

ESSEX PRIMARY HEADTEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 7 OCTOBER 2020 at 10.45 am – 11.30 am

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 (Tiptree and Stanway)
	*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

Also in attendance

Amanda McAuliffe

Headteacher, St Helen's Catholic Infants

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

Apologies were received from:

- Heidi Blakeley Wickford
- John Clements Uttlesford South
- Julie Lorkins Epping Forest Rural
- Hayley O'Dea Rochford
- Amanda Reid Chelmsford North
- Gary Soars Rayleigh

2. FOLLOW UP FROM THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The meeting followed on from the AGM, which Michelle Winter (Senior HMI) had attended. George Athanasiou, who had received an Ofsted visit the day before, fed back his experience. He has produced a video about the visit, which was played at the AGM. He stressed that the visit was entirely non-judgmental and inspectors were at pains not to make any comments on the school's action and practice. He noted that the telephone call the day before the visit lasted about one hour and twenty minutes, and that time was spent organising the meeting and reiterating the information on the slides provided by Michelle Winter in her presentation to the AGM. He advised that headteachers should not release staff, shouldn't do any specific preparation and certainly shouldn't put governors or the SEP on stand-by. He noted that the matter of headteacher wellbeing was not really addressed beyond asking the question: "How are you?" Many of the questions during the visit related to children with special educational needs.

The inspectors did make it clear that they had the power to convert the visit to a full inspection if they saw anything they were uncomfortable with.

3. BUSINESS INTERESTS REGISTER

Executive members have been asked to complete a business interests' form and to forward this to the Professional Officer. It was **AGREED** that all Executive members who have not yet done so should complete a form at the earliest opportunity.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Executive meeting held on 9 July 2020 were confirmed as an accurate record. The following matters arising were raised:

a) Online CPD (Minute 4b refers)

It was confirmed that Juniper Education are currently delivering their training online.

b) Return to school with confidence – summer campaign (Minute 4c refers)

The campaign took place as a community service during the summer. Nick Hutchings reported that he had seen the campaign (including a video he made to support the campaign).

Action

Executive members who have not yet send BI form

c) Link programme (Minute 4d refers)

The EPHA Professional Officer noted that she has not yet had confirmation that the Link programme workshops, held face to face in the spring term, had resumed, though the intention is that these will be delivered online.

d) Webcast with Mike Gogarty and Clare Kershaw (Minute 8 refers)

This was organised for September and took place online. The webcast can be accessed on YouTube and has had over 1,000 views. A follow-up webcast has been arranged for 5th November at 1.30 pm. The Professional Officer will circulate an invitation to headteachers before half term.

**Professional
Officer**

5. PRIORITIES FOR EPHA FOR THE 2020/21 YEAR

The Chair of EPHA suggested the following priorities a focus for the EPHA Executive in the coming year.

a) Support for schools around Covid-19

Including navigating the guidance and putting forward primary headteacher views.

b) Continuing to work collaboratively with partners

Including the Local Authority, ASHE, ESSET, and now the Regional Schools Commissioner officer. It has never been more important to ensure that the primary headteacher voice is heard.

c) Headteacher well-being

This is even more important than ever given the huge current pressures on headteachers. The Headteacher Wellbeing programme, led by Jo Barclay, is being rolled out to schools. This started with a focus on resources for governors. The Professional Officer noted that all Schools Effectiveness Partners have received training on the Headteacher Wellbeing programme resources and they should be focused on this as a concern.

d) Termly briefings for headteachers

Continuation of the termly briefings delivered by the Professional Officer which are welcomed by many headteachers across the County.

e) Training opportunities

The Chair asked Executive members to feedback if there was anything EPHA should be responding to with training, resources and website updates – ongoing.

The Chair reminded EPHA Executive members to send any other thoughts or suggestions for priorities to the EPHA Professional Officer.

6. EPHA REPRESENTATION ON GROUPS AND COMMITTEES

i) Leadership Group meeting

The EPHA Chair reported that the EPHA Leadership Group (Chair, Professional Officer and Area Chairs) met with Lisa Fergus and Alison Fiala on 10th September 2020. The meeting focused on a number of issues arising over the last few months including

testing issues, test and trace, the DfE daily attendance return, and elective home education. The Chairs were asked if they wanted the School Comms emails to continue; the group's view was the Covid related updates should continue to be circulated by email, and that non-Covid related matters should be published in the weekly Education Essex newsletter (which had ceased since the end of March). This has now been actioned by the Local Authority.

Inclusion continues to be a priority for the Local Authority, but there are not dates for meetings of the Inclusion Headteacher Roundtable.

Harriet noted that Nicola Woolf (with the Board) is in the process of refreshing the School-Led Improvement system, and the Local Authority is conducting a root and branch review of those children who are not in full time education.

The School Effectiveness Partners will be discussing schools' plans for catch-up during their visits and offering support, but the EPHA view is that they should tread very softly and not put pressure on headteachers. There was some concern that the matrix that they proposed had been presented to schools as having been endorsed by EPHA and that was not the case. EPHA Chairs made it very clear that their view was that the matrix should only be used if the school was in agreement and Alison Fiala confirmed this approach.

The pressures that headteachers and school staff are under was made very clear to the Local Authority officers.

ii) Meeting with Regional Schools Commissioners and Local Authority officers

The EPHA Chairs and Professional Officers met with Alan Parnen, Deputy Director East of England RSC and Ian Jacobs, RSC team, along with Clare Kershaw and Lisa Fergus. The following issues were discussed:

DfE daily return

The requirement for schools to submit a daily attendance and staffing return to the DfE continues to be an extra burden on schools. Schools are, of course, also having to complete the daily pupil registration, in addition to the daily return.

Alan Parnum said that he recognizes the daily burden of this data collection, but noted that there is about an 85% return currently from schools, and this information informs the Cabinet, but also SAGE, enable them to make instant and timely decisions. We did stress that there should be an easier way to collect data, and that the DfE should consider, at least, fewer than weekly collections. Alan pushed back on this totally, saying that this was unlikely to change "any time soon".

DfE guidance for schools

The varying and differing guidance about how schools can operate safely is a good example of how much pressure heads are under. We accepted that guidance has to change over time, but too much of the guidance is inconsistent and often impractical or unworkable in schools. Headteachers are left to interpret the guidance, and have to respond to change and inconsistency on a daily basis. We need clearer and better thought-through information.

Contingency planning and remote learning

The group expressed their concern about the introduction of the Temporary Continuity Direction (from 22 October) which makes it a legal duty to provide remote education for state-funded, school-age children unable to attend school due to coronavirus. This direction was announced last Thursday, with apparently little consultation with schools, headteachers or even the unions. The Professional Officer argued, and was supported by colleagues, that this is draconian, and there is no explanation of what the consequences might be for any school that fails to fulfil the legal duty. The guidance about what a school should be offering is extensive, with the expectation that a school will be able to provide a full day, ideally including live lessons.

Alan Parnum noted that he shared some frustration about the Temporary Continuity Direction, admitting that in most cases this was not actually needed. He stated that the DfE knew that this would not “land well” with schools.

In response to comments, Alan said that he would take the points about staffing, secondary v primary guidance, and parental engagement.

He noted that the laptop scheme is available to schools, but agreed with Nicky to look into the issue of them being limited to Years 3 and above.

We stressed that any new initiative designed by the DfE should take into consideration the added workload for headteachers. The group raised the additional financial burden on schools to cover staff absence or other associated costs, which will rise as we are only at the very start of the new term and restrictions. School budgets were set with no additional funding or capacity to cope with this additional burden.

Headteachers asked about SATS and needing early sight of the time line, expectations and how assessments in primary schools should be conducted.

The EPHA Chairs have asked to meet again with the RSC representatives, and this was agreed though a date is yet to be set.

iii) Meeting with Social Care Directors

The EPHA Chair, Vice-Chair and Professional Officer met with Social Care quadrant directors on 11th September. The main issues addressed were the need for social workers to have clear protocols around the use of PPE when visiting schools, and also clarification around how they can demonstrate that they are DBS checked. Jo Barclay has suggested that they should carry a letter from a line manager to confirm their status, and this is being considered further.

iv) 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, 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.

The Professional Officer noted that the most useful meetings are the regular conference calls with Clare Kershaw, other LA officers and ASHE representatives, and these continue to be an effective way to feedback concerns from primary headteachers.

She noted that the Deputy and Assistant headteachers conference had, this year, been held online. Over 180 deputies attended and the conference, despite a few technical glitches, was well received.

v) Schools Forum report

The EPHA Chair noted that a number of EPHA Executive members are on the Schools Forum (including herself, Richard Green, Sue Bardetti and the Professional Officer). At recent meetings the main focus has been to develop the Essex Funding Formula. The Local Authority is proposing a move to the National Funding Formula over the next two years, except for the primary lump sum which will reduce over three years. Harriet noted that, as always, there will be both winners and losers in any funding formula that is decided. She reminded headteachers to respond to the consultation, which closes on Friday 16th October.

7. MATTERS TO BE RAISED WITH THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

- i) It was agreed that the Executive would ask which schools have had visits from Ofsted, so that we can receive feedback from those heads.
- ii) A headteacher noted that the SEND strategy meetings that have been conducted with schools have been a waste of time. The Inclusion Partners have demanded a great deal

of information (much of this is historical data which they asked for a year ago) and gave very little suggestions or strategies around the support they could offer.

In some cases therapists (for example, speech and language) have been into schools, but this is inconsistent and it was argued there needs to be uniformity across teams. One headteacher noted that pre-Covid there was a “menu” of support on offer; she argued that the teams should develop a list of what support is actually available during this restricted period, so that schools can discuss and determine what support they need and can access, depending on their own specific context.

It was noted that that school staff were told that they had to attend recent MLD workshops and also one plan training, both of which were a waste of time.

One headteacher noted that, following the period of home learning, a number of parents at his school are now demanding EHCPs for their children. He suggested that the SEND could help schools by liaising with parents and explaining what support is available and why an EHC plan is not automatically available for a child.

Another headteacher echoed this, saying that she also has an increased number of parents asking for EHCPs. She said that their expectation is that the school should drop everything and undertake the necessary assessment for their child and, at the same time, she has found that she has been stonewalled by the EP team. She also noted that parents are being told by the LA that schools must put support into place (that they are expected to fund). The Local Authority has explained that this expenditure may then be backdated if the EHCP is agreed.

- iii) One headteacher expressed her concerns that admissions are applying fair access protocols with no reference to the limitations caused by Covid restrictions, even when there are places in alternative schools.
- iv) It was agreed that the current inconsistency of SEP visits, including whether or not the matrix is used, should be addressed.
- v) A headteacher asked if schools are obliged to offer remote learning to a child if the family has been on holiday and is therefore required to quarantine.
- vi) The Local Authority recently announced its decision that the remaining Central Payment schools must open their own bank accounts in time for the new financial year. This has created a great deal of stress and anxiety, not least because some banks are not offering new bank accounts during the pandemic. A headteacher noted that there has been training offered (at a cost to the school) but it has created a huge amount of work at a time when schools are under immense pressure. The EPHA Chair expressed her frustration that this decision (made by the Cabinet in March) had not been conveyed or discussed in any of the many meetings that EPHA representatives have with the Local Authority. It was argued that the LA has a responsibility to offer considerable support to enable the transfer to happen, or else they should delay the decision.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Professional Officer noted that the termly headteacher meetings will take place on the dates agreed, but that they will be online meetings, offering each quadrant the opportunity to hear from, and question, Clare Kershaw and other LA officers.

9 DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS FOR THE 2020/21 SCHOOL YEAR

Executive meetings (Chelmsford City Football Club)

Thursday 21 January 2021

Thursday 29 April 2021

Area Heads Meetings

Autumn term 2020

N-EAST Wednesday 11 November virtual meeting

SOUTH Thursday 12 November virtual meeting

WEST Wednesday 18 November virtual meeting

MID Thursday 19 November virtual meeting

Spring term 2021

N-EAST Wednesday 3 March Colchester Community Stadium

SOUTH Thursday 4 March Holiday Inn, Basildon

WEST Wednesday 10 March Weston Homes Business Centre, Takeley

MID Thursday 11 March Chelmsford City Football Club

Summer term 2021

N-EAST Wednesday 16 June Colchester Community Stadium

SOUTH Thursday 17 June Holiday Inn, Basildon

WEST Wednesday 23 June Weston Homes Business Centre, Takeley

MID Thursday 24 June Chelmsford City Football Club

Conferences

Headteachers' Conference

Friday 19 March 2021 possibly Stock Brook Country Club, Nr. Billericay

Deputy Headteachers' Conference

Friday 8 October 2021 Weston Community Homes Stadium

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Harriet Phelps-Knights
Chair of EPHA

Pam Langmead
EPHA Professional Officer