

COMPOSITE MINUTES OF THE 2026 SUMMER TERM AREA MEETINGS OF THE LA AND ESSEX PRIMARY HEADS' ASSOCIATION

North East	Wednesday 17 June 2026	Colchester Football Stadium
South	Thursday 18 June 2026	The Lion Inn, Boreham
West	Wednesday 24 June 2026	Manor of Groves, Sawbridgeworth
Mid	Thursday 25 June 2026	The Lion Inn, Boreham

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:

North East

Melanie Atwell Kings Ford Infants
Rachel Saunders Chase Lane Primary

South

Charlotte Castle Runwell Primary (Head of School)
Melanie Smith Holy Family Catholic Primary

West

Nicky Butcher Wimbish Primary Academy (Interim Executive headteacher)
Josh Chesterman Manuden CE Primary (Acting headteacher)

Mid

Toby Power St John's CE Primary
Jenny Haken Beehive Lane Primary
Paul White Woodville Primary

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

North East

Liz Bartholomew Mayflower Primary
Lee Caffull St Andrew's Primary, Weeley (moving school)
Abbie Fairbairn Lawford CE Primary (moving school)
Lisa Frith-Sly Camulos Academy
Carl Messer St George's School
Amanda Mitchelson Old Heath Primary
James Newell Wix and Wrabness Primary (moving school)
Steven Turnbull Hazlemere Infants
Michelle Wright Montgomery Primary

South

Daniel Craft Cedar Hall School
Nina Kemp Whitmore Primary
Nic Maxwell Holy Family Catholic Primary
Jo Sampson Wyburns Primary
Amanda Watson Holt Farm Infants

West

Dean Beaumont Tany's Dell Primary
Vicky Early Harlowbury Primary
Sophia Ovenlon Fawbert and Barnard Primary
Nicola Pickford Wimbish Primary Academy
Linda Todd Elsenham CE Primary

Mid

Lucinda Bellett	Richard de Clare Primary (moving school)
Amanda Daines	The Tyrrells Primary
Vicky Jackson	St Francis Catholic Primary, Braintree
Jane Landa-Arrese	Moulsham Infants
Sarah Manning	Galleywood Infants
Richard McIntosh	Baddow Hall Juniors (moving school)
Fiona Sapiano	Terling Primary
Chris Speller	St Michaels CE Primary, Braintree
Louise Sillett	St Michaels CE Primary, Braintree
Greg Waters	The Bishops CE and Catholic Primary

A number of Local Authority officers are retiring or changing roles. Clare thanked Caroline Gibson, Head of EY and Education in Mid, for her excellent service, and wished her a very happy retirement. Caroline will be succeeded by Nick Rudman, currently a SEP in Mid.

Carole Farrer, a long-standing adviser in North East, is also retiring in the summer. She was thanked for her contribution, wise words and commitment to education in Essex.

2. DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

a) LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Clare noted that local council elections had taken place in May. 77 (of 78) seats for Essex County Council were contested and the following councillors elected:

52 Reform;

13 Conservative;

5 Liberal Democrat;

1 Green;

1 Labour;

2 Independents

ECC is now run by a Reform majority (in common with Norfolk, Thurrock and Suffolk) for the first time in 26 years.

A new Cabinet has been formed, and the Cabinet Member for Education, SEND and Skills is Councillor Sam Journet, who is also Mayor of Basildon. He has a keen interest in special educational needs, being autistic and neurodivergent himself. He has declared that he wants Essex to be the "epicentre of SEND" and is keen to recover and improve the system. He has visited a number of schools across the county.

The Deputy Member for Education, SEND and Skills is Sam Gascoygne, a teacher at an independent school.

Clare noted that the Local Area SEND Inspection report was published in May, and she had met with the Cabinet members to discuss the outcomes of the report.

b) LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

The Reform Cabinet is leading a challenge in relation to the Government decision to approve a proposal for 5 unitary authorities across Greater Essex from April 2028. In the meantime, Harlow Council has also stopped any work towards LGR, but ECC continues to plan for that change. Clare stressed that the aim is to ensure that all future unitary authorities are operated safely and legally.

c) CHILDREN'S WELLBEING AND SCHOOLS BILL

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools bill was passed on 29th April 2026 and is now law. The main aims are to strengthen the child protection system and support, early identification and prevention, ensure fairness and consistency and shared responsibility.

The Act introduces the Families First Partnership Programme, and a Children Not in School Register, amongst many other reforms. Clare noted that the register is not as onerous as anticipated, and will support the early identification of need and prevention. Other strategies include:

Mobile Phone Policy Enforcement

Schools must enforce mobile phone policies to create calm, focused classrooms and reduce distractions.

Multi-Academy Trust Inspections

Multi-academy trusts will undergo dedicated inspections to improve oversight and accountability.

Curriculum and Pay Standards

All schools must follow the national curriculum and meet minimum pay levels for fairness.

Qualified Teacher Status Requirement

New teachers in state schools must have or work towards Qualified Teacher Status for quality teaching.

Free Breakfast Clubs

Free breakfast clubs in primary schools ensure children start their day well-fed and ready to learn.

Extended Free School Meals

Eligibility for free school meals is extended to all families on Universal Credit to reduce food insecurity.

Uniform Cost Limits

Limits on branded school uniform items can save families up to £1,000 annually, easing financial pressure.

Supporting Family Wellbeing

These measures improve attendance, learning readiness, and overall wellbeing while easing cost-of-living pressures.

Raising standards and supporting teaching:

- Clarity and consistency - The Act provides schools with clear expectations and enforces
- consistent behaviour policies to foster calm classrooms.
- Reducing inequalities – National consistency in curriculum, pay and qualifications helps reduce disparities between schools and regions

- Supporting wellbeing and outcomes – Aligning standards with safeguarding and family support positions schools as key partners in children’s wellbeing

Single Unique Identifier

A new unique identifier ensures children remain visible to services despite changes in location or circumstances.

Improved Information Sharing

Enhanced data sharing and registers prevent children from being overlooked, especially those not in school.

Collaborative Approach

Success depends on agencies and schools working effectively together to safeguard and support children.

Next Steps and Guidance

Further statutory guidance will be developed as reforms come into force to ensure smooth implementation.

Clare noted that the Single Unique Identifier will be welcomed, as currently identification systems between education and social care aren’t aligned.

d) SEND REFORM PLAN

The purpose and principles of the Government’s SEND Reform Plan include:

Building on Inclusive Practices

The reforms recognise and build on existing strong inclusive practices in many schools across the country.

Addressing Resource Imbalance

The reforms focus on understanding and fixing how schools often feel under-resourced for SEND provision.

Early Identification and Intervention

Enabling earlier identification of needs aims to support more children successfully within mainstream schools.

Collaboration and Shared Responsibility

Reforms emphasise collaboration, new investment, and shared leadership responsibility, beyond individual roles like SENCO.

Local Authorities were required to submit a local SEND Reform Plan by 19th June. The Essex SEND Reform Plan was developed in line with national policy, and Clare thanked headteachers and senior leaders for getting involved in the series of co-production workshops that were run across the county, ensuring that the views of school leaders were included in the Plan.

The Plan sets out how ECC will:

- Deliver stronger inclusion
- Provide earlier, more local support
- Create a sustainable SEND system

And builds on:

- The Inclusion Strategy
- SEND Transformation Programme
- Existing good practice
- School Partnership Strategy

It covers a 3-year roadmap (2026–2029) to align, embed and sustain reform

The Plan is an extensive document that must contain the following:

Vision & Goals

Clear 3-year end state aligned to national reforms

Strategy

- Experts at Hand model
- Inclusion approach
- Workforce development
- Funding & resource strategy

Year 1 Delivery Plan

- Defined workstreams and milestones
- Testable and trackable delivery

Governance

- Roles across LA, health, education
- Clear accountability and decision-making

Monitoring & Evaluation - Measures, data flows, impact tracking

Co-production - Designed with families, schools and partners

For 26/27 Essex has been allocated

£11m for the Experts at Hand offer (including administration)

£21m Capital

Inclusive Mainstream Fund directly awarded to schools

The **Vision for SEND in Essex** was developed collaboratively and has been agreed as follows:

Children and young people with SEND in Essex feel safe, valued and that they belong, irrespective of background or need. Their needs are identified and assessed accurately, in a timely way, and they are empowered to progress and live full lives.

Through inclusion, compassion and partnership, Essex maintains a consistent SEND system where needs are met, families are heard and support is equitable and joined-up.

What this means for children, young people and families:

Every child and young person will belong in their local community, not be lost in it.

Children, young people and families will help design services and make decisions, not just navigate them.

We will move from managing demand to building confidence, capability and inclusion across the whole system.

The SEND system will not rely on escalation or crisis to act – support is available locally, consistently and without the need to fight.

Success will be measured by the difference it makes to families, not by statistics and process compliance alone.

The Essex SEND reform strategy is grounded in the findings of the Local Partnership Maturity Assessment, which identifies a system that is developing. Essex benefits from a strong, shared inclusive vision, improving leadership and governance, and high levels of engagement from schools, families and system partners. However, experience and outcomes remain variable, driving uncertainty, escalation into statutory processes and reliance on specialist provision.

In response, the strategy focuses on:

- acting earlier, so needs are identified and met before escalation;
- reducing unwarranted variation, so children and families experience consistent support regardless of location or setting;
- building confidence and capability across education, health and care, so inclusion becomes routine rather than exceptional.

Central to the strategy is

- **Expertise at Hand**, as the default route to timely, multidisciplinary support for mainstream settings
- Local sufficiency planning, strengthening high-needs capacity within mainstream provision and using specialist and alternative provision strategically;
- Shared accountability and partnership collaboration, strengthening mature collective practice improvement.

Delivery will be initially phased over three years, supported by strong governance, shared data, coproduction and continuous learning.

Experts at Hand



Clare explained that the Expertise at Hand offer should start to be available at the end of the 2027/28 academic year, and the aim is to support Universal, Targeted and Targeted Plus pupils, supported by the co-written Individual Support Plan (ISP). Schools will not need an EHCP to access this support. A key aspect of the service will be the continuation and possible expansion of the ESSET Outreach support, which has been particularly beneficial for primary schools. In the autumn term work will begin to establish effective SEND clusters, likely to consist of one or secondary schools and their feeder primaries, to ensure that resources are shared and used effectively.

The Essex SEND Reform plan has been submitted and, subject to a lengthy governance process, will release the High Needs Stability Grant if approved.

e)

JOINT ASSESSMENT MEETINGS (JAMs)

Clare noted that the current backlog of needs assessments in the system should be cleared by the end of the calendar year but, in order for this not to remain a continuing problem a new way of deploying Educational Psychologists is being introduced. In order to free up more capacity in the system, the LA has been piloting a new way for EPs to complete their part of the statutory needs assessment process, designed by Steve Whitfield (Senior EP) and the Deputy EPs. It is usually used when there is already recent, appropriate and reliable information about a child or young person's needs.

The process will be facilitated by the EP and they will, for example, aim to assess a couple of pupils in one day (it currently takes an EP around 2 days to assess one pupil and write the report). This will involve collaboration between the child, family, school staff, EP and Assistant EP to improve assessment quality. A SEND Ops Co-ordinator may also be present alongside the family, school and the other professionals.

Schools are being asked for their co-operation and support:
They are responsible for hosting the JAMs, and SENCos should prepare for and fully participate in the meetings, ideally with the class teacher.
Schools collaborate with families and professionals, providing documentation and supporting the child's involvement.

f) KEY OFSTED FRAMEWORK CHANGES

A new toolkit has been published, in force from the end of July. The following changes have been made:

Greater focus on pupils with barriers

Inspectors will check whether pupils with learning or wellbeing barriers achieve well. Schools must show pupils know more, remember more, and produce high-quality work.

Comparison with 'similar schools'

Data will be judged against schools with similar intakes, not just national averages. Stronger focus on progress of disadvantaged pupils vs national peers.

Stronger inclusion requirements

Schools must have a published inclusion strategy explaining use of funding. Inclusion bases must effectively support pupils and enable participation. Leaders must engage proactively with families to reduce barriers.

SEND and attendance considerations

Inspectors will recognise that SEND can affect attendance levels. Greater emphasis on how schools improve attendance for these pupils over time.

Behaviour expectations with support

Schools must show pupils with barriers are supported to meet high behaviour standards. Evidence of collaboration with parents and local authorities (e.g. EHCP support) to attend and behave well.

Mobile phone and bullying policies

Inspectors will review policies and communication with parents/pupils on phone use.

[Enrichment benchmarks - GOV.UK](#)

Enrichment should be purposeful and varied.

New safeguarding focus: allergy safety

Schools must have a dedicated allergy policy and arrangements for medical needs. Recruitment records and safeguarding documentation must be accurate and up to date.

Early years updates

Stronger checks on safe sleeping practices and food preparation.

Failure here could result in an ‘urgent improvement’ judgement. Clare noted that Jo Barclay is liaising with the Essex Child and Families Wellbeing Service who may be able to provide allergen training for school staff, in line with new statutory guidance.

Future enrichment framework

Inspections will link to a new enrichment framework, recently published by the DfE.

Enrichment Benchmarks (DfE, 2026)

[Enrichment benchmarks - GOV.UK](#)

Purpose: Framework of 8 benchmarks to help schools/colleges evaluate and improve enrichment provision

Strategically aligned

- Linked to vision, curriculum, and whole-school priorities such as – Attainment, Attendance, Behaviour, Careers Guidance, Curriculum, Personal Development and Wellbeing

Broad & well-rounded

- Access to varied activities: civic, arts, outdoor, sport, and life skills

Well-communicated

- Clear information; participation and achievement recognised and celebrated

Community-shaped

- Designed with input from pupils, staff, parents; includes student leadership

Accessible & inclusive

- Equitable access for all, addressing barriers (SEND, disadvantage, attendance)

Partnership-driven

- Enrichment strengthened by external partners (employers, community, cultural orgs)

Outcomes-focused

- Tracks impact on wellbeing, skills, engagement, and future progression

Continually improving

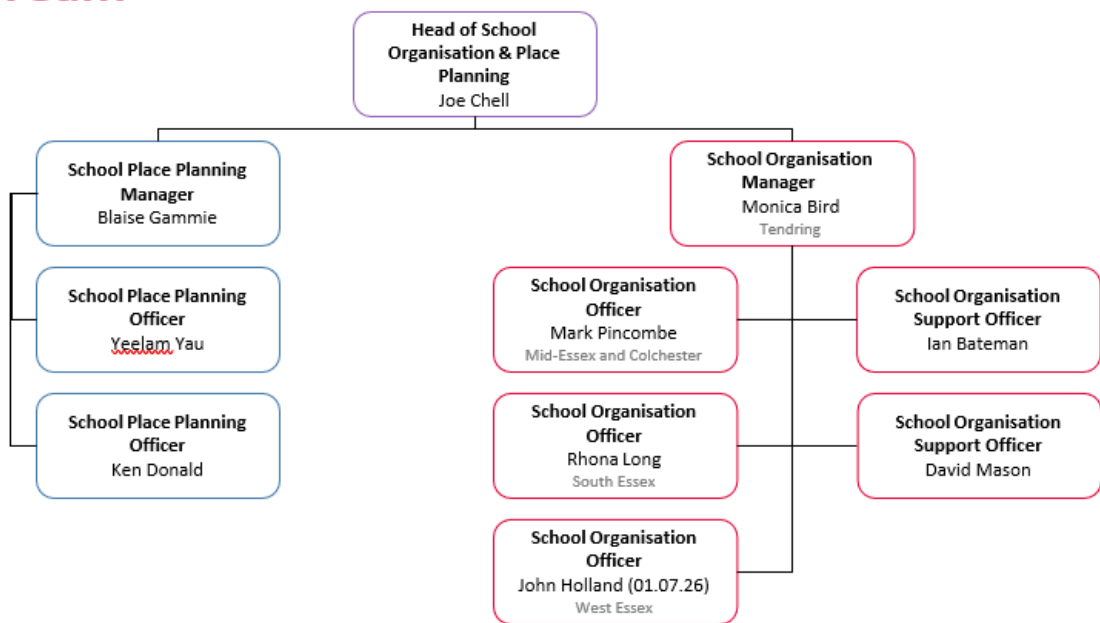
- Uses feedback and data to refine and enhance provision over time



g) SCHOOL ORGANISATION AND 10 YEAR PLAN

Clare reminded headteachers of the 10 year plan, which is updated annually, and explained some of the staffing changes to the Organisation and Place Planning team.

The Team



All schools are within a planning group, and the team forecast and plan future school capacity. House building across the county has generated growth in pupil numbers in some areas, but the declining birth rate is affecting PAN. Canvey Island is affected in particular, in part because of the expanded Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) Jewish community.

Originating as a satellite group from Stamford Hill, North London, the community relocated to Essex seeking more affordable housing and space. It has since established its own local synagogue and children are electively home educated.

The work of the team includes the following:

Expansion	The Education Estate
New Schools	SCAP Return
School Closure	Data Products
Amalgamation	Housing
Relocation	Local Plans
Small Schools	Planning Applications
Academy Conversion	S106 Contributions
Growth Funding	RAAC

10 Year Plan

- The 10 Year Plan for Mainstream School Places is published each January on our web page: www.essex.gov.uk/schoolorganisation
- It is organised by 'planning groups' agreed with the DfE.
- Planning group level forecasts are provided for each admissions year, along with any projects in the pipeline.
- There's also a section describing our responsibilities and approach to forecasting and providing school places, and the factors that influence this.
- Contact the team: school.organisation@essex.gov.uk

h) ESSEX DIRECTORY OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Clare explained that this initiative is to be rolled out this term. It originated from a discussion with the MAT CEO group (chaired by Roy Blatchford), which was initially formed to tackle the under-performance at KS4.

The directory aims to address the **RISE universal focuses**: attendance, mainstream inclusion, English and maths outcomes, Reception GLD outcomes.

The EDSI will be a directory of best practice, around any aspect of school improvement, created and developed by school leaders, and facilitated by the LA. The context is on problem-solving rather than “best in class”: how a school has addressed an element of school improvement and has improved outcomes from a baseline.

The plan is that there will be a termly upload of contributions, which will be quality assured by a panel of MAT CEOs and headteacher association representatives and LA Officers; the EPHA Chair has agreed to be part of the panel who assess the case studies. These will then be published on the secure log-in part of the Infolink. Schools that have improvement strategies published will be asked if they can showcase their work, have contacts or visits etc

Clare confirmed that no one will monitor the directory; the DfE is expected to acknowledge that this is how Universal RISE priorities are supported and developed in Essex.

As part of the testing phase for the Essex Directory of School Improvement (EDSI), an initial set of case studies are being sought, showcasing effective practice from schools. The directory webpage is now live on [Essex Schools Infolink](#), where the template and guidance for submission can be downloaded. School leaders are invited to submit a completed case study by **Monday 8 June 2026** for review and potential inclusion this term. Email submissions to Anthony.sappong@essex.gov.uk

The EDSI will be launched at the Leadership conferences on 29th and 30th June; Clare confirmed that the booking links for these conferences will be included in the School Communications newsletter on Monday 11th May. The keynote speakers are as follows:

Monday 29th June 2026

1. Tim Coulson – National Education Policy
2. Gary Aubin - Inclusion: Every classroom, Every colleague, Every day

Tuesday 30th June 2026

1. Tim Coulson – National Education Policy
2. Marc Rowland - Addressing educational disadvantage through social and academic inclusion

3. TPP PROGRESSION STAGES

Lianne Canning and Beth Brown were welcomed to the meetings. Lianne reminded headteachers that TPP was launched in 2020, following a Train the Trainer rather than a delivery model – and was explained by Steve Whitfield (her predecessor) as an “evolution, not a revolution”. Lianne stated that, 7 years on, and following great engagement by Essex schools, she argued that the revolution is finally here!

Engagement to date:

- Primary Schools: 412
- Secondary Schools: 69
- Early Years Settings: 265
- Specialist Provisions: 52
- Post-16: 4
- Out of County: 32

Beth explained that the training was developed to provide a high-quality, trauma informed, evidence-based training package that:

- Supports all pupil's SEMH needs
- Low-cost training accessible to all school/settings within Essex
- Skilling schools up in trauma-informed approaches and

- relational strategies
- Shape how the whole school/setting works
- Change everyday practices and responses within relationships, not just knowledge
- Align behaviour, SEND and wellbeing, instead of treating them separately
- Develop staff confidence and reduce reliance on individuals
- Create consistency across classrooms, phases and roles
- Supports sustainable ways of working, not quick fixes
- Makes other priorities easier to deliver (behaviour, SEND, attendance, wellbeing)
- Offer stability even when staff or leaders change
- Create a shared language and culture across Essex's workforce
- Encourage peer-led support to drive school led improvements across the County

Beth and Lianne explained the next progression for TPP, to acknowledge the journey that Essex schools have been part of. This is being framed as **“trauma proofing”, going beyond trauma informed.**

The approach focuses on designing:

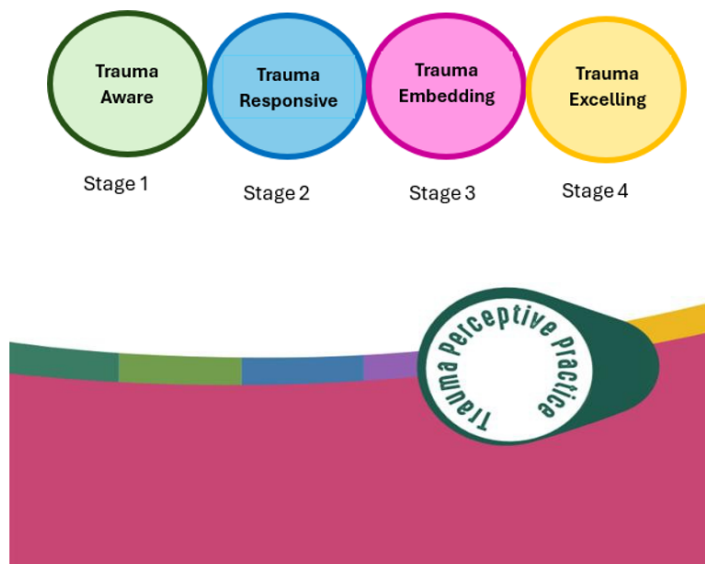
- environments,
- systems,
- interactions

that reduce the likelihood of (re)traumatisation and support the wellbeing of all people (children and young people and adults), including those who have experienced trauma. It goes one step further from trauma-informed. It's about actively building protective structures so that everyday experiences are safer, calmer, and more predictable for everyone.

A trauma-proof environment helps children and young people **access learning, feel safe, and build trust.** This **benefits all pupils**, not just those with known experiences of trauma.

Schools/settings will be able to **gain a marker for the stage** they are at on the **TPP journey**. This will **acknowledge progress** and **enables** services to **support** the school/setting **more effectively**. We also hope that it **encourages better peer support** between schools/settings. The progression stages:

- **Map** out the implementation of TPP in a **progressive framework** to support the development of **sustainable inclusive practice**
- **Support** schools/settings to **demonstrate effective implementation** of TPP **within** their **whole-school/setting approach**
- Enable **quality assurance** processes
- Inform **impact measures**
- **Validate** the schools/settings **progress**
- Make a schools/settings **efforts meaningful and impactful**



Lianne noted that there has been feedback about the use of language, the phrases “trauma embedding” and “trauma excelling” possibly implying that these stages are positive! The team is looking at reframing the titles, more in line with the national language of trauma proofing. Whether or not they are renamed, currently the proposed stages are

- Trauma Aware (Stage 1): At this foundational stage, schools and settings demonstrate an emerging commitment to trauma-informed practice

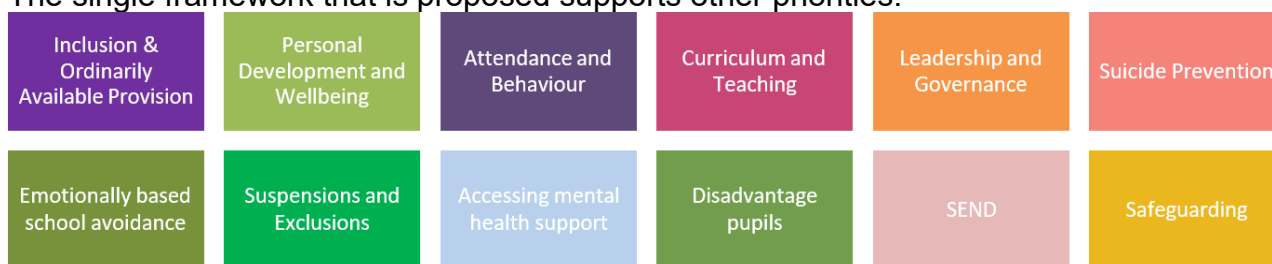
- Trauma Responsive (Stage 2): At this developing stage, schools and settings demonstrate that they are embracing practice and building consistency in trauma-informed practice
- Trauma Embedding (Stage 3): At this developing stage, schools and settings demonstrate whole-school/setting cultural transformation and leadership in Trauma-Informed Practice
- Trauma Excelling (Stage 4): At this advanced stage, schools and settings demonstrate sustained, exemplary, and innovative trauma-informed practice, influencing wider networks and contributing to system-level improvement.

Applying for TPP progression

- Self-assessment and gather evidence to support application
- TPP moderation panel
- Outcome (2 years)

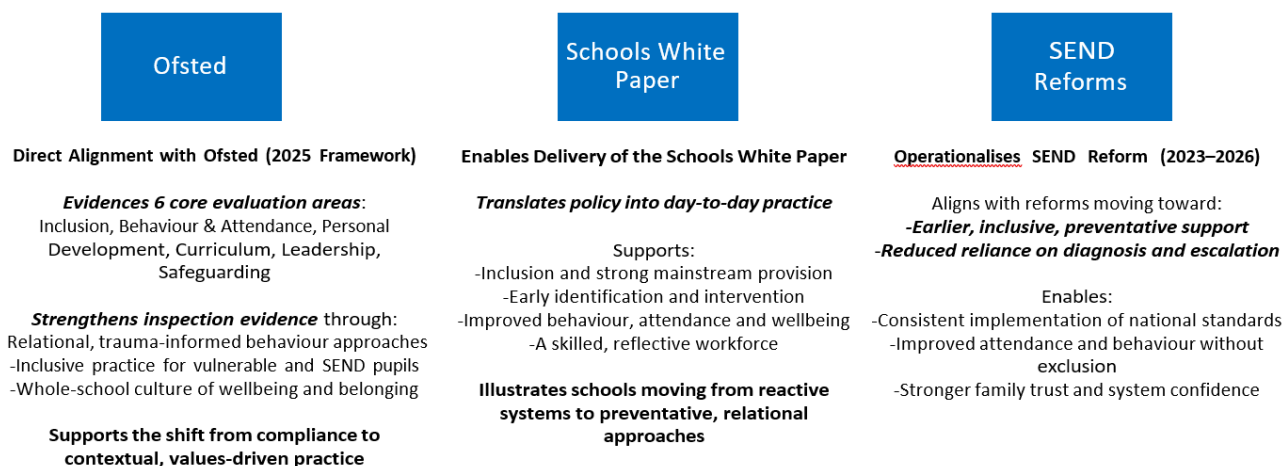
Lianne confirmed that there will be no additional cost to schools to progress on the TP journey.

The single framework that is proposed supports other priorities:



Ofsted, White Paper & SEND Reform Priorities

TPP progression stages framework provides one coherent approach that enables schools to meet national expectations across inspection, policy and reform, and show evidence to exemplify it.



Launch event for your TPP Trainer:

Tuesday 8th September - 3:30pm-4:30pm (online)

Booking link: [New TPP Quality Assurance and Impact Launch | Education Essex online](#)

One headteacher (in West) argued that the language in this approach is crucial, and he questioned the title “trauma perceptive practice” noting that this potentially narrows support for children and young people to those who have suffered trauma, rather than a much wider cohort of children who need support.

He noted that children are being turned down for support from the services because schools are not using the TPP framework. He reminded colleagues that TPP is not statutory and no schools should be prevented from accessing support if they are following the principles of TPP, which he endorses. Lianne agreed to follow up on his concerns.

Finally, Lianne gave a comprehensive update of the additional work of the SEMH team.

SEMH Update	Summary	Further information
Mental Health Multi-Agency Consultations for Education	Available in West Essex this term and then replicating across the county in 2026-27	Information will be shared via local SEND Teams and School Communications
DMHL Training	New Essex-based training to develop the role of DMHL	Currently in Pilot. Available from Autumn term.
Preventing Inappropriate Use of the DB Code for Pupils with SEND	New guidance, developed in collaboration with Education Access Team	Permanent exclusion Essex Schools Infolink
Off-site directions guidance	New guidance, developed in collaboration with Education Access Team and SEND Quadrant Teams	Currently in development. Available on the Infolink from Autumn term.
SEMH e-Learning	All webinar content has now been formalised as e-learning	Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Education Essex online
Let's Talk suite of resource	A reminder of what's available: - We Miss You - Managing Risk - Emotional Wellbeing and Reducing the Risk of Suicide - Disordered Eating - Self-harm - Working Together - Common Language - Posters to display in school	Essex Let's Talk resources Essex Schools Infolink
Support, Panels and Pathways Navigation Guide	New reference point for guidance, outreach, support and pathways.	SEMH services and support: SEMH services and support Essex Schools Infolink

Lianne highlighted the recent guidance developed in Essex:

Preventing Inappropriate Use of the DB Code for Pupils with SEND

New document setting out Essex's expectations, statutory responsibilities and practice guidance for the suspension or permanent exclusion of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), with a particular focus on preventing inappropriate use of the DB code (Persistent or General Disruptive Behaviour).

Developed by representatives from:

Education Access Team
SEMH Strategy Team

With contributions from:

- Education SLT

Available here: [Permanent exclusion](#) | [Essex Schools Infolink](#)

4. OFSTED ESSEX LA UPDATE

Peter Stonier was welcomed to the meeting, and was thanked for joining the termly headteacher meetings once again. He referred to the range of subjects that had already been covered in the meeting, and acknowledged that the volume of work and the reforms and changes currently taking place in education were sobering. He promised to remind his team of the pressures that heads are under in addition to Ofsted inspection, and agreed to share the EPHA summer term briefing notes to make this point!

He reminded heads that in November he introduced the new framework to Essex heads and was now in a position to give an update on the inspection process and share new information.

Peter showed a number of slides from Ofsted produced as a summer term update, and he agreed to send these out following the meeting. He noted a number of useful web links that Ofsted has on the website, including

[Ofsted - frequently asked questions](#)

When will my school be inspected?

What is the role of the nominee?

What happens on the planning call?

How does case sampling work?

How do Ofsted take into account the context of small schools?

What is the role of governors in school inspections?

[Strong foundations in the first years of school](#)

Foundational knowledge by the end of key stage 1

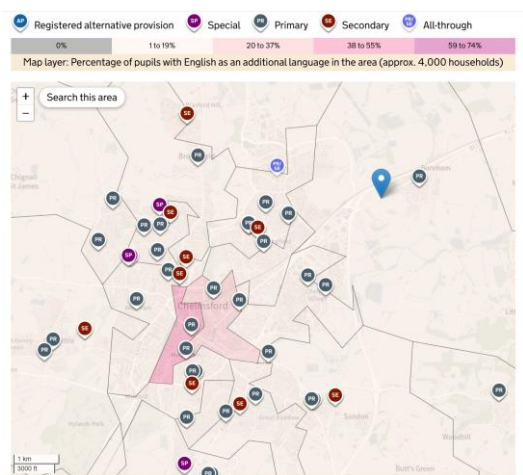
Appropriate pedagogy and assessment

[Ofsted YouTube channel](#)

Report card video for parents

Various webinars to watch

Another useful web-based tool is **Ofsted: explore an area**

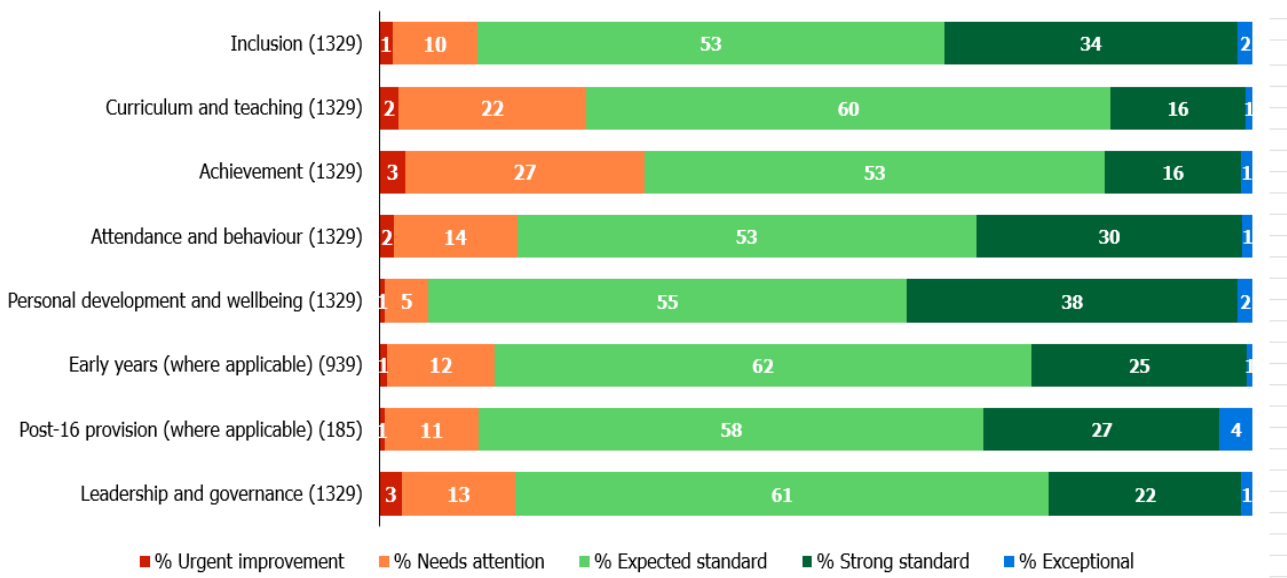


- ☐ No data layer
- ☐ Percentage of children in income-deprived families
- ☐ Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals
- ☐ Percentage of pupils receiving special educational needs support
- ☐ Percentage of pupils with an education, health and care plan
- ☒ Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language

Peter demonstrated how the tool can be used to understand the local context, and sometimes highlight anomalies in local data. He was asked if inspectors use this tool in advance of an inspection, and he noted that this varied, but that he would be highlighting its use to his regional team.

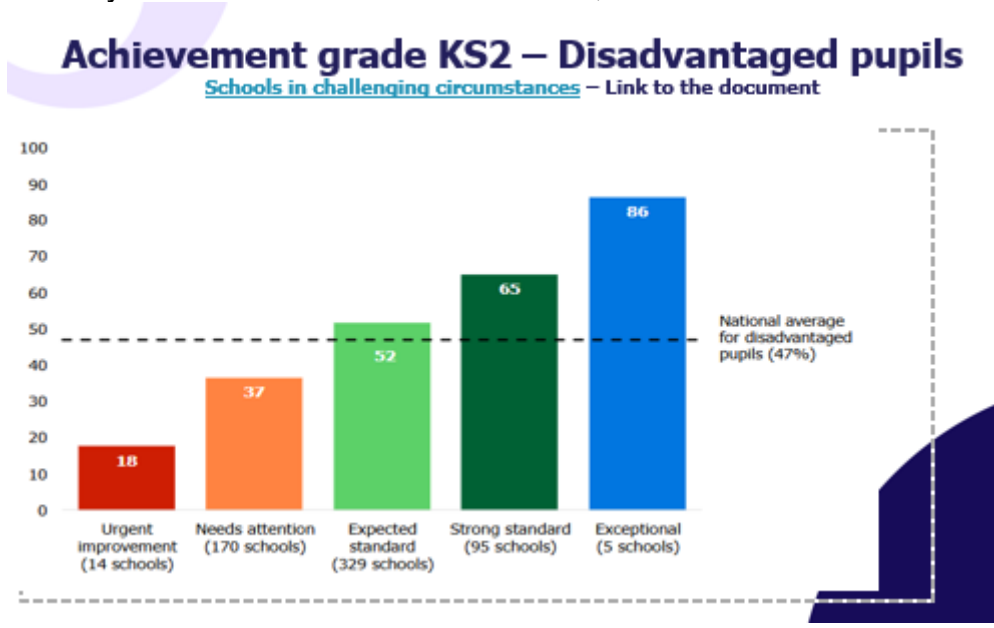
The renewed education inspection framework came into use in November 2025. Since then, Ofsted has inspected and published report cards for 1329 schools. These 1329

schools represent only a small % of all state-funded schools, so the grade profile is not representative of all schools. In fact, as Ofsted inspects lower-performing schools more often than high-performing schools, the mix of schools inspected in any single year is not typically representative. While these early inspections cannot inform firm conclusions about the sector as a whole – and may change as time goes on – we can start to look at the relationships between different aspects. For instance, we can start to see the relationship between the ‘achievement’ evaluation area and the performance data for schools, and how grades differ by the characteristics of the schools, such as the level of disadvantage



Peter noted that, as anticipated, the vast majority of schools achieved expected standard and strong standard. Out of the 1329 inspections, just 10 schools were judged as “not met” for safeguarding.

Peter noted that while these inspections cannot inform firm conclusions about the sector as a whole – and may change as time goes on – they can start to look at the relationships between different aspects. For instance, Ofsted can start to see the relationship between the ‘achievement’ evaluation area and the performance data for schools, and how grades differ by the characteristics of the schools, such as the level of disadvantage.



The table shows the correlation between evaluation grades awarded and how the attainment of a school's disadvantaged pupils compare with the national average for disadvantaged pupils.

- Schools in which disadvantaged pupils are performing broadly in line with the national average for all disadvantaged pupils tend to be graded 'expected standard'.
- Schools in which disadvantaged pupils are performing below the national average for all disadvantaged pupils are more likely to be graded 'needs attention' or 'urgent improvement'
- Schools that are closing the gap for their disadvantaged pupils are likely to be recognised for doing so and graded 'strong standard' or 'exceptional'

Peter reminded the headteachers that schools don't have to be perfect to achieve expected standard, and there is "wiggle room" in the guidance. He shared examples from reports of grades judged at "expected standard", "strong standard" and "needs attention."

Peter gave an update on the **needs attention monitoring programme**, which will start to be established as schools receive "needs attention" grades in the new framework. This is the Ofsted programme for schools with one or more NA grade.

If a school has one or more "needs attention" grades they will be assigned a nominated HMI who will provide regular contact with the school. They will initially contact the school around 3 months after the publication of the report card, and will then conduct a Teams call on a regular basis, approximately half termly or termly. This will focus on evaluating progress against key weaknesses.

The HMI tests whether leadership actions are:

- Well-targeted
- Implemented effectively
- Improving outcomes for pupils

The process ensures accountability, while offering challenge and professional dialogue. Safeguarding remains a constant priority.

Unlike in the previous framework, where a school had to wait for a full inspection for grades to be changed, "needs attention" grade(s) can be changed at the monitoring inspection.

Peter confirmed that governors may be involved in the monitoring process, to ensure their understanding of the school's improvement. Depending on the number of "needs attention" grades, the aim is that the follow-up monitoring inspection would be conducted by the HMI who is linked to the school, and will focus on the NA area (and also safeguarding). He confirmed that the next full inspection will take place around four years from the date of the last full inspection, not the monitoring inspection.

There is different guidance for schools that are judged to need urgent improvement for any area.

It was noted that many headteachers still feel that combining the behaviour and attendance grades puts schools at a disadvantage, and Peter was asked if there had been any review of this approach. Peter noted that behaviour and attendance are written in very distinct paragraphs, so it should be obvious in a report which area is a concern, if that is the case. He also noted that this separation had been considered during the consultation, but that Ofsted had decided to group these areas together as there was criticism from school leaders that there were too many areas for evaluation.

Peter outlined what happens post-inspection.

- Onsite grades are always provisional – confidentiality etc
- Onsite grades are checked by SHMI – anything unusual?
- Possible evidence base review if so e.g. everything NA but L&G expected?
- Enhanced moderation for exceptional/urgent improvement grades
- Report card then quality assured by HMI line manager (SHMI) – evidence checked

The draft report is usually received within 18 schools days, and the headteacher has the following choices in relation to the content:

- **No action:** You do not have any comments to make and you do not want to formally challenge the findings.
- **Make comments:** You want to highlight some minor points of clarity or factual accuracy in the report card. We expect the vast majority of providers will find a reasonable resolution through this route. If you choose this route, you will not normally have a later opportunity to raise a formal complaint or challenge.
- **Complain:** You want to seek a review of the inspection findings and judgements.

What do you want to do? ☐ No action
☒ Make comments
☐ Complain

Following the factual accuracy check the report goes back to the Lead HMI, then to the Senior HMI and then for final proofread – the Provider Contact Helpline is open throughout

Peter reminded headteachers that they are welcome to email him with any questions, following the meeting or at a later date. His email address is Peter.Stonier@ofsted.gov.uk

Peter was thanked for attending the meeting, as his input is always very helpful.

Web links

www.gov.uk/ofsted
reports.ofsted.gov.uk
www.youtube.com/ofstednews
www.linkedin.com/company/ofsted
www.x.com/ofstednews
www.facebook.com/ChildcareRegistration

At the meetings the Area Chairs asked colleagues if they would be happy with the idea of the Local Authority sharing details of upcoming Ofsted inspections each Monday with the EPHA Professional Officer, to enable her to offer support if required. The headteachers in each quadrant **AGREED** with this suggestion.

5. CLOSE

Clare thanked the headteachers for their hard work during a very busy school year. She acknowledged the pressure and pace of change, and praised the spirit of collaboration and working together which is so strong in Essex.

She wished everyone a relaxing and restorative break over the summer holidays, ready for a restart in September.

6. DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

EPHA Annual General Meeting

Thursday 1 October 2026 – The Lion Inn, Boreham

West EPHA – Weston Business Centre, Takeley

Wednesday 4 November 2026

Wednesday 10 March 2027

Wednesday 23 June 2027

South EPHA – The Lion Inn, Boreham

Thursday 5 November 2026

Thursday 4 March 2027

Thursday 17 June 2027

North East EPHA – Colchester United Football Stadium

Wednesday 11 November 2026

Wednesday 3 March 2027

Wednesday 16 June 2027

Mid EPHA – The Lion Inn, Boreham

Thursday 12 November 2026

Thursday 11 March 2027

Thursday 24 June 2027

EPHA Conferences

Deputy/Assistant Headteachers' Conference

Friday 9 October 2026 Colchester Football Stadium

Small Schools conference

Wednesday 14 October 2026 The Lion Inn, Boreham

Headteachers' Conference

Friday 19 March 2027 Chelmsford City Race Course

EPHA dates for the 2026/27 academic years can be found on the EPHA website at
<https://essexprimaryheads.co.uk/events/>

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