

COMPOSITE MINUTES OF THE 2023 AUTUMN TERM AREA MEETINGS OF THE LA AND ESSEX PRIMARY HEADS' ASSOCIATION

West	Wednesday 8 November 2023	Manor of Groves, Sawbridgeworth
Mid	Thursday 9 November 2023	The Lion Inn, Boreham
North East	Wednesday 15 November 2023	Colchester Football Stadium
South	Thursday 16 November 2023	Greenwoods Hotel, Stock

1. WELCOME, THANK YOU AND NOTICES

- a) Clare Kershaw, Director for Education, and the Area Chairs, welcomed those present, extending a particular **welcome** to the new (or new in post) headteachers in each area, who are:

West

Keeley Chandler	Newport Primary
Neil Coster	Hare Street Primary and Nursery
Ben Davey	Henham and Ugley Primary
Ross Jones	Upshire Primary
James Kenyon	White Bridge Primary
Nichola Pickford	Wimbish Primary
Marne Reynecke	Ashdon Primary (substantive head)
Sharon Vessey	Birchanger CE Primary
Lisa Fish	Pemberley Academy
Luke Wildig	Little Parndon Academy
Jenny Redgrave	Water Lane Primary
Elaine Brook	Water Lane Primary
Clare James	Takeley Primary

South

Ronnie Branch	Sunnymede Primary (infant and junior amalgamated)
Sally Townsley	Canvey Juniors
Shaun Kelliher	St Joseph the Worker Catholic Primary
Robert Watson	Hogarth Primary
Jennifer Cole	Rayleigh Primary
Shiv Chetty	Greensted Primary
Claire Jacques	Hatch Primary (Interim Headteacher)
Gill Marrion	Down Hall Primary (Interim)
Rachelle Tidiman	Ghyllgrove Primary
Katie Herbert	Winter Gardens Primary
Emily Perryman	Westwood Primary
Dean Moran	Thomas of Canterbury Primary (Infant/Jun amalgamated)
Liz Bundy	Shenfield St Mary's Primary (Head of School)
Deola Emmanuel	St Margaret's Academy

North East

Lewis Barrett-Rodger	Kendall Primary (Acting for remainder of term)
Sally Blunden	Frinton Primary
Ellie Eames	White Hall Academy
Michelle Garnham	Alton Park Juniors
Louis Collins	Great Bentley Primary
Sophie Denyer	Roach Vale Primary
Keith Birbeck	St Andrew's CE Primary, Marks Tey
Margaret Coxhead	Milldene Primary
Andrew Faithfull	Ardleigh St Mary's Primary

Rebekah May	Birch CE Primary
Karen Jackson	Iceni Academy
Charlotte Newley	Cherry Tree Academy
Lotte Cumming	Monkwick Infant School (Associate Head)
Jason Beeseraz	Monkwick Infant School (Associate Head)

Mid

Vicky Doherty	Steeple Bumpstead Primary (Executive Head)
Nikki Emrich	St Nicholas CE Primary, Tillingham
Zoe Fairbairn	Hatfield Peverel Infants
Luke Howden	Steeple Bumpstead Primary (Head of School)
Claire Laver	Priory Primary
Susie Price	St John the Baptist, Pebmarsh (returning to role)
Emma Reece	Tolleshunt D'Arcy St Nicholas CE Primary (Head of School)
Natasha Robson	Chipping Hill Primary
Sam Wilding	St Peter's CE Primary, Coggeshall
Tracey Wilson	Writtle Infants
Wendy Woods	Southminster CE Primary

- b) Thank you and farewell** to those headteachers who are retiring or leaving their current post this term:

South

Jane Robinson	Hilltop Infants
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North East

Marie Kelly	St Teresa's Catholic Primary
Becky Maguire	St Joseph's Catholic Primary

Mid

Dawn Baker	HERA Multi Academy Trust (CEO)
Sarah Ginzler-Mayer	St Joseph and St Francis Catholic Primaries
Xanthe Glynn	St Nicholas CE Primary, Tillingham
Simon Waltham	Heybridge Primary
Lyndsey Woods	St Cedd's CE Primary, Bradwell on Sea

2. LOCAL AUTHORITY UPDATE

Helen Lincoln, Executive Director for Children, Families and Education (West meeting)
Clare Kershaw, Director of Education
Philippa Holliday and Stephen Chynoweth (North East meeting)
Lisa Fergus and Maz Norman (South meeting)
Nicola Woolf (West meeting) (*Apologies from Ashley Milum*)
Catherine Hutley and Alison Fiala (Mid meeting)

a) DIRECTOR'S WELCOME

Clare welcomed the headteachers to the West, North East and South meetings. Caroline Gibson and Catherine Hutley led the Mid meeting.

Helen Lincoln, Executive Director for Children, Families and Education, attended the West meeting. She thanked headteachers for managing their schools incredibly effectively in tough times. She noted that educationally we are in a system that no one has anticipated or planned, with the public sector on its knees, an increase in homelessness and mental health issues; Helen said that she is very aware of the fragmentation across the system, and noted that when things go wrong, such as managing RAAC in schools, asylum seeker numbers, the Local Authority and schools are expected to step in at a moment's notice with very little clear guidance.

Helen said that she empathises with the challenge and pressure of Ofsted inspection; Essex Children’s Services were inspected in June, and she had two weeks of sleepless nights during the process, but thankfully it culminated in an outstanding judgment, one of very few LAs to have successive outstanding outcomes for children’s services.

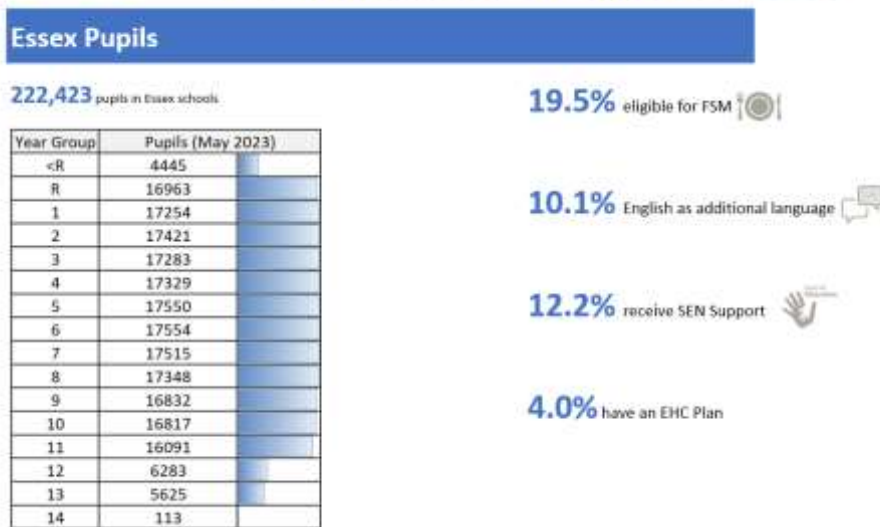
b) DfE CHANGES

Clare noted that in the recent government reshuffle, Nick Gibb, who has been a school’s minister for over a decade, has resigned. Damien Hinds has been reappointed as Schools Minister. Will Quince, MP for Colchester, has resigned as a minister and will step down at the next election.

c) EDUCATION DATA OVERVIEW

Clare gave an overview of current education data.

EDUCATION DATA OVERVIEW - 2023



There are approximately 17,000 children in each cohort, a huge number of pupils. Clare was pleased to note that Essex outcomes are generally better than national outcomes, and even those areas that are challenging have made good progress.

DATA OVERVIEW – Essex v National 2023

	National 2023 outcomes	Essex 2023 outcomes	Difference
Good Level of Development	67.2%	69%	+1.8%
Y1 Phonics	78.9%	79.2%	+0.3%
KS1 RWM	56%	57.9%	+1.9%
KS2 RWM	59.4%	60.7%	+1.3%

*This is subject to change until all data has been certified as final by DfE.

However, the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged continues to be cause for concern.

Year	Group	KS2 RWM
2019	All	65%
	Disadvantaged	50%
	Non- Disadvantaged	71%
	Gap	21%
2023*	All	60.7%
	Disadvantaged	42.5%
	Non- Disadvantaged	67%
	Gap	24.5%

*This is subject to change until all data has been certified as final by DfE.

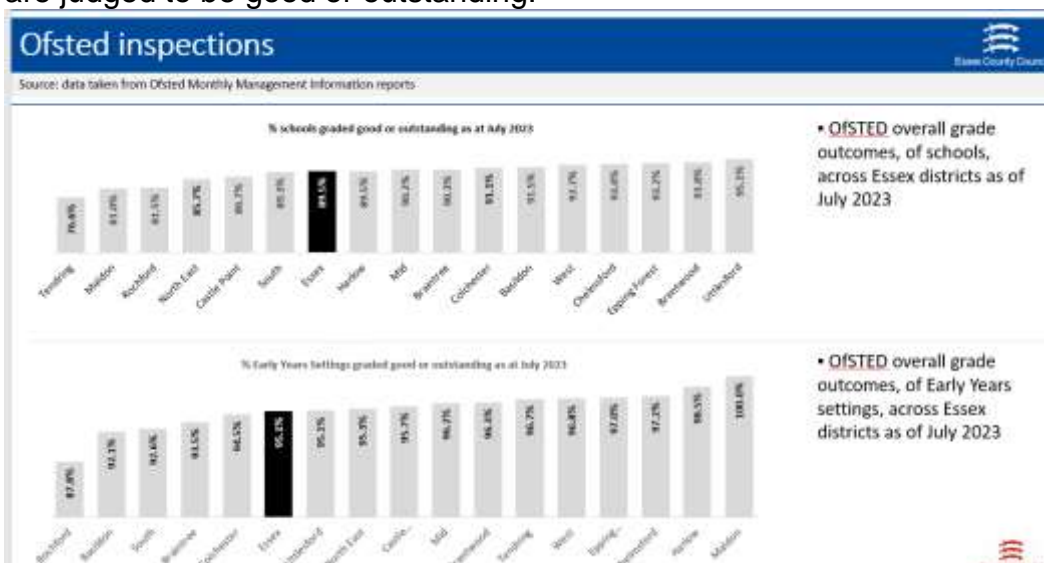
The Local Authority continues to offer support to Disadvantaged Champions and School Leaders:

- September – reflection tool submission to sign up for the academic year– supports with monitoring and evaluating your disadvantaged strategy, updating your PPG statement and reporting to governors.
Deadline Friday 29th Sept. [Summary Reflection Tool](#)
- Online termly Disadvantaged champion training 3- 4.30 pm:
 - 27th Nov – the overlap between SEND and disadvantage
 - 7th March
 - 6th June
- In person workshop on completion of a PPG statement that reflects best practice:
 - NE and Mid champions – 5th March 10 am to 3pm– venue to be confirmed
- From November 23, partnership reflection tool overview

The presentation, available on the EPHA website, gave data about attendance, broken down into districts.

d) OFSTED INSPECTION UPDATE

There are around 5-6 Ofsted inspections taking place across Essex each week. 89.5% of Essex schools continue to be good or outstanding, and about 95.1% early years settings are judged to be good or outstanding.



The Ofsted handbook has been updated with some key changes:

- Terminology (Para. 18) especially regarding leaders/leadership. More reference to CEO in MATs. Reference to this throughout the handbook eg Para 122-124, 132-

136, 338-351. Para. 97-99 as part of the Headteacher phone call – maintained schools/academies. Curriculum leadership – Para. 241-244.

- Greater clarity over governance in maintained schools/academies – Para. 344-351.
- Contextual information will include all those with responsibility for the school.
- Areas of weakness will be referred to as the responsibility of ‘the school’ rather than individuals.
- Preparation carried out by the lead inspector (Para 101).
- Revised complaints procedure – increased transparency and easier for schools to raise concerns (Para 166-167) or see Inspecting Schools Guide.
- Staff can be accompanied when speaking to inspectors (Para. 116)
- Sharing of information/inspection outcome – Headteachers can decide which colleagues/others they share this information with, although outcomes remain provisional until the final report is published.
- Timing of inspections – greater clarity about the year in which a school is likely to be inspected (Para.34-42).
- School week of at least 32.5 hours, must be in place for 1 September 2023 (Para 223) – DfE have delayed until September 2024.
- Evaluating behaviour – specific considerations eg attendance (Para. 292-295)

e) ESSEX SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY

The presentation included information about the partnerships across the county, and noted the quadrant partnership leads, who also sit on the EPHA Executive. They are:

WEST

Colin Raraty, Headteacher at Rodings Primary

MID

Dida Burrell, Headteacher at White Court School

NORTH-EAST

Kerry Malcolm, Headteacher at St Lawrence C of E Primary
and Nicky Patrick, Headteacher at Spring Meadow Primary

SOUTH

Katherine Parker, Headteacher at St Peter’s Catholic Primary and
Heidi Blakeley, Headteacher at Abacus School

Headteachers were asked to contact their Head of EY and Education to discuss the support that their partnership needed, and were welcome to offer alternative support ideas to benefit their cluster.

f) NATIONAL WRAPAROUND CHILDCARE PROGRAMME

There has been a recent announcement from the DfE about wraparound childcare. The expectation will be that schools will offer or signpost accessible childcare from 8.00 am – 6.00 pm, from 2026.

The Government’s ambition is that: -

- starting in September 2024 and by 2026, all parents and carers of primary school-aged children who need it will be able to access term time, Ofsted- registered, wraparound childcare in their local area, from 8 am-6 pm to support working patterns
- the wraparound care will be school-centred, with provision delivered by a variety of childcare models through: -
 - provision on a school site either run by the school or a private childcare provider,
 - the school supporting signposting parents to alternative local provision, for example PVIs and childminders.

This programme will only focus on: -

- primary school-aged children from reception to year 6
- creating places that are available Monday to Friday, term time 8 am-6 pm (unless data shows that local demand is for different hours)

The DfE are providing funding to Local Authorities to fund new and expanded wraparound provision to meet current demand and to start to create capacity to meet future demand. Funding will only be available to create new places or expanded places and will not cover ongoing revenue costs to support running costs .

Clare stressed that, for the time being, headteacher should not do anything, apart from completing the Local Authority audit of current provision. The Essex Early Years team are currently undertaking an audit on current wraparound childcare provision and will also be consulting with parents to understand the expected level of need.

Once this is concluded, an analysis will be undertaken on the expected demand and identify areas around the County where wraparound childcare places will need to be created.

The ECC Early Years team will be offering bespoke support to all schools, private voluntary and independent childcare providers and childminders interested in creating new wraparound childcare places. This support will consist of: -

- Wraparound briefing sessions, that will start to be run in the coming weeks
- Information packs, including the data on needed places and registering with Ofsted
- Business support to create new wraparound places and to apply for available funding
- Facilitation of creating local partnership wraparound childcare models between schools, PVI and / or childminders

At several of the meetings there was a discussion about the challenges that this might pose, in particular in relation to children with special educational needs. Some parts of the DfE guidance are unclear, particularly in relation to SEND, and also transport. Parents may expect to have the same SEND support in a childcare setting as they are entitled to in school, and this is unlikely to be available, and is certainly not funded. Headteachers are concerned about safeguarding (including in the settings and when transporting children) and funding of appropriate provision.

Clare **AGREED** to take these concerns back to the DfE.

CK

3. a) SEND SUFFICIENCY PLAN

Alex Abercrombie (West meeting)

Ralph Holloway (Mid, North East and South meetings)

It was noted that the SEND system continues to be under huge financial pressure, with an increased number of children and young people with (or waiting for) EHCPs, and around £40 million spent on out of county independent school places, up from £21 m in 2015. There has been a considerable growth in children diagnosed with autism, and an increase in behavioural challenges, including children in early years.

Education Health and Care Plans maintained by Essex have increased by over 33% in the last 5 years:

Jul-19	9183
Jul-20	9768
Jul-21	10,824
Jul-22	11,275
Jul-23	12,193

The presentation included data on the number of EHCPs across the four quadrants, and by category of need. The most significant change is in communication and interaction, where 1771 additional plans have been issued since 2019.

The number of pupils in Essex Special schools has also increased significantly, a 35% increase since 2017, 16% increase in the last 5 years. In September 2017 there were 2720, in September 2023, 3671.

The number of pupils in independent special schools has increased and the placements cost significantly more.

- Between Sept-19 and Sept-23, the number of known placements has grown by 178.
This is a 102% increase.
- Between Sept-19 and Sept-23, the average cost of a placement has increased by £11,909.
This is a 24% increase.

It was noted that it is difficult to bring children back into Essex who are in independent out-of-county schools, and parents may go to Tribunal to appeal decisions that they do not agree with. Nonetheless, it is essential that the amount of money spent on independent schools is reduced, so that the funding can support the SEN system in Essex. The Schools Forum has established a working group to consider ways in which the system can be developed, in order to disrupt the need to place children out of county. Headteachers were asked to share any cost-effective ideas as groups of schools, and these will be considered by the LA. One consortium in the North East noted that they had put forward a plan, but were still waiting for a response.

The LA response to date has included:

- New and additional special schools
 - £115m capital investment in SEND, including the approval of four new free school special schools
- Increased / over-capacity in Essex special schools
- Additional PRU capacity
- Development of GROW provision and new Enhanced Provision
- £1m+ investment in early intervention for 22/23, additional for 23/24
- Collaborative working with individual schools to develop new onsite provision – primarily in primary

The future plans include four aims:

1. Ensure inclusive mainstream provision
2. Enhance the mainstream offer for children and young people with EHCPs
3. Review and redesign the enhanced provision model in Essex
4. Enhance Special School capacity appropriately

To deliver the aims:

- Access new and different **funding streams** i.e., developer contributions, to invest in schools differently.

- Develop **new and reclassify existing Enhanced Provisions** appropriate to the needs of Essex children and young people,
- Develop effectively supported **outreach/ in-reach** models
- Support for mainstream schools with children for whom special school has been deemed appropriate
- Delivering the wider **inclusion support offer**
- Best practice visits bringing **research and evidence** into Essex
- Rollout of the **Ordinarily Available with associated support offer**
- Capacity analysis, **review and potential reclassification** of existing specialist provision
- Development of **satellite provisions**

A number of issues were raised at the meetings, including the effective transition between pre-school/nursery provision and primary schools. It was argued that by the time they reach Reception, children who are undiagnosed or unsupported with special educational needs have increased the age-disconnect. It was noted that work is being undertaken on banding for early years children, but there is currently a different system for funding SEN in the early years sector.

In the North East, headteachers asked how much funding there is in the High Needs Block. Unlike many Local Authorities who have significant deficits, Essex currently has a surplus of around £13m, but if the current trajectory of need continues that will become a deficit in two years. Ralph confirmed that the LA continues to lobby the DfE and the LGA (Local Government Association); this is a national as well as a local challenge.

One headteacher asked whether the costs of independent school placements will rise if Labour come to power and follow through on their possible plan to remove charitable tax status from independent schools. Clare was unsure, as many of these schools are funded with public money, but she agreed to investigate further.

CK

In South, a headteacher asked if enhanced provisions have to be registered, as this affects funding arrangements. It was explained that if the provision was part of the school provision, such as GROW, then it does not need to be separately registered, but other provisions may need to be.

The South chair suggested that schools would benefit from being able to access efficient CPD in relation to speech and language, similar to that rolled out within the autism strategy offer. It was **AGREED** that this would be followed up with Lisa Gridley, SEN Strategy Lead.

RH/
EPHA

b) **ESSEX INCLUSION STRATEGY**

Essex has developed strategies to support the SEND system. This has four pillars:

Inclusion Strategy - Our vision and commitments, for equity and excellence in education for all children and young people.

Inclusion Framework - Enabling early intervention and inclusion in mainstream schools through the principle of Lives without Labels.

The Inclusion Framework is for all pupils/ students who are experiencing a barrier to accessing a full, mainstream education. Use of the Inclusion Framework should therefore not be seen as a tool just for SENCOs.

The approach has been designed to support schools where they are struggling to include any pupil/s.

The process can be instigated at any time, for a single or group of children. The LA would encourage schools to use the profiling tool proactively, rather than wait for a barrier to present itself.

Inclusion reviews - Supporting schools to review and reflect on their culture, provision and practices.

These were piloted last year, and the take up was very good. They involve a one-day review, involving staff, school leaders, governors, pupils and parents. The LA is carrying out around 2 a week at the moment, and they result in a report and recommendations for the school.

Information for Primary:

<https://essexcc.pagetiger.com/cpiulug/1>

Information for Secondary:

<https://essexcc.pagetiger.com/cpiulug/1>

To express an interest in a review please share your details here:

<https://forms.office.com/e/Fh6Y2mDie3>

- Schools receive a report following their review. This includes evidence-informed recommendations.
- As our evidence base deepens, schools will also be linked to other schools who can share good practice in key areas.
- The recommendations will form a part of the ongoing work with school leaders and their allocated IP/SEP.
- Where appropriate, the report will also highlight links to additional ECC support (e.g., from the traded offer or our package of 'support for schools').

Alongside the reviews, best practice visits identify examples of best practice – focus on inclusive practice. They underpin the inclusion reviews and overall inclusion strategy being adopted in Essex.

Resources and learning - Research visits, gathering and sharing intelligence and best practice, as well as professional learning programmes.

Recently developed: **Ready to Regulate** – a TPP professional learning programme. This is practical, hands-on training for staff to deal with dysregulation, available from the spring term. Initially rolling out to TPP schools, then all will be able to participate. Clare stressed that this does not replace or replicate Price (or Essex Steps) restraint training.

Reviews, resources and CPD are all free to support Essex schools. Heads should contact their Inclusion Partner for more information.

Top-up funding

Ralph confirmed that the financial modelling for special schools is continuing, alongside moderation across the system. The aim is still to roll out the new funding levels in September 2024.

It was argued that parents need to understand the continuum of need and the constraints on the Essex SEND system. Ralph noted that there is a good parent/carers forum in Essex, the Essex Family Forum, who work well with the LA.

In addition, Health and Social Care need to understand the pressures on schools and try not to exacerbate those. For example, headteachers continue to report that health professionals will tell parents that the school will provide resources or support that may not be relevant, necessary or affordable.

c) **AUTISM UPDATE**

Ondrea Bloom, SEND Strategy Lead Autism, was welcomed to the quadrant meetings. Janine Hanson led this section in the North East.

Ondrea noted that she last gave an update to headteachers in the spring term. Since then, there have been a number of developed projects including:

Training for professionals

- **Autism Education Trust Training (AET)**

New format for Good Autism Practice (GAP)

2 x 2hr sessions with implementation/development task

Initial discussion with IP/EP

- **Advanced Autism Course (10 week course)**

In process of being rewritten and will be launched for Summer Term

AutismStrategy@essex.gov.uk

- **Autism, anxiety and transition package**

The Local Authority has applied for levelling-up funding to develop an autism, anxiety and transition package.

The **Peer Education Programme**, in conjunction with the [Autism Central](#) website, is a Peer-to-Peer support programme for parents/carers and Personal Assistants of autistic children and young people. This is an all age, free service.

The website has a growing range of resources and guidance for parents/carers and has information about the weekly online group sessions the Peer Educators are running. Some are drop-in sessions where parents/carers can talk about anything relating to autism and others are themed sessions e.g., eating sleeping & toileting, Sensory processing, holiday survival strategies, anxiety.

Children do not need to have a diagnosis for parents/carers to access this service. All of our Peer Educators have lived experience of autism, mostly with autistic children of a range of ages. They undergo training in order to be able to support other parents/carers.

Parents and Carers can submit a [simple form](#) to request a 1:1 telephone/Teams call if they would like to talk through any concerns or questions in more depth. During calls, Peer Educators will listen, they may offer guidance about services that are available in the local area, navigate parents to services that can support and empower them and increase their knowledge and understanding of autism. Ondrea reassured headteachers that Peer Educators are carefully recruited, trained and managed to ensure that they are offering positive support to parents, and working in partnership with schools.

- ✓ Schools and other groups can request Peer Educators to attend family/carer events.
- ✓ Many schools are already arranging visits to coffee mornings and support groups.
- ✓ If you would like a visit, please email: peersupporthub@essex.gov.uk

https://schools.essex.gov.uk/pupils/Autism_Portal/Pages/Parent-and-Carers-Support.aspx

Good beginnings- for parent/ carers of children in Early Years (inc Reception)

- <https://send.essex.gov.uk/search-support-groups-and-activities/good-beginnings-course>

Ondrea signposted headteachers to the Essex Local Offer, where parents can self-refer to access the programme.

She referred heads to the autism portal on the Essex Schools Infolink.
https://schools.essex.gov.uk/pupils/Autism_Portal/Pages/default.aspx

4. WEST QUADRANT UPDATE

Nicola Woolf gave an update on activity in the West of Essex. She noted that 50 primary schools and 7 secondary schools in West had Ofsted inspections in 2022/23. Nicola also shared the outcomes data for West. The slides can be accessed at <https://essexprimaryheads.co.uk/files/epha-summer-term-2023-la-input-west.pdf>

Harlow Futures Vision

All children and young people in Harlow to have:

- A positive experience of learning
 - Successful progression to where they want to be
 - The very best outcomes
 - The right to be safe, connected and listened to at all times
- Close to their home and supported by their family and friends.

3 key priorities are

1. Reading
2. Mental health and wellbeing
3. NEET reduction

There are six programmes funded by the Levelling Up Programme that are part of Harlow Futures

o My Happy Mind - Provides preventative and early help mental health education. The programme is a whole school approach designed for schools to develop the mental wellbeing of children. The approach combines the latest research, science and technology to help children develop lifelong habits and learn to thrive.

o PATHS® - Empowers all children year 1- year 6 to develop the fundamental social and emotional learning skills which will enable them to make positive choices throughout life. Supporting teachers to teach about social problem solving and building good relationships with peers.

o RISE – Huge amount of resources to support children's wellbeing and resilience across schools – e.g. skills that build confidence and coping skills for managing emotions o Peer Education - A secondary school based, educational programme that aims to give young people the skills and knowledge they need to safeguard their mental health, and that of their peers. Where older pupils deliver the lessons to younger pupils, known as Peer Learners, using the detailed lesson plans. Peer Learners are typically aged 11 & 12.

o Brook PSHE – Resources that support PSHE lessons focussed on financial literacy, managing relationships and career planning (to name just a few topics). It includes resources suitable also for SEND students.

o Future Ready - A targeted Essex County Council Youth Adviser will deliver a blend of Emotional Wellbeing and NEET prevention sessions. By supporting wellbeing at an earlier stage, it reduces needs being escalated to higher tiers, as well as helping individuals that are closer to making the transition from secondary school to their next step. They will learn how to build a great CV, set goals, be active and understand better the steps they need to take to achieve their aspirations

Harlow Futures – next bid

This Business Case is seeking a drawdown £319,150, the remaining monies from the £500,00 investment allocated to Harlow Futures from the Levelling Up element of Everyone's Essex

- 1.To recommend funding of £170,795 to support Early Years initiatives.
- 2.£74,335 to extend the Essex Year of Reading in Harlow schools.
- 3.£20,000 to support the existing Mental Health programmes.
- 4.£54,000 to prevent future NEETs in Harlow through a pilot re-engagement strategy

5 NORTH EAST QUADRANT UPDATE

Philippa Holliday gave an updated on activity in the North East, including staffing updates and outcomes data. She stressed that whilst Colchester and Tendring have lower than national average outcomes, the progress that has been made is cause for celebration.

The slides can be accessed at

<https://essexprimaryheads.co.uk/files/north-primary-headteacher-meetings-epha-la-input-pack-november-2023.pdf>

NE Quadrant update



COLCHESTER LEVELLING-UP:

COMMUNICATION FRIENDLY SETTING Status (CFS)

- CFS ELKLAN training commencing this halfterm for registered schools, EY settings and childminders

COMMUNICATION HUB

- Kendall CofE Primary school will be the Communication hub for Colchester
- Training commencing Spring 2024

TENDRING LEVELLING-UP:

ELSA training

- Expressions of interest sent to schools for Spring term cohort training. If interested, contact Lorna.Fowle@essex.gov.uk

HOME SCHOOL LIAISON ATTENDANCE OFFICER – Sarah Aldorino

- Referrals can be made [here](#)
- If you would like Sarah to visit your school to outline role, contact sarah.Aldorino@essex.gov.uk



CONNECTIVITY:

- Thursday 14th March 3.30pm – 5.15pm at Spring Meadow Primary School: Termly quadrant leaders' School Partnerships Lead Headteachers meeting linking with Alpha Teaching Hub, Venn Maths Hub, Myland Literacy Hub



6. SOUTH QUADRANT UPDATE

The outcomes data for South were shared at the meeting. The slides can be accessed at <https://essexprimaryheads.co.uk/files/south-primary-headteacher-meetings-epha-la-input-pack-november-2023.pdf>

7. MID QUADRANT UPDATE

The slides can be accessed at <https://essexprimaryheads.co.uk/files/mid-primary-headteacher-meetings-epha-la-input-november-2023.pptx>

8. ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION AND ATTENDANCE UPDATE

Anita Patel-Lingham, Education Compliance Team Manager, attended the meeting to give an update on Elective Home Education (EHE) referrals and the current penalty notices code of conduct.

She explained the context and gave an overview of the Education Compliance Team:

- Statutory Education Compliance Manager – manages the teams who receive Children Missing Education (CME) referrals, Elective Home Education (EHE) notifications and Attendance Compliance referrals (penalty notice and prosecution requests)
-
- CME/EHE team consists of 7 staff members (3 administrative/4 face-to-face – one lead allocated officer per quadrant) - dedicated to the investigation of CME/EHE concerns – in place since September 2018 reorganisation – role alignment/integration within Essex is a real strength (ILACS Inspection June 2023)
 - Impact of reorganisation/social care trigger: In 2017/18, approximately 400 EHE assessments were carried out vs. almost 900 in the 2018/19 academic year
- Association of Elective Home Education Professionals (AEHEP) – APL Chairs national board and meets with DfE monthly to discuss EHE. Draft updated EHE guidance for LAs and parents – recent roundtable discussions. Consultation now underway/live – deadline for responses is 18th January 2024
-
- Association of Education Welfare Management (AEWM) – APL sits on National Executive Committee – regular discussions with DfE regarding attendance – well-placed to raise related CME/EHE matters via this channel
-
- Cross-party Working Group – CME/EHE high on the agenda for our Councillors, submission of detailed consultation responses/lobbying work, etc.

The EHE cohort has grown considerably during and since the pandemic

EHE Data – Essex General Overview (Reception – Year 11)

Date	Total EHE	Child in Need	Child Protection Plan	Looked after Children	SEN Support	Education, Health and Care Plan
1 st September 2023	2656	37	6	0	483	133
1 st September 2022	2288	32	9	2	359	114
1 st September 2021	2167	27	7	7	352	100
1 st September 2020	1656	25	9	8	268	87
1 st September 2019 (pre-pandemic)	1531	34	7	8	251	80

Essex – Primary EHE Cohort (Reception – Year 6)

Date	Total EHE	Child in Need	Child Protection Plan	Looked after Children	SEN Support	Education, Health and Care Plan
1 st September 2023	758	16	3	0	117	39
1 st September 2022	703	14	2	0	108	39
1 st September 2021	803	13	3	0	126	38
1 st September 2020	619	8	6	0	109	33
1 st September 2019 (pre-pandemic)	490	10	2	0	92	30

Key points to note

- EHE cohort within Essex is growing and has been for some time – in line with regional and national trends. No central, ringfenced funding source available for LAs for this growing cohort of children. Expectation to safeguard this cohort remains.
- 2022/23 – 3000+ - Data used to identify local patterns/trends (e.g., year 6, specific schools, pandemic – ethnic groups, etc.)
- Between September 2019 and September 2023, our total EHE cohort has grown by 73% (from 1531 to 2656) and our primary EHE cohort has grown by 54.7% (from 490 to 758)
- LAs submit termly census returns to the DfE, detailing our EHE and CME cohorts (second year of DfE collections). DfE remains committed to introducing a CNIS register
- Essex staffing ratio to EHE cohort - 1:382 (Sept 2019) vs. 1:664 (Sept 2023)
- Lasting legacy of pandemic de-registrations – whole families, changes in family circumstance (working from home), advent of improved online resources for the EHE community, clinical vulnerability – many did not return
- Our online EHE notification form asks direct questions about safeguarding concerns and parental commitment to EHE – allows us to prioritise the right families for assessment and follow up. Who submits these notifications? Are they the right person? Anita stressed that completion of the form is not just an administrative task and needs to be done by someone who knows the circumstances and educational ability of the pupil in question.
- B2B (80 schools) – online EHE notification is to be completed for ALL de-registrations which take place due to a parental decision to EHE (regardless of whether school has signed up to the B2B data exchange). This supports the LA to have all relevant information available when prioritising cases for EHE assessment

Education Compliance – How does the team respond to EHE notifications?

- Online notification form has been specifically designed to capture key safeguarding information/concerns
- Always cross-reference intelligence held by the LA
- All concerns (reported/identified) are acted upon (regardless of the source)
- Liaison is strong between CME/EHE Investigators and key partners – joint visits/TAFs/Core Groups, etc.
- Recent update: most recent pupil progress report requested (challenge provision if needed)
- Flexible EHE assessment timeframes – prioritisation determined using all available intelligence (general rule: 4 week settling in period + further 4 weeks to address any concerns/gaps shared with parent)

- Pandemic – move to telephone/video consultations, now firmly back to home visits for initial EHE assessments, second assessments may be done via telephone/video call (professional judgement)

What does the Education Compliance Team have to be mindful of?

- EHE, in law, is considered a valid alternative to a school-based education. No requirement for all parties with parental responsibility to agree – de-registration request from one parent is sufficient
- CiN/CP/EHCP status does not prohibit a parent from exercising their right to EHE (N.B. Special Schools)
- Parents are not required to follow the national curriculum
- DfE guidance to LAs – initial enquiries to be informal in nature (e.g. “information” not “evidence”)
- No right of access to the home
- No right to see the child as part of any EHE assessment
- Currently LAs must only intervene “where it appears” that a child may not be in receipt of a suitable home education – hence school information at the point of de-registration (and beyond) is so crucial
- Where the LA is not satisfied that EHE provision is suitable – CME – School Attendance Order process

Update about the Essex Penalty Notices Code of Conduct

- Steering Group meeting held on 17th July 2023
- Interesting discussion about the number of fines being issued, the impact on school-family relations, lack of evidence that fines are leading to an improvement in attendance across Essex
- ECC issued a record number of penalty notices during 2022/23 - 12953 in total, 12017 for holidays taken during term time
- Draft updated local Code of Conduct prepared over the summer to reflect the suggested changes that came out of the Steering Group discussion. **IMPORTANT: LOCAL CoC REVIEW NOW FIRMLY ON HOLD**
- DfE have announced their intention to introduce a national framework for legal intervention (i.e. one national code of conduct – same criteria and triggers for penalty notices). Meeting – 24th October 2023 – DfE shared their current thinking and sought feedback from LAs. Not set in stone – discussions ongoing.
- Intended timeline for national framework to come into force – September 2024

Anita confirmed, therefore that any changes to the Essex Penalty Notices Code of Conduct are on hold, pending any national decisions by the DfE. They are considering increasing the levels of the fine, possibly increasing from £60 (or £120 if not paid immediately) to £80 (£160). There was also a suggestion that the number of penalty notices over a period of time might be limited e.g. two in two years, after which a prosecution would automatically follow.

The DfE is also considering introducing a “warning notice” that should be sent to parents who have taken unauthorised term time holidays on their return; in effect putting them “on probation”.

It was generally agreed that the guidance about authorising “exceptional” absence should be clearer, particularly in relation to international families who return to their country of origin for extended visits.

One headteacher asked about authorising absence for performances. Anita confirmed that licences are issued by ECC. Schools should follow the guidance on absence coding, and reminded heads that there is a restriction on how many days a child/young person can

work, and over a certain time the organisers must provide tuition. It is the headteacher's decision whether or not to agree to the time away from school.

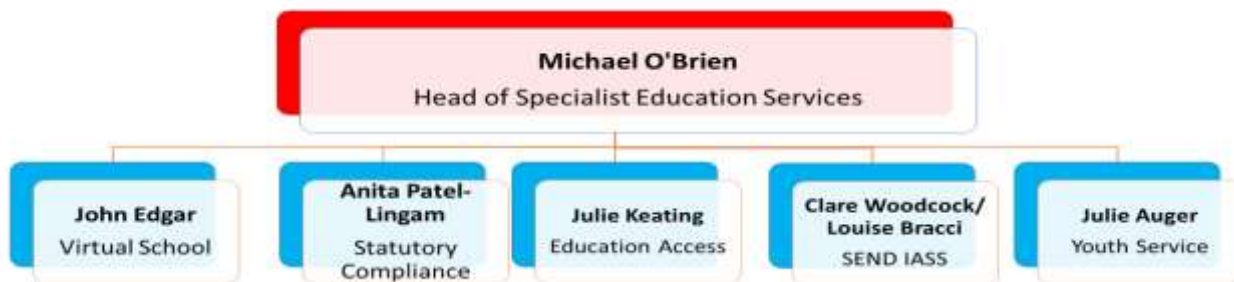
Anita was thanked for her input to the meeting.

The presentation slides are on the EPHA website at

<https://essexprimaryheads.co.uk/files/ehe-presentation-november-2023.pptx>

9. EDUCATION ACCESS TEAM UPDATE AND GUIDANCE

Julie Keating was welcomed to the meeting. (Vicky Young attended on her behalf at the West meeting). Julie noted that the Education Access Team which she manages is a central, county wide team.



Their work is underpinned and driven by the section 19 LA duty which states: Each local authority shall make arrangements for the provision of suitable education at school or otherwise than at school for those children of compulsory school age who, by reason of illness, exclusion from school or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them.

This means that EAT put in place education for:

- Young people who have been permanently excluded from school
- Young people unable to attend school for medical reasons
- Other young people struggling to access school

Current exclusions data in Essex, following the national trend.

Permanent Exclusions: All referrals to EAT 22/23

The academic year 22 / 23 saw an overall 56% increase of referrals to EAT where a school had made the decision to exclude.

The data shown opposite reflects the number of referrals received by EAT where schools had completed the exclusion paperwork and notified the LA

However, not all referrals remained as PEX.

- 5 families elected to EHE (we always advise continuing with the PEX process though)
- 10 were overturned at appeal
- 50 were withdrawn because alternative arrangements were made

Quadrant	Total PEX 21/22	Total PEX 22/23	% change 21/22 to 22/23
Mid	43	80	86%
NE	49	72	47%
South	44	75	70%
West	59	107	81%
TOTAL	214	334	56%

In 22 / 23 there were **37** referrals from primary schools

40% were for physical assault against an adult

22% were for disruptive behaviour

Quadrant	DB	PP	PA	VA	OW	Total
Mid	4	1	9	0	0	14
NE	1	3	2	0	2	8
South	2	1	2	2	4	11
West	1	0	2	1	0	4
Total	8	5	15	3	6	37
% of all primary PEX	22%	14%	40%	8%	16%	

Current position in half term 1 – Autumn term 2023

To the end of HT 1 we had received 63 exclusion referrals

9 at primary - 4 in key stage 1 and 5 in key stage 2

	DB	OT	OW	PA	PP	TOTAL
South			1	1		2
Mid				1		1
NE			1			1
NE		1				1
Mid					1	1
Mid			1			1
NE				1		1
NE	1					1
Total	1	1	3	3	1	9

In September the Education Access Team produced exclusions guidance for Essex schools, to try and support schools faced with having to make the decision whether to exclude and where to seek advice and support.

This can be found on ESI by following:

https://schools.essex.gov.uk/pupils/Education_Access/Pages/Permanent-Exclusion.aspx

Alternative Education for primary pupils

GROW provisions – all details on ESI

https://schools.essex.gov.uk/pupils/social_emotional_mental_health_portal_for_schools/Pages/Enhanced-Provisions-for-SEMH.aspx

Children and young people will:

- remain on roll at their mainstream school and return to this school at the end of the placement
- experience a more targeted holistic curriculum so that they can make progress with their social and emotional development
- learn to feel safe, use their curiosity, improve self-esteem and develop confidence through close and trusting relationships with adults.

Pupil Referral Units

PRU provisions – normally for when a pupil has been excluded

EAT have commissioned 20 primary places at each of our 4 Essex PRUs.

However, due to the complexity of many of the children referred the settings must put in place 1:1 or sometimes 2:1 provision which limits capacity

Many primary pupils will be assessed for an EHCP and may be offered specialist provision

Outreach is sometimes available from the PRUs.

Using an Alternative Provision provider

Schools may sometimes feel that they want to commission an alternative education for a pupil to prevent a PEX

EAT understand that commissioning an AP particularly one that is not Ofsted registered can be a worry

EAT have produced a page tiger document around safeguarding and to act as a commissioning guide for schools also available on ESI

<https://essexcc.pagetiger.com/safeguarding-AP/1>

Coming soon,...

EAT has just commissioned an attendance platform from a company called Different Class

Any pupils receiving education with an unregistered provider that is commissioned by ECC will receive a log in that will allow them to access daily attendance and timetable details for their pupil

We hope to go live with this on 4th January and more details will follow.

Contact details

- Exclusions: exclusions@essex.gov.uk
- Duty line: 03330 322534
- South – eatsouth@essex.gov.uk
- Mid: eatmid@essex.gov.uk
- West: eatwest@essex.gov.uk
- NE: eatnorth@essex.gov.uk

Following a concern raised by the Professional Officer, Julie confirmed the following: *“As agreed, I discussed with my team earlier the need for the headteacher’s pack following a PEX. It was felt that the key information that we need is the headteachers report, which should be easy to send by email.*

It is possible the PRUs or AP provider might ask for further information when we place the child in their next education setting but that can always be obtained separately. If we are able to attend a PEX hearing then we can always liaise with the clerk to arrange to have access to the full PEX pack.”

A headteacher in North East noted that schools had been advised to avoid referrals to REACH for the time being whilst investigations were going on into their suitability. Julie confirmed that this setting will be back on the list of approved AP providers and so schools can now make referrals once again.

A headteacher questioned how the suspension data is used by the Local Authority, as it is now a requirement to notify them of all suspensions, whatever the length. Julie explained that the team is beginning to sort the data, and will use it to identify pressure points; when the team capacity is increased this kind of work can take place.

The Professional Officer asked if the statement from the Local Authority sent to the governors’ exclusion panel could be more nuanced to the individual case, as currently they simply advise the governors on process. Julie said that this is an area that the team will focus on and will try to improve and personalise the statements for a permanent exclusion.

Julie was thanked for her input to the meeting. The EAT exclusions guidance was provided at the meeting, and can also be found on the Essex Schools Infolink at https://schools.essex.gov.uk/pupils/Education_Access/Pages/Permanent-Exclusion.aspx

The presentation slides are on the EPHA website at <https://essexprimaryheads.co.uk/files/education-access-team-exclusions-presentation-epha-november-2023.pptx>

10. DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

North East EPHA –Colchester United Football Stadium

Wednesday 6 March 2024

Wednesday 19 June 2024

South EPHA – Greenwoods Hotel and Spa, Stock

Thursday 29 February 2024

Thursday 13 June 2024

West EPHA – Manor Suite, Manor of Groves, Sawbridgeworth

Wednesday 28 February 2024

Wednesday 12 June 2024

Mid EPHA – The Lion Inn, Boreham

Thursday 7 March 2024

Thursday 20 June 2024

EPHA Conferences

Headteachers' Conference

Friday 22 March 2024 Chelmsford City Race Course

Deputy/Assistant Headteachers' Conference

Friday 11 October 2024 Colchester Football Stadium

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