

LA /ESSEX PRIMARY HEADS' ASSOCIATION SOUTH AREA

THURSDAY 12 JUNE 2025

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)
Richard Green, Chair

Welcome to the following Headteachers:

Sarah Amran Montgomerie Primary

Farewell to the following headteachers:

Julie Braithwaite	Lincewood Primary
Dominic Carver	South Benfleet Primary
Alina Clay	Stock CE Primary
Sandra Dorrington	Canvey Island Infants
Katherine Parker	St Peter's Catholic Primary
Kath Samson	Wyburns Primary
Nicky Stone-Riley	Cherry Tree Primary
Sharon Walker	North Crescent Primary

Apprenticeship Levy update
Smartphone Free Childhood

Allison Aargaard, ECC Apprentice and Employer Engagement Officer
Jordana Lynch and Geoff Woollgar

SEPHA meeting and AGM
Election of Officers and Local Delivery
Group representatives
EPHA updates

Richard Green	
Chair	Richard Green (Grove Wood Primary)
Vice-Chair	Luke Bulpett (Brightside Primary)
Wickford	Heidi Blakeley (Abacus Primary)
Billericay	Liz Benjeddi (South Green Juniors)
Rochford	Claire Smith (Riverside Primary)
Rayleigh	Gary Soars (Edward Francis Primary)
Brentwood	Matt O'Grady (West Horndon Primary)
Canvey Island	Samantha Murrell (Lubbins Park Primary)
Castle Point/Benfleet	Aaron Cross (Kingston Primary)
Basildon East/Pitsea	Terri Chudleigh (Briscoe Primary)
Basildon West	Lisa Patient (Noak Bridge Primary)
South Partnership Lead head	Heidi Blakeley (Abacus Primary)

AREA AGENDA

LA updates on current priorities including:

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|-------|---|---|
| p 1-6 | • Director's welcome and view from the Bridge | Clare Kershaw |
| p 6-7 | • Send Banding update | Clare Kershaw |
| p 7-8 | • Stay Project | |
| p 9 | • Essex Air Ambulance CPR training | Ondrea Bloom and Carly Clarke |
| p 10 | • Update on Educational Psychology in Essex | Adam Carr, Jenna Casey
Steve Whitfield |

p 10-11 **Key dates**

SOUTH headteacher meetings 2025/26 – The Lion Inn, Boreham
Thursday 6 November 2025
Thursday 5 March 2026
Thursday 18 June 2026

Deputy Headteachers' Annual Conference 2025
Friday 10 October 2025 Colchester Football Stadium

Headteachers' Annual Conference 2026
Friday 20 March 2026 Chelmsford City Race Course

*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 SOUTH AREA
DISTRICT AND AREA MEETING
THURSDAY 12 JUNE 2025
ATTENDANCE

Basildon/Billericay/Wickford

Gareth Allen	Millhouse Primary
Rachel Anthony	Runwell Primary
Liz Benjeddi	South Green Juniors
Annie Bristow	Wickford CE Infants
Luke Bulpett	Brightside Primary
Emma Campkin	Kingswood Primary
Chiv Chetty	Greensted Primary
Terri Chudleigh	Briscoe Primary
Lynn Cooney	Oakfield Primary
Jenny Haken	Millhouse Primary
Samantha Murrell	Lubbins Park Primary
Lisa Patient	Noak Bridge Primary
Penny Pepper	Eversley Primary
Harriet Phelps-Knights	Janet Duke Primary
Lorraine Ramet	Wickford Primary
Tom Robinson	The Willows Primary
Rachelle Tidiman	Ghyllgrove Primary
Janine Travi	Hilltop Infants
Robert Wade	Whitmore Primary

In Attendance

Pam Langmead	EPHA Professional Officer
Don Wry	Hearts Academy Trust
Helen Maynard	Canvey Infants
Jordana Lynch	Smartphone Free Childhood
Geoff Woollgar	Smartphone Free Childhood
Jenna Casey	EYEP (Mid)
Adam Carr	Essex Air Ambulance
Lizzie Mooney	Essex Air Ambulance
Jon Stevens	Essex Air Ambulance

LA Officers

Clare Kershaw	Director of Education
Lisa Fergus	Assistant Director, South
Maz Norman	Head of Education, South
Jo Barclay	Education Safeguarding
Bethan Russell	School Effectiveness Partner
Hilary Luckman	School Effectiveness Partner
Mel Clapton	School Effectiveness Partner
Liz Gelston	School Effectiveness Partner
Jim Moir	ECC
Kerry Howard	SEND Quadrant Manager
Carina Embeira	ECC Deputy Senior EP
Allison Aargaard	ECC

Rochford/Rayleigh/Castle Point/Canvey Island

Jen Burdett	Great Wakering Primary
Dominic Carver	South Benfleet Primary
Martyn Clarke	Glebe Primary
Penny Coe	The Robert Drake Primary
Emma Dawson	Thundersley Primary
Sandra Dorrington	Canvey Infants
Lucy Fynn	Hadleigh Infants
Richard Green	Grove Wood Primary
Robin Goodier	Holt Farm Infants
Natalie Jackson	The Robert Drake Primary
Claire Smith	Riverside Primary
Gary Soars	Edward Francis Primary
Sarah Warnes	Jotmans Hall Primary
Lyndsey Wood	Down Hall Primary

Brentwood

Steve Bowsher	Larchwood Primary
Clare Branton	Willowbrook Primary
Liam Daley	St Helen's Catholic Juniors
Jenni Evans	Warley Primary
Emma Fagg	Doddington Infants
Dean Moran	St Thomas of Canterbury CE Juniors
Katherine Poulter	St Joseph the Worker Catholic Primary
Victoria Townsend	Kelvedon Hatch Primary
Robert Watson	Hogarth Primary

Apologies

Jennifer Cole	Hadleigh Juniors
Glenn Moore	
Nella Murthen	Long Ridings Primary
Matt O'Grady	West Horndon Primary
James Rogers	Ingrave Johnstone CE Primary
Kath Sansom	Wyburns Primary
Nicky Stone-Riley	Cherry Tree Primary
Sharon Walker	North Crescent Primary

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

SOUTH EPHA AREA MEETING MINUTES 12 JUNE 2025

1. WELCOME

Richard Green, the South Area (Vice) Chair welcomed headteachers to the meeting.

Welcome to the following Headteachers:

Sarah Amran Montgomerie Primary

Farewell to the following headteachers:

Julie Braithwaite	Lincewood Primary
Dominic Carver	South Benfleet Primary
Alina Clay	Stock CE Primary
Sandra Dorrington	Canvey Island Infants
Katherine Parker	St Peter's Catholic Primary
Kath Samson	Wyburns Primary
Nicky Stone-Riley	Cherry Tree Primary
Sharon Walker	North Crescent Primary

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/>

2. APPRENTICESHIP LEVY AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOLS

Allison Aargaard was welcomed to the meeting. She work within the Business and Skills Unit at ECC and manage the apprenticeship levy pot for the county council. This includes the management of the apprenticeship levy for those maintained schools that do not have their own bank account, who can tap into the extensive funds that are held by ECC.

Allison noted that quite a high percentage of schools have used apprenticeships, and the levy funding has become easier to access since it was first introduced 7 years ago; there are also a number of grants available to support the costs of the process.

Allison gave a brief explanation of apprenticeships: this is a paid job combined with training, so that employees can "earn as they learn". They range from a Level 2 qualification, equivalent to GCSEs, up to Level 7, equivalent to a Master's Degree. The length of time varies, from 12 months to up to 5 years.

There is no upper age limit, and apprenticeships are suitable for new entrants or members of the existing workforce who are looking to upskill or even change careers.

ECC holds an apprenticeship levy pot, which is accessible by maintained schools that don't have their own bank account. There is no limit to the claim on the pot for these schools.

It was noted that, if a school doesn't pay into the levy at all (because their workforce is too small), they can still take on apprentices aged 16-21, paid for by the Government.

In Essex there is an Apprentice Levy Transfer Service, and employers and businesses are often willing to fund apprenticeships in schools using this levy services.

A Government incentive to use the levy pays £1,000 to any employer taking on a 16-18 year old apprentice, and will pay the employment costs for 19 – 24 year olds who have an EHCP or are Looked After.

The Government has simplified the process somewhat by making the “functional skills” element optional for those over 19, unless the employer wants to include that as a requirement. There is more flexibility around off-job hours, which may be helpful when taking on an apprentice.

The ECC team provides a number of apprenticeships, for example, a new course which is proving popular: the Specialist Teaching Assistant Apprenticeship, at Level 5. There is a requirement that the teaching assistant will have Level 3 so that they have a basic understanding of the skills needed in the role, but this specialist course develops skills around SEND, interventions, teaching support and so on. [Specialist Teaching Assistant / Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education](#)

As providers the team will do all the paperwork and can even find apprentices (if the school is not using a member of their own workforce).

The Level 6 teacher apprenticeship is not delivered by ECC but schools can still access the levy pot for this course. Other apprenticeships may be suitable for business administration, IT and early years practitioners, for example.

There is an Apprenticeship Support Fund for new apprentices. This is a grant to incentivise employers to take on apprentices of £2,000 (up to two per employer). If the apprentice is a young person, there is the additional payment of £1,000.

It was confirmed that the employer must offer a contract for the length of the apprenticeship but does not have to continue the employment after the apprenticeship. The team will also support both the employer and the apprentice if it isn't working out and can move apprentices to new employers if needed.

Allison stressed that the team is always happy to have a one-on-one discussion with anyone who would like more information or support re accessing their levy account.

Lorretta Wiltshire
Apprentice & Employer Engagement Lead
Telephone: 03330 138387
Mobile: 07748623230
Email: lorretta.wiltshire@essex.gov.uk | www.aclessex.com

Hannah O'Brien
Sector Skills and Growth Coordinator
hannah.obrien@essex.gov.uk

3. SMARTPHONE-FREE CHILDHOOD

Jordana Lynch and Geoff Woollgar joined the meeting to talk about their mission, to make schools Smartphone free. Heads and teachers have a uniquely powerful role to play in changing the norm in their school communities. They asserted that when schools act, parents listen. And when schools go smartphone free, it benefits children not just during the school day, but in their wider lives too. Because childhood is too short to be spent on a smartphone.

Smartphones weren't designed with kids in mind – but they've reshaped childhood almost overnight. In the UK, 89% of 12-year-olds now own one, and so do a quarter of children aged 5 to 7. On average, kids get their first smartphone aged nine.

Instead of growing up slowly, children are being pulled into a digital world built to keep them hooked. The impact on their development, mental health and relationships runs deep – and we can't afford to look away any longer.

Compared to any other generation in history, children growing up in the smartphone era spend less time outdoors, less time playing, less time reading, less time moving and more time scrolling, alone.

Just as worryingly, Smartphones mean explicit, violent, and extreme content is only ever a few clicks away, often served up by algorithms when kids aren't looking for it. Once children see these things, they can never be unseen.

Teenage anxiety, depression and self-harm rates have skyrocketed since 2010 – when kids started getting smartphones. Evidence shows a direct link between early smartphone use and declining mental health. The tech giants' business model is simple: the longer kids stay on their platforms, the more money they make. That's why apps are packed with addictive features – and why kids find it so hard to put them down.

The average teen now receives over 200 notifications a day – fragmenting their focus and making it harder to concentrate on schoolwork, hobbies or real-life friendships. Constant distraction is the new normal. Smartphones' addictive design means they can quietly start to take centre stage in family life – causing arguments, battles over screen time, and making it harder to share real, uninterrupted time together. The blue light from screens disrupts melatonin, making it harder to fall asleep, while endless scrolling and late-night notifications keep kids wired when they should be resting.

Arguments and fallouts used to end at the school gate. Now they follow kids home, lingering on their screens day and night – with no safe space to switch off, process or recover. TikTok, Snapchat, and Roblox aren't just playgrounds for kids – they're hunting grounds for predators. They're often used by sexual predators to target children with their first smartphones

Smartphone Free Childhood advocates the following and wants parents, and schools, to sign up to their pact.



Everyone with a stake in the future of the next generation has a role to play to play in this movement. Parents, teachers, health professionals, grandparents, politicians – and young people themselves. Together we must reject the broken narrative that childhood mediated by screens and algorithms is the only way forward.

And the more of us who join the movement, the faster we'll reclaim childhood for kids everywhere.

<https://smartphonefreeschools.co.uk/>

4. SOUTH EPHA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

a) CHAIR'S REPORT

Richard Green, Vice Chair of SEPHA, noted that Nicky Stone-Riley, Chair of SEPHA has been unwell for some time and sent her apologies for the meeting. She has made the decision to retire at the end of the term, and asked that the following message be read to colleagues at the meeting:

"I would like to thank all of the SEPHA heads for their commitment and hard work they deliver to our children and staff and for their support of me as chair over the last 12 years. Each year we have faced challenges and had to draw on our resilience and creativity to ensure we give the best we can to our school communities, each year we live in hope that things might be better for the coming year. Currently we are going through a period of change which could well be pivotal in how our education offer looks for the future; I urge you to continue to use your voices in every way you can to ensure the changes we need come about. I believe it is essential, that as much as we can, we remain steady and connected to what we believe in and do our best for all of our children. One size does not fit all and we need to ensure we do not overlook the rights and needs of children emotionally, mentally, socially and academically. Nor can we expect more and more of our staff, particularly in these financially challenging times. We cannot carry on with more of the same, expecting different and better outcomes. It has been a strange experience for me not preparing for the new academic year but I wish all of you the very best for the future and hope that you take time over the summer to rest and recharge. Thank you."

Richard gave the following report as Vice-Chair (soon to be Chair!)

Review of the year

As we hang on in there dragging ourselves to the end of another school year we reflect on a year that started in September with a new education secretary and the announcement of a full reform of Ofsted with the removal of one word judgements and nine months later it has felt like much of the same. It's always good to see the Back to School banners in supermarkets before we've even got into July! Like you, I'm sure you can't wait I can't wait for September to come around already, In particular I'm looking forward to the new Ofsted Framework, a further consultation on a changed curriculum, the bucket loads of cash that the government are going to give us with lots of timely notice, the lowering number of SEND children in mainstream and a return to Thursday evening clapping for teachers and key workers!

To be honest...I'd settle for parents not believing every word their precious child says before they berate us!

As we all know It's been another tremendously busy year and EPHA has continued to work extremely hard on your behalf to support Headteachers and leaders, sitting on working parties, providing conferences and running up-to-the-minute training sessions on everything from exclusions to the latest DfE missives. EPHA can't do all of this without the representatives from the local areas, which allow us to spread the workload across many people. At this point I would like the members of the Executive to stand up. Please give them a round of applause for the work that they have undertaken on our behalf this year.

We all know that EPHA wouldn't exist or be as effective without the knowledge, direction and leadership of Pam! And whilst I, like many of you, come away from the termly updates cursing her for making me aware of things that I would otherwise have been blissfully unaware of, moving me further into the realms of conscious incompetence, we are all indebted to her for her knowledge and the humour she brings to her role. 20 years in the role and we know that EPHA would not run without Pam and her tenacity she

brings in meetings to challenge the orthodoxy, her brilliance in summing up mindless conversations and the joy with which she carries out her job. We are incredibly lucky to have Pam working with us, and I would like us all to show our appreciation to her now. Thanks Pam!!!

This year EPHA have again placed SEND at the forefront of our minds and made it the number one priority. Our second priority has been the curriculum. We have encouraged heads to provide feedback via the consultation. Our final priority has been Headteacher well-being, and Pam recently sent out a booklet on what Heads may want to do when considering improving their well-being.

Headship is a really hard job which seems to get tougher every year but we all chose to do it, so we can't moan too much! At the last meeting I encouraged you all to get in touch with the heads who struggle to get out of school to attend these meetings and mix with others and realise that many of us are all facing the same challenges in our own contexts. I would repeat that same message. As we all know headship can be the loneliest of jobs at times and I find days like these are so important in maintaining a sense of perspective. The paradox of need that keeps us from leaving our schools is a real issue for many and it is so important that we continue to check in within our colleagues who seem particularly under the cosh.

What is to come?

So what have we got to look forward to? This year really is anyone's guess! We know about Ofsted but with minimal detail and even Ofsted don't appear to have a clear timeline for the rollout, we know there will be a 'new curriculum', still with too much to do in too little time as we take on more roles that were typically covered under the title of 'adequate parenting' Other than that it is likely that AI might play a bigger role and we and we will probably have more issues to deal with regarding pupil and parent interaction on social and messaging media.

SEND will continue to place a massive strain on school staff and their ability to carry out their job, whilst ensuring excellent results for all children. We know that there are whole cohorts of children in our school that should be attending a setting that frankly hasn't been provided yet. We will all continue to draw support from each other to make sure children AND staff get the best deal.

With Nicky stepping down, I have said that I would be very happy to take on the South Chair Role unless anyone else has a burning desire to do so, in which case please let Pam know.

Other than that, it remains just to wish you all a great end to the term. Like many others I often say this is my favourite half term of the year and then I remember just how many things we have to cram into such a short time. For those of you retiring...well done, and we hope you find the time to spend the people you wish to spend time with and do the things that you've spend the past decades talking about doing. For the rest of you see you, have a great holiday when it comes and see you in the autumn.

b) ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND LOCAL DELIVERY GROUP REPRESENTATIVES

Chair	Richard Green (Grove Wood Primary)
Vice-Chair	Luke Bulpett (Brightside Primary)
Wickford	Heidi Blakeley (Abacus Primary)
Billericay	Liz Benjeddi (South Green Juniors)
Rochford	Claire Smith (Riverside Primary)
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Brentwood	Matt O'Grady (West Horndon Primary)
Canvey Island	Samantha Murrell (Lubbins Park Primary)
Castle Point/Benfleet	Aaron Cross (Kingston Primary)
Basildon East/Pitsea	Terri Chudleigh (Briscoe Primary)
Basildon West	Lisa Patient (Noak Bridge Primary)
South Partnership Lead head	Heidi Blakeley (Abacus Primary)

The officers and Local Delivery Group representatives were thanked for the hard work that they do on behalf of headteachers in the South 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 2025/26 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 County Annual General Meeting**
The EPHA county AGM will be held on Thursday 2nd October at the Lion Inn, Boreham.
- c) **Conferences**
Headteachers were reminded that the Deputy Headteachers' conference will be held on Friday 10th October 2025, at the Colchester Football Stadium and next year's annual Headteachers' conference will be held on Friday 20th March 2026 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 15th October 2025 at the Lion Inn, Boreham.

EPHA will be running a wellbeing conference for headteachers, with presenter Dr Emma Kell, focusing on "avoiding the risk of burnout". This will be held at the Lion Inn, Boreham, on Wednesday 22nd October 2025.

6. **FUTURE DATES**

SOUTH headteacher meetings 2025/26 – The Lion Inn, Boreham

Thursday 6 November 2025

Thursday 5 March 2026

Thursday 18 June 2026

Deputy Headteachers' Annual Conference 2025

Friday 10 October 2025 Colchester Football Stadium

Headteachers' Annual Conference 2026

Friday 20 March 2026 Chelmsford City Race Course

Small Schools headteacher conference

Wednesday 15th October 2025 The Lion Inn, Boreham

Headteacher wellbeing conference

Wednesday 22nd October 2025 The Lion Inn, Boreham