apologies

Jamie Bearman	St Peter's West Hanningfield
Jona Davies	St John's Primary, Danbury
Geraldine Denham-Hale	St Mary's CE Primary, Burnham
Zanya Farmer	Barnes farm Infants
Natalie Hawkes	Newlands Spring Primary
Melissa Taylor	Ford End/Roxwell/Margaretting
Sarah Vass	Great Totham Primary

Note: If your attendance or apologies have not been noted please contact the EPHA Professional Officer at pam@langmead.me.uk for amendment.

MID EPHA AREA MEETING MINUTES 22 JUNE 2023

1. WELCOME

Dawn Dack, the Mid Area Chair welcomed headteachers to the meeting.

Welcome to the following Headteachers:

Johanna Bailey	Ford End Primary (Head of School)
Rachel Pritchard	Lyons Hall Primary
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Gill Marrion	St Peter's CE Primary (Interim head, 3 days pw)
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Mary Nicholls	Steeple Bumpstead Primary
Rachael Plunkett	Priory Primary
Nick Rudman	St Luke's Primary
Jane Scawthorn	St John the Baptist CE Primary, Pebmarsh

If you are leaving please make use of the EPHA new heads' checklist, and complete it for your successor. This is available on the EPHA website at

<https://essexprimaryheads.co.uk/info-and-documents/good-practice/>

Clare Kershaw and Dawn Dack noted that this would be Alison Fiala's last meeting as head of EY and Education in Mid. Alison has been working within Essex for over 40 years, and has been in senior positions supporting primary headteachers for 30+ years. Dawn presented her with a bouquet of flowers and a card, and read the following poem:

In the realm of education, a guiding light, Alison Fiala, her presence shining bright, Head of Education and Early Years, a role she held, In Essex, where wisdom and knowledge she dwelled.

From supporting head teachers, she lent a hand, To provide the best education across the land, Infant, junior, nursery, and special schools she'd embrace, A champion for all, ensuring every child's grace.

Starting as a primary Head in Essex, her journey began, Through Plowden Conferences, her impact spanned, Initiatives in curriculum, numeracy, and literacy hours, Assessment, target tracker, she showered with powers.

Trained as an Ofsted inspector, her insights vast, Guiding 511 primary schools, unsurpassed, Leading teams of advisors, consultants with might, Across the four quadrants, shining a guiding light.

Not all conversations were easy, it's true, But her commitment to improvement always shone through, From inadequate to outstanding, her goal steadfast, Supporting schools on their journeys, unsurpassed.

One of her many strengths, a knowledge base so wide, Essex schools and staff, she held deep inside, A family lady, now stepping into a new adventure's embrace, Retiring, with happiness and health, her heart's place.

Alison Fiala, we celebrate your legacy, Your dedication, your unwavering advocacy, May your retirement be filled with joy and cheer, As you embark on new adventures, far and near.

2. NAHT UPDATE

Dida Burrell, Branch Officer, gave an update about the NAHT conference and the current ballot of members in relation to potential industrial action. She explained that the Union activity in Essex is relatively low, because of the strength and benefits of EPHA. This is not the same in every authority and where the headteacher associations are not so strong, union involvement and activity is particularly important.

She noted that she attended the NAHT conference in May, which was well attended by members. The issues that are affecting Essex headteachers are replicated nationally: work-life balance is non-existent, headteachers are having to cut staff and make redundancies; these take their toll on the health and wellbeing of heads. The challenges and complexity of children with special educational needs continues to increase and become ever more problematic, and parental complaints are on the increase. An increasing number of schools are setting deficit budgets and teachers are buying resources that the schools simply cannot afford.

Dida stressed that most, if not all, headteachers are not considering strike action because of their own pay, but because the system is broken. Members are being balloted on whether to strike or to take action short of a strike and, because Trade Union regulations dictate that employees can only strike on pay. The NAHT was disappointed with the outcome of the first ballot, when insufficient members voted to support a strike or action short of a strike. Dida reminded colleagues that voting "yes" doesn't actually commit any individual to strike action, but it does enable the action to be taken. Dida noted that all four unions (NAHT, NEU, NASUWT and ASCL) are engaged in industrial action balloting and it is hoped that if the members in each union vote "yes" then this will put pressure on the Government.

The NEU have announced two further days of industrial action, on the 5th and 7th July. This is widely regarded as unhelpful for senior leaders, and many would have preferred to wait until the autumn term when joint action might be organised by the four unions (assuming their members vote to strike).

The NAHT has four focus areas of concern:

- Pay and funding
- Workload and wellbeing
- Recruitment and retention
- Ofsted

As Gillian Keegan, Secretary of State for education, has referenced these, they can be included in the negotiation discussions between the Union and Government. However, in common with other pay negotiations, the Government is taking a hard-line stance, at least for the time being.

Dida encouraged headteachers to vote for industrial action, whether or not they themselves planned to join in a strike. She suggested that headteachers could take the following action:

Write to their MP

Engage with the Union
Give feedback to Dida, your representative, about the NAHT engagement
Stand together- something has to change.

(NB NAHT branch officers, Matt O'Grady (South) and Alan Garnett (North East) spoke at their area meetings giving similar messages.)

3. MID EPHA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

a) CHAIR'S REPORT

Dawn Dack, Chair of Mid EPHA, gave the following report.

Review of the academic year 2022-2023

How hard was this year?

Last year in the Chairs report, I wrote that I was lost for words for the things we had to deal with. This year I do not think I can find the language needed to sum up how hard another year in Education has been. Well maybe I can! The word begins with "S" and has four letters! I could have pronounced it with my phonics buttons or digraphs but I think you know the word! If I said the word aloud I would have to give myself a lunchtime detention and then who would cover lunchtime duty!

A highlight of the year must be the return of the 'critical worker list' to remind us that even though a strike is taking place, we must be made to feel guilty about how this impacts the rest of society.

Many of us in the room have had to carry out redundancies or trim budgets to ensure our survival for another year - these are some of the hardest decisions we have to make.

We have all been working longer and harder and trying to do our best for the children and community we serve. We are working with ever tightening budgets, being asked to do more with less and trying to retain or recruit staff into a system that is now very clearly broken.

The uptake of staff into senior leadership roles is dwindling and heads in this room are spending more and more time talking about early exit, escape plans or reviewing what their skills, set could be used for in other employment. I do not blame anyone for thinking that at all.

However, there are moments when I love my job still and I try to hold onto these special times.

Why do we continue in the job?

We must seek out the 'bright spots' of our weeks; the reasons we first came into teaching and being a headteacher. For me these include:

- The child that 'finally gets it'
- The dysregulating child that has learnt to re-regulate by themselves without the support of a member of staff
- The non-attending child who has returned to school
- The staff who have followed an instruction without the need for follow up,
- The sense of making a difference, however small.

These are the reasons that we continue in the job. This is why we chose to do what we do.

The work of EPHA and thanks to our colleagues

Throughout this year, EPHA has been there for colleagues again. We are unlike any other Local Authority in the way we come together as one voice in Essex. Our combined drive to improve

outcomes for children and staff, as a group, is unmatched.

At this point, I would like the members of the Executive to stand up and be congratulated for representing schools of the Mid Essex at county level. Please give them a round of applause!

I would also like to thank Pam for her support and hard work for the heads of Essex again this year. From being the 'google' of Essex to a shoulder to cry on, from finding that document we have lost, to recalling what was said in a schools forum meeting, from providing the termly briefing to training governors - we could not manage our jobs as well without you. Please put your hands together for Pam!

What is to come in the next academic year?

I am not sure. I did not predict the strike action, or the depth of debt coming from the energy crisis or that COVID would raise its head in schools again. We did not so many changes in government. I guess this year we just need to be prepared for anything! And try to see the glass (whatever you have in it) half full and remember the reasons we teach!

I am very proud to work with you all and represent you at meetings to try to achieve the best Education that we can for the children of Mid Essex.

Thank you for all your hard work. Let us keep working together and standing united through EPHA and see what next year brings!

b) ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND LOCAL DELIVERY GROUP REPRESENTATIVES

Chair	Dawn Dack (Wentworth Primary)
Vice-Chair	Amanda Reid (Perryfields Infants)
Treasurer	Dawn Baker (Lawford Mead Primary)
Braintree	Dida Burrell (White Court Primary)
Chelmsford North	Amanda Reid (Perryfields Infants)
Chelmsford West	Dawn Baker (Lawford Mead Primary)
Chelmsford South	Richard McIntosh (Baddow Hall Juniors)
Halstead	Jinnie Nichols (St Giles' and St Luke's Federation)
Maldon	Dawn Dack (Wentworth Primary)
Dengie	Clare James (Maylandsea Primary)
Witham	Anna Conley (The Howbridge Infants)
South Woodham Ferrers	Amanda Buckland-Garnett (Collingwood Primary)

The officers and Local Delivery Group representatives were thanked for the hard work that they do on behalf of headteachers in the Mid Area and for agreeing to continue in their roles or taking on new positions.

4. EPHA UPDATES

a) **The Summer term EPHA newsletter**, including dates for the 2023/24 school year, was circulated to headteachers in advance of the meeting -these can also be found on the EPHA website www.essexprimaryheads.co.uk.

b) EPHA Annual Subscription

Funding for EPHA will be continue to be top-sliced from the Delegated Schools Grant. Area meetings will continue to be "free" to all primary headteachers, as will the website, headteacher briefings and advice and support from the Professional Officer.

<https://essexprimaryheads.co.uk/files/what-headteachers-get-in-return-for-their-epha-contribution->

[2022-23.pdf](#)

c) EPHA County Annual General Meeting

The EPHA county AGM will be held on Thursday 5th October at the Lion Inn, Boreham.

d) Conferences

Headteachers were reminded that the Deputy Headteachers' conference will be held on Friday 13 October 2023, at the Colchester Football Stadium (key note speakers Andrew Moffat and Bobby Seagull) and next year's annual Headteachers' conference will be held on Friday 22 March 2024 at Chelmsford City Race Course.

The programme and booking form for the Deputy Conference will be emailed to schools at the end of June.

There will be a conference for the Small Schools Support group on Wednesday 18th October 2023 at the Lion Inn, Boreham.

e) Governor and staff online training

We're pleased to report that around 250 governors, trustees and staff have attended recent online training focused on exclusions meeting a real need in the county.

The Professional Officer will be running another session on the latest suspensions and exclusions guidance, with a particular emphasis on the governor's role in the process.

The date/time of the **exclusions training** is Tuesday 11th July 2023, at 6.00 pm – 8.00 pm.

She will also run a training course on **managing complaints**, again focused on the role of governors. Two dates are available (course repeated, pick one):

- Tuesday 27th June 2023, at 6.00 pm – 8.00 pm; OR
- Wednesday 5th July 2023, at 4.00 pm – 6.00 pm.

5. HEADTEACHER WELLBEING – ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

At each area meeting headteachers were asked to identify what activities actually help to support headteacher wellbeing – has the partnership, or have you as an individual, found something that really works? The following suggestions were collated, and will be included within the EPHA Support Directory:

Formal coaching, counselling, supervision

- ✓ DSL supervision
- ✓ Hearth Health programme- Maria Brosnan
- ✓ Professional supervision (this was mentioned a lot)
- ✓ Life coach
- ✓ "Positive" Neil – 2 sessions <https://positiveneil.com/>
- ✓ Counselling sessions from Southend Extended Services – headteacher supervision available
- ✓ Headteacher counselling 1:1
- ✓ "Inside Out" – Maggie Fararr – leadership resilience programme
- ✓ Headspace

Dedicated Leadership Time and work-life balance

- ✓ Non-contact time for headteacher- weekly/fortnightly/half termly
- ✓ Work from home on a scheduled basis
- ✓ One late start "in school" a week – start work at home at 7.00 am/get to school at 10.00 am
- ✓ No evening meetings!
- ✓ Keeping some meetings online, including governors and parents
- ✓ Get the worst things off your list!

- ✓ A target for performance management
- ✓ Not having email on your phone
- ✓ No emails before 8 am, after 6 pm or weekends – making sure you are disciplined about this
- ✓ One day a weekend with no work
- ✓ No parent direct access – emails go through admin
- ✓ Shorter Friday afternoons
- ✓ 2 week October half term
- ✓ Delegate well, but take an interest in everyone
- ✓ Spending time with the children

Networking, partnerships and colleague support

- ✓ Being with other heads and spending time informally, chatting about commonalities – know you all share the same “issues”
- ✓ “Bitch and a Bun” sessions
- ✓ WhatsApp group to share problems
- ✓ Half termly partnership meetings and share experiences – often over lunch.
- ✓ Attending conferences as a partnership group.
- ✓ Very informal meetings- no agenda meetings
- ✓ Partnership meetings
- ✓ Headteacher conferences – including Partnership conferences, EPHA, national
- ✓ Fortnightly Zoom meetings
- ✓ Off-site meetings e.g. EPHA – sharing and meeting
- ✓ Formal and informal networks of headteachers
- ✓ Residential – 2 nights planning for group
- ✓ Pub lunch before partnership meetings
- ✓ Twitter (find like-minded colleagues)
- ✓ Attending conferences e.g. Inspiring Leadership, NGFL, EPHA
- ✓ Setting boundaries – shut the door if you need to
- ✓ Consortium wellbeing event
- ✓ Allocated mentor within the Partnership
- ✓ Shared humour

Physical activities

- ✓ Wellbeing Walks – for some, followed by breakfast.
- ✓ 10 minutes’ walk during the day – know your signs and regulate
- ✓ Staff wellness package
- ✓ Deep Breaths – we hire a pod at Gridserve
- ✓ Star wellbeing days <https://starwellbeing.co.uk/>
- ✓ Meditation and Reiki – breathwork
- ✓ Meditation and prayer
- ✓ Singing in a choir/playing in an orchestra
- ✓ Activities that mean you have to focus and NOT think about school
- ✓ Dog walking
- ✓ Gym
- ✓ Cycling
- ✓ Run twice a week
- ✓ Park Run
- ✓ Playing football
- ✓ Yoga
- ✓ Exercise
- ✓ Sleep well
- ✓ Positive affirmations daily
- ✓ Celebrating what you love about the job
- ✓ Deliberate strategies to try and keep a sense of perspective.

- ✓ Scream pillow!

Support for the role

- ✓ EPHA headteacher briefings
- ✓ Facilitator for the partnership (accepted that this is not financially viable for many schools)
- ✓ Dedicated Mental Health Lead employed across the MAT for staff
- ✓ Supportive Chair of Governors/CEO
- ✓ Making governors aware of wellbeing needs of headteacher
- ✓ EAP (Employee Assistance Programme) – 24 hours staff support service
<https://www.hrdept.co.uk/services/employee-assistance-programme/>
- ✓ Welbee survey
- ✓ Phone a friend – formal and informal
- ✓ Diocese “Sabbath Day” for church school heads (maybe a version of this could be run for non-school heads?)

Tangible rewards

- ✓ Perk Box – commercial package
- ✓ Chocolate and wine (came up a lot, as did swearing!)
- ✓ Stash of healthy snacks in your top drawer
- ✓ Bringing pet into school
- ✓ Taking time for yourself – sketching, riding
- ✓ Animals/hobbies/music playing
- ✓ Rescue remedy
- ✓ Family events – e.g. attending own kids’ sports day

6. FUTURE DATES

MID headteacher meetings 2023/24

Thursday 9 November 2023

Thursday 7 March 2024

Thursday 20 June 2024

Deputy Headteachers’ Annual Conference 2023

Friday 13 October 2023 Colchester Football Stadium

Headteachers’ Annual Conference 2024

Friday 22 March 2024 Chelmsford City Race Course