

Professional Officer Report for EPHA Annual General Meeting 2020

In common with everyone, 2019/20 was a year of two halves for the Association, life until March being relatively normal. When the Covid-19 pandemic hit everything changed for schools, and primary-phase headteachers were faced with new and unprecedented challenges. It was not surprising that they managed to keep their schools running and continued to offer education and welfare to their families and support for their staff, as they rose to the challenge with their usual courage and ingenuity, but it has certainly taken a toll on headteachers. My role as Professional Officer was able to continue, and EPHA has continued to offer support, advice and resources to headteachers across the county. I do miss being able to see heads in person, but our use of virtual platforms for meetings and webinars has been revelatory. While I have continued to attend a variety of meetings on behalf of primary headteachers, an essential addition to my calendar has been the regular meetings with Clare Kershaw, LA officers and colleagues from ASHE (the secondary heads association). These have provided a direct and very effective way of communicating with the LA and ensuring that primary headteachers have continued to be heard during the pandemic. These conference calls are now held weekly (rather than daily at the outset of lockdown), but continue to be an important direct line to Clare, and through her to the DfE and Ofsted.

The EPHA Colleague Supporter programme continues to support headteachers across the county. We have 34 Colleague Supporters on our books and in 2019/20 they supported 14 new and acting headteachers. At the time of writing I am arranging Colleague Support for around 20 new headteachers and heads of schools who have taken up posts this term. Thank you to those serving headteachers who have generously given their time and expertise to the programme.

Sadly, last year's headteacher conference had to be cancelled at the very last minute and the deputy/assistant heads conference is being held online this term. We were determined to make sure that we offered an event for deputies and decided that this should be free for schools. By the time of the AGM the deputy conference will have taken place, and we shall be able to assess how well it worked for the delegates.

The headteacher briefings continue to be a key part of my role, particularly in the first few weeks of each term. I am now delivering these briefings to 29 clusters across the county. In the autumn and spring terms these carried on as normal with groups meeting in local schools or venues. Everything ground to a halt in the summer term during partial lockdown, although headteachers still received the "do-list" as a set of briefing notes. The key difference was the addition of a new section, titled Covid-19. The briefings have resumed this term, but are currently delivered online, which seems to be working well for heads – the chocolate distribution is rubbish, though!

The "Seven minute staff meetings" remain popular with headteachers and school leaders. Whilst they mainly focus on safeguarding issues, they also include subjects such as data protection, Ofsted and now Covid-19.

EPHA continues to provide free (or heavily subsidised) training for headteachers. The all-day exclusions training delivered by barrister, Tanya Callman was particularly well received and was followed by training on the equalities act. Since lockdown we have been running webcasts with Dr Matt Butler, Mike Gogarty (Public Health Director) and Michelle Winter. These are well attended and give our heads a chance to hear from and question key figures in education.

I continue to attend numerous meetings on behalf of EPHA, as detailed in my termly report to the Executive. In addition to attendance at those meetings (and writing follow-up reports), my work for the Association has included:

- Information, emails and communications with all headteachers, including in response to the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Responding to queries and actions from the Executive, ECC, other association officers, interested companies;
- Individual support for headteachers when issues arise;
- Identifying and supporting new headteachers;
- Managing the Colleague Supporter programme;
- Briefings to headteacher groups – 29 partnerships/clusters are now holding termly briefings – researching and writing briefing notes and presentations –and keeping them up to date as new directives, guidance and documents are introduced;
- Writing and delivering governor training on the new Ofsted framework, pupil exclusions and governor monitoring;
- Writing 7 minute staff meetings, including KCSiE 2020 changes, KCSiE quiz, Covid-19 Staying Safe in School, Covid-19 Pupil Wellbeing, and updating all existing resources;
- Updating support materials for schools, including statutory policy lists, website checklists, and the Support Directory;
- Organisation and management of the area meetings in the autumn term;
- Organisation and management of the WEPHA conferences;
- Organising and running Coronavirus webcast with Dr Matt Butler, and webcast with Mike Gogarty (Public Health director) and Clare Kershaw;
- Managing the EPHA finances: paying claims and invoices (including from Colleague Supporters), supporting area treasurers, producing reports, paying in cheques;
- Managing the bookings, organising and running the Deputy Headteacher conference, future planning for Heads' conference;
- Updating EPHA records and website;
- Other tasks as required.

As ever, it is a great privilege to work for and support primary headteachers in Essex and I look forward to another busy year in 2020/21. However, I also hope that 2021 proves less dramatic and traumatic for us all, and that life, both in schools and out, can return to something approaching normal.