

**MINUTES OF THE ESSEX PRIMARY HEADTEACHERS' ASSOCIATION  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 5 OCTOBER 2023  
COMMENCING AT 9.00 am  
Held at The Lion Inn, Boreham**

**Headteachers present**

Dawn Baker	Lawford Mead Primary
Sue Bardetti	Holland Haven Primary
Isobel Barron	Roseacres Primary
Liz Bartholomew	The Mayflower Primary
Dale Bateman	Coopersale and Theydon Garnon CE Primary
Liz Benjeddi	South Green Junior School
Julie Braithwaite	Lincewood Primary
Amanda Buckland-Garnett	Collingwood Primary
Luke Bulpett	Brightside Primary
Dida Burrell	White Court Primary
Anna Conley	The Howbridge Infant School
Dawn Dack	Wentworth Primary
Sophie Denyer	Roach Vale Primary
Paula Derwin	Hazelmere Junior School
Sandra Dorrington	Canvey Island Infant School
Richard Green	Grove Wood Primary
Nick Hutchings	Hamilton Primary
Clare James	Maylandsea Primary
Chris Jarmain	St Mary's CE Primary, Saffron Walden
Becky Keitch	St George's CE Primary, Great Bromley
Pam Langmead	EPHA Professional Officer
Kerry Malcolm	Rowhedge CE Primary
Diana Mason	Montgomerie Primary
Richard McIntosh	Baddow Hall Junior School
James Newell	Wix and Wrabness Primary
Jinnie Nichols	St Giles and St Luke's CE Primaries
Matt O'Grady	West Horndon Primary
Nicky Patrick	Spring Meadow Primary
Harriet Phelps-Knights	Janet Duke Primary
Richard Potter	Home Farm Primary
Colin Raraty	Rodings Primary
Amanda Reid	Perryfields Infants
Marne Reynecke	Ashdon Primary
Gary Soars	Edward Francis Primary
Nicky Stone-Riley	Cherry Tree Primary
Joanne Willcox	Hillhouse CE Primary

If your attendance has not been recorded please contact the EPHA Professional Officer at [pam@langmead.me.uk](mailto:pam@langmead.me.uk) to have the minutes amended.

Action

## 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from:

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| • Heidi Blakeley      | Abacus Primary                                    |
| • Mark Carter Tufnell | Two Village Primary/Mistley Norman Primary        |
| • Sue Clarke          | Barling Magna Primary                             |
| • Matt Curzon         | St Mary's CE Primary, Stansted                    |
| • Ceri Daniels        | Holy Trinity Primary, Eight Ash Green             |
| • Anita Easton        | Great Bradfords Infants                           |
| • Debbie Griggs       | Myland Primary                                    |
| • Mary Jo Hall        | St Thomas More's Catholic Primary, Saffron Walden |
| • Alison Kerrell      | Holy Cross Catholic Primary                       |
| • Hayley O'Dea        | Great Wakering Primary                            |
| • Katherine Parker    | St Peter's Catholic Primary School, Billericay    |
| • Kevin Watts         | Great Dunmow Primary                              |

## 2. WELCOME

**Harriet Phelps-Knights, Chair of EPHA**, welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced herself to colleagues. She welcomed new members of the Executive and other headteachers who were attending the AGM.

Harriet also noted that this would be Dawn Baker's last meeting on the EPHA Executive as she retires at half term. Dawn has been working in Essex since 2004 and joined the Executive in June 2015. She has also represented primary headteachers on key groups such as Schools Forum. Dawn was thanked for her contribution and commitment to her primary colleagues.

## 3. REPORTS ON THE 2022/2023 YEAR

### A. EPHA CHAIR'S REPORT

Harriet Phelps-Knights gave the following report about the previous year as Chair of the Essex Primary Heads' Association.

I would like to start by voicing my immense gratitude and admiration for the pivotal roles you play in shaping the future of all our pupils and the education in Essex. As we gather here for this Annual General Meeting, I am reminded of the profound impact each one of you has on our students, our teachers, and our communities.

As headteachers, you've dedicated yourselves to educating the next generation. And whilst the educational landscape is a tough one. So yet again the year was not as smooth as we would like it to be. Every year we anticipate a normal year and every year life throws a curve ball in one way or another. As schools we just think we get over Covid only to find that it wasn't really over at all and now staff absences are in the rise and headteachers are again having to deal with the fallout from that. We then think that we find a way to manage energy price rises just to find that the well-deserved pay rises are not fully funded and have to revert back to the drawing board in the hope of preventing the school falling into a deficit. And then September 2023 RAAC comes knocking and fortunately for many of us it has not had a direct impact on our schools but we sympathise with our colleagues who are dealing with this situation and think of our own schools and the state of our buildings and become a little anxious perhaps about what is coming next.

I urge you to take a moment out of your busy schedules to reflect on your journey and the countless lives you've touched. Perhaps you've witnessed a struggling student flourish under your guidance or seen a once-struggling school transform into a beacon of excellence. Your leadership has made these stories possible, and they serve as a testament to your dedication and passion.

We know that the world of education is evolving at a rapid pace, driven by technological advancements and societal shifts. Embracing change is not just a necessity; it's an opportunity for growth. As educational leaders, you are the forefront of this change and as EPHA we working together to make Essex schools the success that they are. We have had a number of excellent conferences last year, heads, deputies and small schools. We have held a wonderful selection of training courses and we will continue to do this in the year ahead. As ever we have Pam to thank for the well-informed briefings which are a life line to headteachers and also a frightening experience with the length of the to do lists we are left with at the end! Thank you Pam for continuing to hold this for us.

We know that leadership comes with its own set of challenges, and resilience is your greatest ally. EPHA has the colleague supporter programme that goes from strength to strength in order to support that resilience, build capacity in our schools when needed and provide a friendly ear to weather the storms, manage stress, and maintain a healthy work-life balance. Remember that you are not alone; support systems are in place to help you navigate the toughest of times, and Pam is always that friendly ear to let off steam, ask advice, be sign posted to the best support or just a hug or a barrage of swearing – we know she likes both those things!

No headteacher stands alone. Collaboration is the cornerstone of success. Build strong relationships with your fellow headteachers, teachers, and stakeholders Let's us celebrate the power of collective efforts and teamwork and EPHA has a strength in numbers, experience, professionalism and expertise and we want to use that to support and improve the educational landscape in Essex.

In the words of Nelson Mandela, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Together, we shall navigate the future. Thank you for your incredible work, and may you continue to inspire and empower those in your schools.

## **B. EPHA PROFESSIONAL OFFICER'S REPORT**

Pam Langmead gave the following report, reflecting on her work on behalf of EPHA over the last year.

The 2022/23 school year saw life in Essex primary schools almost back to normal with far fewer cases of Covid, though the tail end of the pandemic continued to affect pupil attendance and staff sickness, along with the continuing need to focus on skills and knowledge that pupils had lost. The year continued to be exceptionally demanding for headteachers, and saw the new challenges brought about by industrial action, which is now, hopefully, resolved. Heads are also managing difficult complaints from parents, and an increasing number of suspensions and permanent exclusions. All of these issues take time and can often be very time-consuming.

EPHA takes the wellbeing of Essex primary, infant and junior heads very seriously and our aim is to support and add value through the work of the association; my role as Professional Officer is as busy as ever and, I hope, has added value for headteachers and their schools. We have responded to the increased number of complaints and exclusions by providing training and support, including all-day training from Tanya Callman (attended by about 220 headteachers and senior leaders) and also offering free training to governors. 300+ governors took advantage of the online training on exclusions, and around 120 attended the training on managing complaints. I have also delivered a number of in-person training sessions to groups of staff and governors, which has raised some income for EPHA.

The EPHA Colleague Supporter programme continues to support headteachers across the county. At the time of writing I am arranging Colleague Support for the new headteachers and heads of schools who have taken up posts this term – there are around 49 new heads and at least 30 of them are brand new to headship and/or Essex. Thank you to those serving headteachers who continue to give their time and expertise to the programme.

During the year we expanded the programme to offer support to any headteacher who wanted this, and also offered financial support to enable schools to free up leadership time, particularly in those schools where the headteacher has a significant teaching commitment. This has had a really positive impact on the wellbeing of heads, and their ability to cope with a huge workload. One headteacher told me that he was convinced that it had enabled his school to get through Ofsted successfully (having given him the time and space to update the website, school development plan and curriculum planning), and another simply said “Having that time simply changed everything!”.

The “Seven minute staff meetings” remain popular with headteachers and school leaders. Although they mainly focus on safeguarding issues, they also include topics such as data protection and Ofsted; recent subjects have included filtering and monitoring, a particular issue highlighted in the 2023 version of Keeping Children Safe in education. Last year KCSiE introduced the requirement for all new governors to undertake some form of safeguarding training, so that they understood their key role in safeguarding as leaders in their school. I wrote and recorded a

presentation that headteachers could use with new and existing governors to introduce them to the topic, and I have updated and recorded a new version for the beginning of the autumn term 2023, along with updated safeguarding resources reflecting the new version of KCSiE.

I believe that EPHA offers real value when we can offer free resources that save individual headteachers time and energy, allowing them to focus on leading their schools effectively. As part of that, the headteacher briefings continue to be an important part of my role, taking up lots of time in the first few weeks of each term, delivered as a mix of online or in-person meetings, depending on the preference of each partnership. I am delivering the briefings to 27 clusters across the county, plus an “overspill” meeting for those who can’t attend a local meeting. I have calculated (very approximately) that about 360 headteachers across the county attend these briefings; that’s a lot of people wading their way through the “do-list” each term!

The Small Schools Support Group, formed in March 2022, has gone from strength to strength and offers small school headteachers support, information and resources, such as paid-for membership of NASS (National Association of Small Schools) and also access to FundEd. (We have recently extended the offer of membership of this useful resource to all EPHA schools.) The Small Schools Support Group comprised of around 60 headteachers in schools with fewer than 120 pupils. We hold two meetings a term, and are running our second conference in October, following a very successful event last year. The meetings focus on the particular challenges that small schools face, but we also aim to celebrate the positive aspect of these schools.

Headteacher wellbeing continues to be one of EPHA’s key priorities and we have subsidised a number of headteachers enabling them to take up coaching, counselling, supervision and focused programmes such as the HeartHealth programme delivered by Pursuit Wellbeing.

Our annual conferences for Headteachers and Deputies continue to be very popular and the conference in March was extremely well attended – I was so pleased to be back after a gap of four years due to Covid.

I attend numerous meetings on behalf of EPHA, as detailed in my termly report to the Executive. In addition to attendance at those meetings, my work for the Association has included:

- Information, emails and communications with all headteachers;
- 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 and capacity support opportunities;
- Termly briefings to headteacher groups
- Managing the Small Schools Support Group, running those meetings, planning the annual conferences;
- Writing and delivering training to governors;
- Planning and organising Deputy headteacher conference and WEPHA conference;
- Planning the Headteacher conference;

- Updating support materials for schools, including statutory policy lists, website checklists, and the Support Directory;
- Organisation and management of the area meetings in the spring and summer terms;
- Managing requests for headteacher wellbeing support;
- Managing the EPHA finances: paying claims and invoices (including from Colleague Supporters), supporting area treasurers, producing reports, paying in cheques;
- Updating EPHA records and website;
- Other tasks as required.

As ever, it is a great privilege to work for and support primary-phase headteachers in Essex and I look forward to another busy year in 2023/24.

#### 4. CONSTITUTION

It was noted that the Constitution for the Essex Primary Headteachers' Association was available on the website in advance of the AGM, and was reviewed by headteachers at the meeting.

There were a number of proposed changes on the draft constitution circulated in advance of the meeting. These included:

Adding to the membership section: *The Lead Headteachers representing partnerships in each of the four quadrants: West, East, Mid and South.*

Deleting: *Each Area shall have its own **Area Association**. Representatives (including Chair and Vice-Chair) shall be elected annually at the Area Association AGM to form the **Area Steering Group** and will serve on the County Executive Committee.*

This is no longer felt to be a requirement as the funding, and organisation of termly headteacher meetings, is done centrally.

These changes was **AGREED**.

With these changes, it was **AGREED** that the Constitution would be **ADOPTED** for the coming year. The document would be updated by the EPHA Professional Officer and would be circulated with the minutes of the meeting and posted on the EPHA website.

Professional  
Officer

#### 5. TREASURER'S REPORT

Pam Langmead, Professional Officer and treasurer, circulated reports relating to the EPHA accounts:

- a Current Account income and expenditure statement from 1 August 2022 – 31 July 2023;
- a statement of the conference account from 1 August 2022 – 31 July 2023.

Both statements have been checked and agreed as a fair and accurate record of the accounts, by Ann Cutting, School Business Manager at Burnham-on-Crouch Primary School.

The following reports were circulated at the meeting:

**a) Current account income and expenditure 24.04.23 – 18.09.23**

	Expenditure	Income	Notes
DSG		£143,680.00	449 schools x £320
Subscriptions		£2,960.00	independent schools/ESSET
Miscellaneous	£2,881.48	£1,100	income from Education Taskforce
Supply	£6,508.00		
Travel & mileage	£4,250.63		Includes EPHA Chair expenses
Professional Officer	£26,150.16		
Meetings	£21,248.66		Venues and presenters
Colleague Supporter	£1,993.00		
Headteacher wellbeing	£1,956.26		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£64,988.19</b>	<b>£147,740.00</b>	

The Professional Officer expenditure for April 2023 – August 2023 is broken down into

- professional fees £23,835.00
  - mileage £ 828.55
  - expenses paid on behalf of EPHA £ 1,486.61
- £26,150.16

Part of the PO expenses paid on behalf of EPHA is a monthly Zoom subscription of £100.79 which supports the online meetings, briefings, conferences and webcasts run by the Association.

The de-delegated funding of £320 top-sliced from all schools, was received on 27 June 2023.

There was additional income from two independent schools and ESSET.

The Education Task force contributed £1,000 from the Headteacher Wellbeing fund, subsidising 3 small school headteachers.

**Bank statements for account 00795978**

<b>13.04.23</b>	<b>£153,140.99</b>
<b>14.09.23</b>	<b>£232,474.61</b>

**b) Conference account Income and Expenditure 02.04.23 – 01.09.23**

	Expenditure	Income
Headteacher conference 2023	£923.60	£3,400.00
Deputy conference 2023	£300.00	£12,500.00
WEPHA conferences	£3,012.00	£805.00
Training and events	£15,334.82	£1,740.00
Headteacher wellbeing		£1,000.00

Please note that the income and expenditure relates to this 5 month period, and therefore doesn't record the overall income and expenditure for each event. The Deputy conference on the 13<sup>th</sup> October is proving popular, with 210 bookings so far.

**Bank statements for account 17215168**

<b>28.04.22</b>	<b>£3,485.15</b>
<b>24.09.22</b>	<b>£31,518.67</b>

The Professional Officer explained that EPHA's expenditure has increased significantly this year, particularly in three areas:

- Last school year there was a significant outlay on conference presenters; this can be managed and reduced if necessary;
- The Association is running free training for headteachers and this can be expensive; the recent training on suspension and permanent exclusions for heads added up to around £40,000 for the trainer and venues; however, this was very well received and valued by Essex heads. Other training, such as online training, is much more cost effective, and is beginning to produce a small income stream;
- EPHA is offering an increased amount of financial support to headteachers in relation to wellbeing and capacity. Again, this is valued by the headteachers who have benefited and is seen as a good use of funds.

It was **AGREED** by the headteachers attending the AGM that the current approach to the use of funds should continue, and that EPHA was offering valuable support to primary headteachers.

#### c) **EPHA funding**

The EPHA Chair proposed that the DSG top-slice should, once again, be £320 per school. If this is agreed at the AGM, there will be no requirement for the Schools Forum to revisit this decision. Taking into account the continuing costs for the Association, the scope of its activities and, in particular, the uncertainty of future funding, it was unanimously **AGREED** that the top-sliced contribution from the DSG should be £320 in the 2023/24 financial year. It was hoped and anticipated that the Association continues to offer good value for money to schools, including meetings, training, the website, headteacher briefings, resources and ongoing support and advice from the Professional Officer, as well as effective communication with the Local Authority and DfE. It was agreed that EPHA should continue to offer support and training opportunities to all schools.

#### d) **Financial Regulations**

It was noted that the Financial Regulations for the Essex Primary Headteachers' Association were circulated and were available on the website in advance of the AGM, and were reviewed by headteachers at the meeting.

Two additions were proposed (in italics):

##### Funding

EPHA will be funded by a contribution from all primary-phase schools and academies in Essex, top-sliced from the DSG. The contribution for the 2023/24 financial year will be £320, as agreed at the AGM on 5 October 2023. *Contributions may also be made by independent school headteachers, and ESSET, on an annual basis.*

##### Payments and claims

EPHA will pay expenses if any Headteacher serves on a committee to represent Primary Headteachers for EPHA *or by offering colleague support or capacity to another headteacher.*



These amendments were **AGREED**.

It was **AGREED** that the Financial Regulations would be **ADOPTED** for the coming year. The document would be updated by the EPHA Professional Officer and would be circulated with the minutes of the meeting and posted on the EPHA website.

Professional  
Officer

## 6. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

### a) Election of Chair

It was noted that one nomination had been received prior to the meeting for the position of Chair for the Essex Primary Headteachers' Association, from Harriet Phelps-Knights (Janet Duke Primary).

There were no further nominations received at the meeting and **Harriet Phelps-Knights was duly elected as Chair**. She was thanked for the work she has done on behalf of Essex Headteachers during the year and for agreeing to continue as Chair of the Association.

### b) Election of Vice-Chair

It was noted that no nominations had been received prior to the meeting for the position of Vice-Chair for the Essex Primary Headteachers' Association, but that Nick Hutchings, (Hamilton Primary, Colchester) had indicated that he would be prepared to continue in this role.

There were no further nominations received and **Nick Hutchings was duly elected as Vice-Chair**. He was thanked (in his absence) for the work he has done on behalf of Essex Headteachers during the year and for agreeing to continue as Vice-Chair of the Association.

It was argued that having continuity in the two roles of Chair and Vice-Chair was a real strength of the Association; their experience, knowledge and understanding of the Essex system was invaluable, and the two representatives are known and trusted across the County.

### c) Election of Executive Treasurer

It was proposed that the Association should continue to elect a headteacher to act as Executive Treasurer, to help oversee the work of the county treasurer/Professional Officer. **Nicky Stone-Riley (Cherry Tree Primary)** agreed to continue in this role.

It was noted that Pam Langmead, Professional Officer, will continue to undertake the day to day work and financial administration as County Treasurer.

### d) Area and Local Delivery Group Representatives

Following the Area AGMs that took place online during the summer term, it was confirmed that the following headteachers will represent the South, Central (Mid), North-East and West Areas and Local Delivery Groups (or locality equivalents) on the Executive Committee. However, following the meeting a couple of EPHA Executive members noted that they were unable to continue - Ceri Daniels and Hayley O'Dea. Tiptree and Stanway is already well represented, and Hayley O'Dea has indicated that her group has a replacement representative for Rochford in mind. As reported above, Dawn Baker's departure also leaves a vacancy for Chelmsford West, but she also has a replacement headteacher lined up.

<b>Chair</b>	<b>Nicky Stone-Riley</b>	<b>Cherry Tree Primary</b>
<b>Vice-Chair</b>	<b>Richard Green</b>	<b>Grove Wood Primary</b>
Wickford	Heidi Blakeley	Abacus Primary
Billericay	Liz Benjeddi	South Green Juniors
Rochford	vacancy	
Rayleigh	Gary Soars	Edward Francis Primary
Canvey Island	Sandra Dorrington	Canvey Junior School
Basildon East/Pitsea	Nicky Stone-Riley	Cherry Tree Primary
Basildon West	Julie Braithwaite	St Anne Line Catholic Infants
Castle Point/Benfleet	Diana Mason	Montgomerie Primary
Brentwood	Matt O'Grady	West Horndon Primary
Treasurer	Luke Bulpett	Brightside Primary
Partnership Lead	Katherine Parker	St Peter's Catholic Primary School, Billericay

**MID Area**

<b>Chair</b>	<b>Dawn Dack</b>	<b>Wentworth Primary</b>
<b>Vice-Chair</b>	<b>Amanda Reid</b>	<b>Perryfields Infant School</b>
Braintree	Dida Burrell	White Court Primary
Chelmsford North	Amanda Reid	Perryfields Infant School
Chelmsford West	vacancy	
Chelmsford South	Richard McIntosh	Baddow Hall Juniors
Maldon	Dawn Dack	Wentworth Primary
Dengie	Clare James	Maylandsea Primary
Witham	Anna Conley	The Howbridge Infants
South Woodham Ferrers	Amanda Buckland-Garnett	Collingwood Primary
Halstead	Jinnie Nichols	St Giles and St Luke's Primaries
Treasurer	vacancy	
Partnership Lead	Dida Burrell	White Court Primary

**NORTH EAST Area**

<b>Chair</b>	<b>Nick Hutchings</b>	<b>Hamilton Primary</b>
<b>Vice-Chair</b>	<b>Richard Potter</b>	<b>Home Farm Primary</b>
Tendring Mid	Ian MacDonald	Elmstead Primary
Tendring South	Sue Bardetti	Holland Haven Primary
Tendring North	Becky Keitch	St George's CE Primary, Great Bromley
	James Newell	Wix and Wrabness Primary
Harwich & Dovercourt	Liz Bartholomew	The Mayflower Primary
Colchester East	Paula Derwin	Hazelmere Juniors
Colchester West	Nick Hutchings	Hamilton Primary
Colchester South	Saran Stevenson	Langenhoe Primary
Treasurer	Bridget Harris	St Thomas More's Catholic Primary
Partnership Lead	Kerry Malcolm	Rowhedge CE Primary
Partnership Lead	Nicky Patrick	Spring Meadow Primary

**WEST Area**

<b>Chair</b>	<b>Isobel Barron</b>	<b>Roseacres Primary</b>
<b>Vice-Chair</b>	<b>Chris Jarman</b>	<b>St Mary's CE Primary, Saffron Walden</b>
Epping Forest South	Joanne Willcox	Hillhouse CE Primary
Epping Forest Rural	Dale Bateman	Coopersale and Theydon Garnon CE Primary
Harlow	Mary Evans	Henry Moore Primary
Uttlesford North	Mary Jo Hall	St Thomas More Catholic Primary
Uttlesford South	Matt Curzon	St Mary's CE Primary, Stansted
Treasurer	Mary Jo Hall	St Thomas More Catholic Primary
Partnership Lead	Colin Raraty	Rodings Primary

Officer

It was confirmed that the Executive Membership list will be updated to reflect these changes, and will be made available on the EPHA website. All of the Executive members were thanked for their contribution and commitment to EPHA and for representing their local colleagues.

**6. EPHA FOCUS AND PRIORITIES FOR THE YEAR AHEAD**

A

The EPHA Chair asked headteachers for their suggestions about what EPHA should focus on in the year ahead.

It was agreed that **colleague support and headteacher wellbeing** should continue as a priority.

There was a discussion about **Level 3 safeguarding training** and whether EPHA could offer this more cost effectively, and at a better standard, than the current "Essex-based" training offer from Juniper. The Area Chairs had discussed whether the Professional Officer could gain accreditation but, having researched this possibility, it is confirmed that she will not qualify, as the NSPCC accreditation requires a minimum of two years of child protection operation. A number of alternative options were discussed:

Andrew Hall offers an excellent training course, which costs £195 plus VAT. Headteachers asked the Professional Officer to find out whether he would offer a group price for Essex.

Richard McIntosh noted that the LGFL offers free Level 3 training, which takes 2 full mornings. Two of his staff attended last year and said that it was very good. Following the meeting he forwarded the following link <https://lgfl.bookinglive.com/book/add/p/4>

Other providers mentioned included NSPCC, and High Speed training (£65 + VAT) <https://www.highspeedtraining.co.uk/courses/safeguarding/designated-safeguarding-lead-training-course/>

Three headteachers, Nick Hutchings, Richard Potter and Nicky Stone-Riley, all said that they would be prepared to undertake the Level 3 accreditation training, with a view to delivering training to primary headteachers in the future.

It was **AGREED** that EPHA would discuss this issue with Jo Barclay.

One headteacher mentioned concerns that have been raised with **Social Care**, and in particular the lack of response or feedback during the 45 day assessment period. Schools would like to have information about the progress of any referral during that timeframe. The EPHA Chair noted that Social Care had been asked to attend the Executive meeting later in the day, but they, apparently, were not available.

It was **AGREED** that the Essex Year of Numbers should be a focus for EPHA during the year.

Finally it was agreed that **SEND** continues to be one of the major challenges faced by schools, and should continue to be a priority for EPHA.

## 7. OFSTED UPDATE

Peter Stonier, Senior HMI for the East of England, was welcomed to the meeting. A number of headteachers joined the meeting, online, to hear this input.

Peter introduced himself and reminded headteachers that he works alongside other senior members of the East of England team, Tracy Fielding, Paul Wilson, Dan Lambert and Andrew Hemmings.

Peter recognised that this was a difficult time to be a school leader, particularly managing education post-Covid. Children and families are still struggling to adjust, and there has been a long-lasting impact on attendance and behaviour. This is recognised by inspectors, who are interested in how leaders are responding.

He mentioned the Ofsted training video: Seeing the Bigger Picture available at

[https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=Ofsted+seeing+the+bigger+picture](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Ofsted+seeing+the+bigger+picture)

Peter gave a presentation, which highlighted key sections of the Ofsted handbook.

Paragraphs 19 – 33 set out the common misconceptions about the Ofsted framework. For example, Peter stressed that inspectors don't expect predictions of attainment, or pupil tracking data.

Paragraphs 48 and 49 explain graded and ungraded inspections. Peter noted spotlight areas, including behaviour and personal development.

Paragraph 63 explained the risk assessment process and how schools are prioritised. Ofsted uses risk assessment to ensure that their approach to inspection is proportionate so that they can focus our efforts on where we can have the greatest impact. The indicators that we analyse in our risk assessment are usually the most recent data available at that time.

Ofsted uses a broad range of indicators to select schools for inspection. Therefore, receiving a

graded inspection, rather than an ungraded inspection, does not mean that there are significant concerns about a school.

In a risk assessment, Ofsted analyses:

- data from the DfE (for example, progress, attainment, attendance and exclusion data)
- school workforce census data
- the views of parents and carers, including those shown by [Ofsted Parent View](#), Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents
- qualifying [complaints](#) about the school referred to Ofsted
- pupil mobility (this measures the amount of pupils leaving the school before the normal leaving age, or joining after the normal joining age, for that school)
- the outcomes of any inspections that we have carried out since the last graded or ungraded inspection
- statutory warning notices
- any other significant concerns that are brought to their attention

Paragraphs 83 – 102 gives information about notification, including what the inspector does to prepare for inspection. Peter noted that deferrals will always be considered on a case by case basis, and the more information a school can provide, the better.

Ofsted's deferral policy can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/deferring-ofsted-inspections>

Paragraph 92 sets out the initial phone call. Peter stressed that these calls usually go well, as headteachers are able to talk knowledgably about their schools. He noted that an increasing number of headteachers are holding these as conference calls with deputies and other senior leaders in attendance. Peter stressed that there should be no trick questions; the call is intended to give the inspectors an overview of the school.

Paragraphs 106 – 107 set out the documents to be made available. These should all be documents that the school already has, such as behaviour and attendance records and analysis.

Peter stressed the most important factors on which inspection will focus:

Paragraphs 213 and 227: Evaluating the quality of education

Paragraphs 264 to 268: Pupils with SEND

Paragraph 288: Evaluating behaviour and attitudes

Paragraph 313: Evaluating personal development

Paragraph 335: Evaluating leadership and management

Paragraph 417: Evaluating EYFS and sixth-form provision

Paragraph 432 to 459: Grade descriptors for the judgements

Peter noted that sometimes school leaders are unaware of the grade descriptors, and need to spend time considering these; he confirmed that during the team meetings the inspectors will focus on the handbook to make their judgements.

Peter reminded headteachers of the changes to Keeping Children Safe in Education this year, which are set out in Annex F of that document. He highlighted, in particular, the reference to filtering and monitoring, and the new DfE standards published in July. For example, Ofsted might ask about search notifications, and how they are tracked by the school.

He highlighted the inspection of safeguarding. Schools may be asked how they identify pupils and families who need support, how the school helps them to access that support, and how the support is managed.

Ofsted will look carefully at apparently closed cultures, for example where staff are not encouraged to raise concerns, there is poor induction and training. It is important that schools are reflective when challenged and Ofsted will consider the safeguarding culture that has been established in a school. He referred heads to paragraph 367 which sets out an effective/ineffective culture.

Peter noted that Ofsted will describe ineffective safeguarding more clearly in reports, to help reassure parents and others that these judgements are not made lightly. Effective safeguarding will say just that, and there will be no further text in inspection reports, so that schools are not led to believe that the good practice of other schools is a mandatory requirement.

The complaints system is within a consultation period. Peter noted that the vast majority of inspections go well, but sometimes schools feel that the process hasn't been followed properly or fairly, or the conduct of inspectors has been poor. There is now a "hotline" that schools can contact the day after an inspection if they are unhappy about the process. Ideally concerns are resolved during inspection. Ofsted is also trying to make the complaints process more streamlined and quicker.

Ofsted is giving schools more information about the broad timing of their next inspection. Schools will still get one day's notice of inspection, but the blog gives more clarity about the year they are likely to be inspected. This will be particularly helpful for schools that have been exempt from inspection for many years. (paragraph 39)

<https://educationinspection.blog.gov.uk/2023/06/12/when-will-my-school-be-inspected/>

Peter noted that he had been asked to comment on the change of leadership, when Amanda Spielman leaves at the end of the year. She will be replaced by Sir Martyn Oliver, but Peter was unable to give any news about any changes to the framework as a result of his appointment.

One headteacher said that he had heard that there would a renewed emphasis on published outcomes and data. Peter noted that this is already in the handbook (in the Quality of Educaiton section) but there has been a changed emphasis in recent years.

One headteacher asked why heads weren't able to see the evidence gathered by the inspectors, without having to submit a freedom of information request. She suggested that this contradicted Ofsted's apparently transparent approach to inspection.

Peter agreed to follow this up with the policy unit and, following the meeting, he replied as follows:

*'This is a valid question. FOI requests have to be treated as if they are requests from any member of the public. We therefore would not routinely provide evidence bases to schools while their inspection process is ongoing (i.e., ahead of publication of their final report), just in the same way that we wouldn't provide an evidence base to a person in the street. This approach is referenced in our 'Complaints about Ofsted' (CAO) policy on our website and has been supported by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).*

*Instead, during the onsite inspection, leaders are given detailed feedback when they attend the team meetings and during any keeping in touch meetings. This means that leaders should have a full understanding of the evidence that has been collected during the inspection and how inspection judgements have been formed.*

*However, we acknowledge that this explanation is not readily available and so we will look to provide further clarification when the CAO guidance is reissued.'*

Peter clarified the new arrangements when a school is judged inadequate for safeguarding. He confirmed that when an inspection team returns within a three month period they will check whether safeguarding systems are effective. It will not be carried out by the same inspector as made the original judgement. Following the meeting he added this information:

*I just wanted to offer some further clarification to the question your colleague asked around the monitoring inspections of schools that are inadequate with serious weaknesses solely due to safeguarding. The school monitoring handbook (para 150) explains this process. Whilst inspection activity will indeed focus mainly on the safeguarding arrangements that are now in place at the school, the inspector will also undertake reasonable steps to assure themselves that the evidence collected in the previous graded inspection is still valid. This may include: learning walks, talking with staff and pupils, reviewing staff/parent surveys and considering whether a rich range of personal development continues to be provided.*

One headteacher noted that some years ago Ofsted had sent letters to schools confirming whether they would, or wouldn't be inspected in a school year. Peter referred heads back to the blog, and explained that it wouldn't be possible to rule out an inspection entirely in case a risk assessment identified the need for an inspection.

Jinnie Nichols noted that in the last couple of years there has been discussion about whether the Ofsted framework was suitable for small schools, and asked if any consideration had been given to this. Peter stressed that it was vital that all headteachers set out their school's context in the initial phone call. He was asked if Ofsted were careful to choose inspectors who had knowledge of a school's phase, but said that the handbook allows for appropriate inspection for all schools.

One headteacher argued that the number of inspectors in a secondary school inspection is

proportionately lower than in a primary school inspection, given pupil and staff numbers. Peter noted that timetabling is more straightforward in a secondary school inspection, but didn't feel that the inspection process is weighted against the primary sector.

Peter was thanked for attending the meeting and for engaging in discussion and debate with the headteachers. He stressed that he is happy to be contacted at [peter.stonier@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:peter.stonier@ofsted.gov.uk) and agreed to follow up any further questions that were submitted.

**8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no additional business to discuss.

The meeting ended at 10.45 am

Pam Langmead  
EPHA Professional Officer

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Harriet Phelps-Knights  
Chair of EPHA