

**MINUTES OF THE ESSEX PRIMARY HEADTEACHERS' ASSOCIATION  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2022  
COMMENCING AT 9.00 am  
Held at The Lion Inn, Boreham**

**Headteachers present**

George Athanasiou	Great Sampford Primary
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
Heidi Blakeley	Abacus Primary
Luke Bulpett	Brightside Primary
Gary Capps	Ghyllgrove Primary
Anna Conley	The Howbridge Infant School
Matt Curzon	St Mary's CE Primary, Stansted
Dawn Dack	Wentworth Primary
Ceri Daniels	Holy Trinity Primary, Eight Ash Green
Paula Derwin	Hazelmere Junior School
Mary Jo Hall	St Thomas More's Catholic Primary, Saffron Walden
Debbie Hanson	Clarity Independent School
Clare James	Maylandsea Primary
Becky Keitch	St George's CE Primary, Great Bromley
Pam Langmead	EPHA Professional Officer
Ian MacDonald	Elmstead 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
Hayley O'Dea	Great Wakering Primary
Matt O'Grady	West Horndon Primary
Jo Parkes	Kents Hill Junior School
Harriet Phelps-Knights	Janet Duke Primary
Amanda Reid	Perryfields Infants
Gary Soars	Edward Francis Primary
Marie Staley	Moulsham Junior School
Nicky Stone-Riley	Cherry Tree Primary
Janine Travi	Lubbins Park Primary
Karen Tucker	Canvey Junior School

Joanne Willcox

Hillhouse CE Primary

Jonathan Duff  
Ian Jacobs

Regional Director, East of England  
DfE Officer

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:

- Amanda Buckland-Garnett Collingwood Primary
- Dida Burrell White Court Primary
- Daniel Craft Holy Family Catholic Primary School
- Becky Fairhead The Vine Trust
- Richard Green Grove Wood Primary
- Nick Hutchings Hamilton Primary
- Nella Murthen Long Ridings Primary
- Richard Potter Home Farm Primary
- Angela Russell St Anne Line Catholic Infant School
- Melissa Taylor Margaretting Church of England Primary School
- Emma Wigmore The Vine Trust

## 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.

## 3. REPORTS ON THE 2021/2022 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 think that life has got back to business as usual, but I am under no illusion that this is far from an accurate reflection of where we are in schools. I think we are probably at a new normal and business as usual has certainly taken on a new meaning to us all. Not only are we still managing Covid positive cases, but we are now having to deal with the over whelming and often stressful financial crisis that we are faced with as a business and also personally. Yet again we are the calming factor for our staff, parents, pupils and community as a whole.

Yet again, I believe that it is important to acknowledge that in all this turmoil headteachers have,

yet again, been amazing. I am sure we don't all feel like it at time but you have to remember and focus on the fact that you have continued to lead and manage your schools despite very difficult and trying times. You continue to be solution-focused, creative, inspirational, supporting, protective and proactive when everyone else most needs it and once again I thank you all for the hard work that you do for the children and families of Essex.

In an attempt to support heads, we have continued to have an EPHA focus on leaders' mental health and we will continue to embed this through the work of EPHA with the Heart Health programme and the colleague supporter scheme which we have widened this year to include building leadership capacity, short term, in schools.

We have also supported the Essex Task Force work on the Year of Reading, Preschool language development, teenage mental health, outdoor learning and residential events. Some of this work is continuing with the Year of Reading focusing on a consistent reading age test across all schools in Essex, this is starting with two pilot studies that are currently being organised with secondary and feeder primaries to gauge the appetite from schools and the relevance and reliability of the data that it gives.

As always, a massive thank you to Pam who is the knowledge and glue that holds EPHA and our leaders across Essex together.

Thank you to Nick as vice chair for words of encouragement, experience and knowledge and his ability to land those awkward questions and honest statements in a commanding way. Thank you to area chairs and vice chairs for your support and challenge in LA meetings and for the support that you give to the areas that you represent. Thank you for the time that you give to make Essex schools what they are.

The headteachers present thanked Harriet for her efforts and work during the year to support Essex Primary Heads, and to ensure the ongoing success of the Association.

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

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

It was a great relief this term, when writing the briefing notes, not to have to include a Covid section within the presentation! Whilst the pandemic is not quite over (despite what Ofsted and the DfE seem to think), many headteachers are now turning their focus to different challenges, in particular how to manage their budgets in this time of unprecedented financial pressure, along with the relentless return of Ofsted, and the ever-changing ideas and directives from the DfE.

EPHA continues to support and champion Essex primary, infant and junior heads; my role as Professional Officer is as busy as ever and, I hope, has added value for headteachers and their schools. A new initiative this year, and a welcome addition to the support EPHA offers, is the formation of the Small Schools Support Group. This is aimed at around 60 headteachers in schools

with fewer than 120 pupils. We hold two meetings a term, and are running our first Small Schools conference in October. The meetings focus on the particular challenges that small schools face, but we also aim to celebrate the positive aspect of these schools.

The EPHA Colleague Supporter programme continues to support headteachers across the county. At the time of writing I am arranging Colleague Support for the many headteachers and heads of schools who have taken up posts this term – there are around 59 new heads and at least 40 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. We are also expanding the programme to offer support to any headteacher who wants this, and also brokering additional capacity from other senior leaders in schools.

Headteacher wellbeing has been an important priority for EPHA this year and we funded a pilot programme delivered by Pursuit Wellbeing, focused on HeartHealth. The impact of the programme has been impressive; one headteacher who took part noted:

*“I found the sessions to be highly effective and uncovering the science behind emotional responses really helped deal with stressful situations. This is not what you would expect from a well-being session, and I would highly recommend them. Maria who coordinated our course touched base between sessions which was very helpful. I am continuing to apply what I have learnt on a daily basis.”*

EPHA is able to subsidise headteachers who want to take up this or other coaching/counselling opportunities, partly supported by funding from the Education Taskforce wellbeing fund.

The headteacher briefings continue to be an important of my role, taking up lots of time in the first few weeks of each term, particularly now that over half have returned to in-person meetings. 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 “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 online safety and I’m about to produce one focused on the new Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance produced by the DfE.

EPHA continues to provide free (or heavily subsidised) training and events for headteachers and we are planning to repeat the exclusions training we held three years ago with Tanya Callman, following the publication of new Suspension and Exclusion guidance. We will continue to hold regular webcasts as an excellent and efficient way to hear from local and national figures in education.

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, guidance 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;
- Briefings to headteacher groups – 27 partnerships/clusters are now holding termly briefings – researching and writing briefing notes and presentations –and keeping them up to date as new directives, guidance and documents are introduced;
- Writing 7 minute staff meetings, including updating all KCSiE presentations, and bringing all in line with 2022 guidance;
- Updating support materials for schools, including statutory policy lists, website checklists, and the Support Directory;
- Organisation and management of the area termly headteacher meetings;
- Organising and running webcasts;
- Managing the EPHA finances: paying claims and invoices (including from Colleague Supporters), producing reports, paying in cheques;
- Managing the bookings, organising the Deputy, Headteacher and Small School conferences, future planning for conferences;
- Updating EPHA records and managing the 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 2022/23.

#### 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. The EPHA Chair proposed that all references to the employment of an Executive Director should now be removed (in both the Constitution and the Financial Regulations). Nigel Hookway, the previous Executive Director, retired in July 2018 and since then the Professional Officer has undertaken that role as well as the administration of the Association. This proposal was **AGREED**.

With this change, 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 2021 –31 July 2022;
- a statement of the conference account from 1 August 2021 – 31 July 2022.

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.

**a) The Current Account Income and Expenditure statement for the period 27 04 22 to 20 09 22.**

	Expenditure	Income	Notes
DSG		£145,920.00	456 schools x £320
Subscriptions		£2,640.00	independent schools/ESSET
Miscellaneous	£23,819.02		Includes transfer of £20,000 to conference account
Supply	£2,865.60		
Travel & mileage	£2,690.99		Includes EPHA Chair expenses
Professional Officer	£24,067.65		
Meetings	£16,311.76		Venues and presenters
Colleague Supporter	£432.00		
Headteacher wellbeing	£3,915.04	£1,350	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£74,102.06</b>	<b>£149,910.00</b>	

*The Professional Officer expenditure for April 2022 – August 2022 is broken down into*

• professional fees	£22,120.00
• mileage	£ 555.00
• expenses paid on behalf of EPHA	<u>£ 1,425.65</u>
	£24,067.65

*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 24 August 2022.*

*There was additional income from two independent school and ESSET.*

*The Education Task force contributed £1,350 from the Headteacher Wellbeing fund, subsidising 4 small school headteachers.*

**Bank statements for account 00795978**

<b>13.04.22</b>	<b>£243,422.72</b>
<b>16.09.21</b>	<b>£321,863.41</b>

**b) The Conference account Income and Expenditure statement for the period 12 04 22 to 16 09 22.**

	Expenditure	Income
Headteacher conference 2022 & 2023	£4,106.48	£200.00
Deputy conference 2022		£12,300.00
WEPHA conferences	£3,050.00	£1,950.00

*Although we have resumed charging for conferences, a large proportion of headteachers who attended in 2022 had a credit for their place owing from 2020. Therefore there was significant reduction in the balance of the conference account and I transferred £20,000 from the main account to subsidise the conference account (11/05/22).*

*Please note that the income and expenditure relates to this 4 month period, and therefore doesn't record the overall income and expenditure for each event. The Deputy conference on the 7<sup>th</sup> October is proving popular, with 228 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>

**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. It was proposed that references to the Executive Director role should be removed; this was **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.

**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:

**SOUTH Area**

<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	Hayley O'Dea	Great Wakering Primary
Rayleigh	Gary Soars	Edward Francis Primary
Canvey Island	Karen Tucker	Canvey Junior School
Basildon East/Pitsea	Nicky Stone-Riley	Cherry Tree Primary
Basildon West	Angela Russell	St Anne Line Catholic Infants
Castle Point/Benfleet	Diana Mason	Montgomerie Primary
Brentwood	Matt O'Grady	West Horndon Primary
Treasurer	Luke Bulpett	Brightside Primary

**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	Dawn Baker	Lawford Mead Primary
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	Dawn Baker	Lawford Mead Juniors



### **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	Ceri Daniels	Holy Trinity CE Primary, Eight Ash Green
Treasurer	Bridget Harris	St Thomas More's Catholic Primary

### **WEST Area**

<b>Chair</b>	<b>Isobel Barron</b>	<b>Roseacres Primary</b>
<b>Vice-Chair</b>	<b>George Athanasiou</b>	<b>Great Sampford Primary</b>
Epping Forest South	Joanne Willcox	Hillhouse CE Primary
Epping Forest Rural	Julie Lorkins	St Andrew's CE Primary, North Weald
Harlow	Jonathan Tye	Churchgate CE 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

**Professional  
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**

The EPHA Chair noted that following a discussion with the Area Chairs, and the Essex Education Taskforce, the following school improvement priorities were considered a focus for the year ahead:

- Reading – with a particular focus on children with special educational needs;
- Disadvantaged children, and a particular focus on white British boys;
- Writing;
- Development of SEN outreach support, especially at key transition points

Other key priorities include the mental health and wellbeing of headteachers, alongside the impact of the current severe financial pressures, in particular as a result of rising energy bills.

Harriet also noted the current organisational challenges in the SEND system, arguing that headteachers need to understand more about the process and solutions that are being introduced, the length of time that diagnosis and processes are completed, linked to improved

communication from and across the Local Authority. She noted that the Director of Education has agreed to run a webcast for headteachers to explain the systems in Essex.

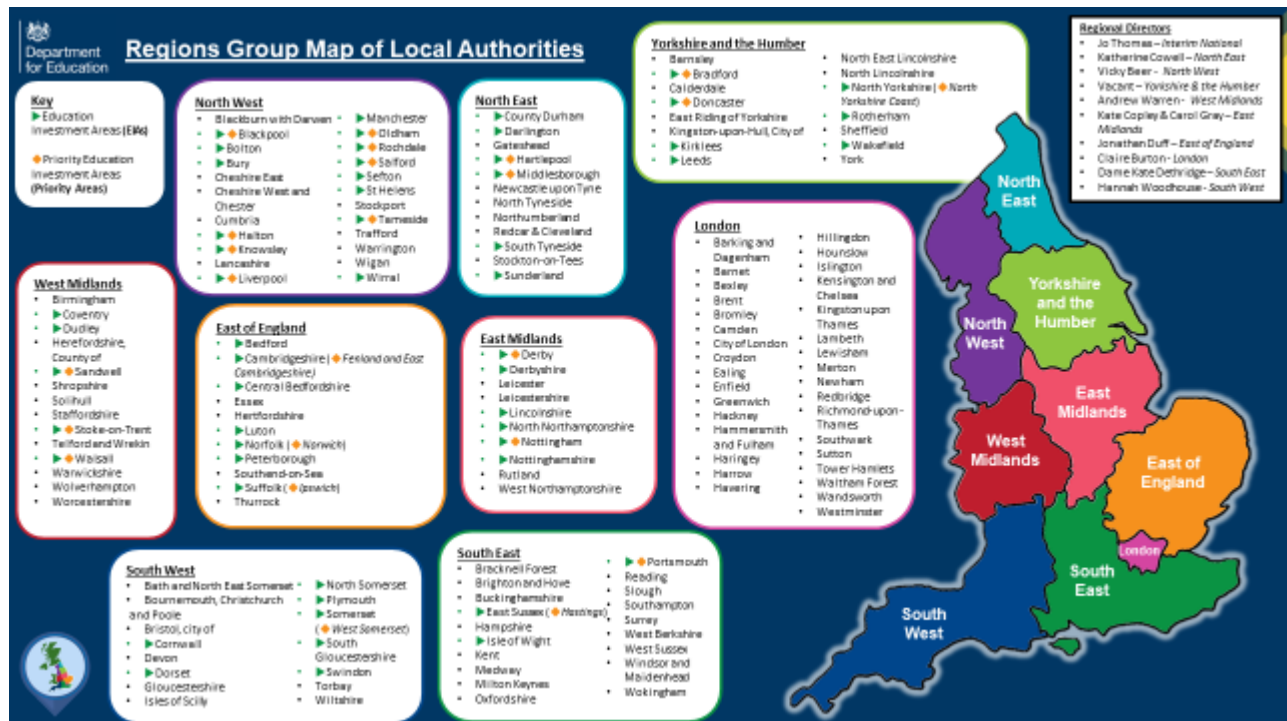
One headteacher questioned why Inclusion Partners are able to take leave in September, at a time when schools need their support more than ever.

Another headteacher suggested that the Local Authority needs to help governors to understand their roles and responsibilities to school leaders; this could usefully be done through the termly Director of Education briefings for governors. It was suggested that, in addition, EPHA could organise an online training session or webinar for governors, run by Linda Robinson, focused on their duty of care to headteachers and senior leaders.

## 7. THE DFE WHITE PAPER AND DIRECTION

Jonathan Duff – Regional Director, for the East of England, for the East of England, was welcomed to the meeting, along with Ian Jacobs, DfE representative.

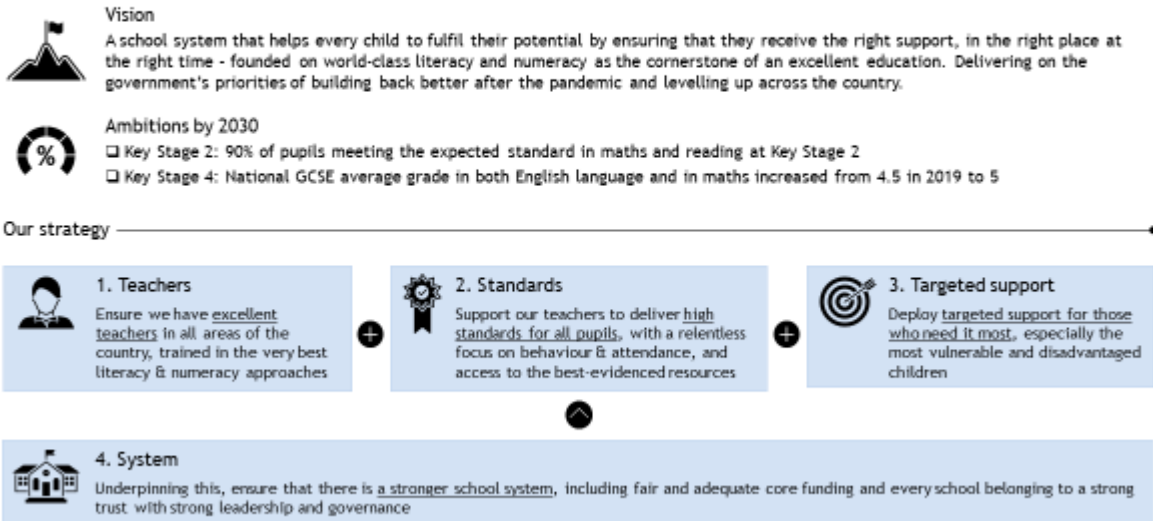
Jonathan (JD) explained that he was appointed as the RSC for East of England and North London in April; since September the role has been renamed Regional Director and he is now responsible for the East of England area. He shared a number of slides produced by the DfE, outlining the direction of the White Paper announced earlier in the year, including the regions group map of local authorities.



The Schools White Paper was published to set out the DfE's main intentions and their overall ambition and vision, namely that, by 2030, 90% of children would meet expected standards in

reading, writing and maths (combined) by the end of primary school, to ensure that they can access the secondary curriculum confidently and successfully.

## Our Schools white paper vision, ambitions, and strategy to deliver



2

JD explained that a key focus for him is on the development of the system: creating a single system of schools that are fully trust-led, benefiting from shared resources, support and expertise.

**A fairer and stronger school system**  
Schools White Paper  
Chapter 4

**Context & our ambitions**

- All children will benefit from being taught in a strong MAT, or their school will have plans to join / form one
- All schools will provide a high quality and inclusive education within the resilient structure of a strong trust, sharing expertise, resources, and support to help deliver better outcomes
- The best trusts will work where they are needed most, levelling up standards, and transforming underperforming schools
- Every part of the system will be held accountable to a set of clear roles and responsibilities

**Key policies**

1. A fully trust led system with a single regulatory approach, through growth of strong trusts and establishment of new ones, including trusts established by LAs
2. By 2030 all pupils will be taught in a strong MAT or their school planning to join one
3. Clear roles across the school system with LAs empowered to champion children's' interests and a new collaborative standard requiring trusts to work with other partners
4. Education Investment Areas (EIAs) to receive increased funding (extra in priority areas)
5. Digital infrastructure investment so all schools can take advantage of modern tech

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Early priorities for JD include to:

- **Implement and deliver the Schools White Paper and Levelling Up priorities, starting with Education Investment Areas and Priority Areas, to a fully trust led system in 2030:** This will involve collaboration between DfE, LAs, dioceses, schools and trusts, supporting and embracing the vision for change.
- **Raising aspirations and standards in the East through strong trusts.** Developing and growing the best trusts into areas of need, including specialist education following consultation on the SEND green paper.
- **Tackling failure:** inadequate (and consecutive RI) Ofsted judgements in maintained schools and academies.

One headteacher noted that schools are going to need to have adequate core funding in order to reach the standards target being set by the DfE. She asked if the likely cuts in staff, reduction in support for SEND and the need to trim any enriched curriculum as a result of budget pressures, had been taken into account by the DfE. She argued that most schools will be in a deficit position by the end of the year. JD said that he understood the current funding pressures and sympathised with headteachers; however, the Government's view is that there is sufficient funding in the education system as a result of the £4 billion funding settlement and the considerable amount of funding in school reserves. The EPHA Chair accepted that there are significant funds in some schools balances, but that these reserves would have been built up with a deliberate plan; if those contingencies have to be diverted to cover energy bills, staff costs and inflationary pressures, there won't be funds for school improvement. JD noted that if Trusts are in financial difficulty they are advised to discuss this with the DfE.

A headteacher noted that the financial pressures are broader than simply the size of school budgets; the cuts to other services and support systems, including safeguarding, SEND support, social care and others, are having a huge impact on what schools can offer.

A headteacher noted that the proposals within the DfE plans for restructuring the system are limiting. Whilst there is not a huge appetite for academisation, there are limitations on establishing new MATs, even if you are a successful head of a successful school. JD stated that decisions about new MATs or which MAT a school might join will depend on what is in place in a locality; the DfE doesn't want to create numerous small, unviable Trusts. However, he stressed that headteachers should contact his office to discuss proposals, as these will be considered. He noted that the academy system is unlikely to be reversed, whatever government is in power.

One Executive, the headteacher of a small school federation, asked about the DfE approach to this partnership route. She also reminded JD that the Diocese has strong views about the direction and management of church schools. She explained that, in Essex, there are two main Diocesan MATs and church schools are limited to joining these if they decide to academies; this potentially limits parental choice, if they don't agree with the direction of the diocese MAT.

JD noted that the preferred model for the DfE is academisation, rather than federation. He explained that there is a national memorandum of understanding with the two main churches in

England, and there are specific issues to consider including their ownership of land as well as the need to retain the ethos of the school. JD noted that he is meeting with the two Dioceses in Essex, and will ask if two Trusts are sufficient to meet the needs and direction of the church schools in the county.

One headteacher noted that there have been an unprecedented number of new headteachers in the county this term, and mentioned the workload and morale of headteachers, and the potential challenges around recruitment and retention. JD stressed that a Multi Academy Trust system can take away the administrative and personnel burden from a headteacher, ensuring that the size of the job is manageable and leaving them able to focus on teaching and learning.

There was a question about the proposed reading of the Schools Bills and when that might now take place, and whether the previous bills might be altered, given the change in Government. JD accepted that the whole parliamentary timetable has shifted for a number of reasons, and that regulatory reviews are taking place.

The group discussed what action can be taken if it is felt that Trusts are not behaving fairly or properly, for example in relation to admissions or the delivery of SEND provision. JD stressed that he and his department are happy to receive intelligence or feedback, and will investigate concerns that are raised.

Another headteacher asked how the DfE had decided on the 90% target, particularly given the number of children with SEN in the system. JD stressed that the DfE target is aspirational, but it is right to be ambitious for children and young people in education.

One headteacher argued that, whilst being ambitious and aspirational for children and young people is entirely positive, the fact is that the vast majority of schools in Essex are good or better, and are in strong, supportive partnerships, whether or not they are academies. She argued that there is no research to back up the assertion that being in a MAT will guarantee better outcomes for pupils. She noted that the DfE and the media are often negative about schools, stressing failure and shortcomings, rather than acknowledging how positive the education system is; headteachers and senior leaders are rarely given the credit they deserve. She stressed that schools need to be in local networks as well as Trusts, so that their focus is on the local community of children and their families. In addition to the negative approach, many of the stresses faced by headteachers are directly as a result of poor systems and confusing guidance produced by the DfE.

JD agreed that the profession should be respected, and that the argument is not as simple as Good Academies versus Bad Maintained schools. The Government is committed to making MATs work, and will continue its stated ambition to both challenge and support schools.

Jonathan and Ian were thanked for attending the meeting and for engaging in discussion and debate with the headteachers.

**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