

**MINUTES OF THE LA AND EPHA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING  
THURSDAY 19 MAY 2022 starting at 11.00 am**

The meeting was held at The Lion Inn, Boreham. It followed on from the EPHA Executive meeting held during the morning.

<b>In attendance</b>	<b>Representing</b>	<b>email address</b>
Alison Fiala AF	Education and EY Lead Mid	<a href="mailto:Alison.fiala@essex.gov.uk">Alison.fiala@essex.gov.uk</a>
Lois Ashforth	EPHA Dengie	Head@coldnorton.essex.sch.uk
Dawn Baker	EPHA Chelmsford West	ceo@heraacademy.co.uk
Sue Bardetti	EPHA Tendring South	admin@hollandhaven.essex.sch.uk
Isobel Barron	EPHA West Chair	head@roseacres.essex.sch.uk
Dale Bateman	EPHA Epping Forest Rural	Head@coopersaletheydongarnon.essex.sch.uk
Liz Benjeddi	EPHA Billericay	head@southgreen-jun.essex.sch.uk
Heidi Blakeley	EPHA Wickford	Head@abacus.essex.sch.uk
Amanda Buckland Garnett	EPHA South Woodham Ferrers	abg@collingwood.essex.sch.uk
Dida Burrell	EPHA Braintree	Head@whitecourt.essex.sch.uk
Anna Conley	EPHA Witham	head@howbridge-inf.essex.sch.uk
Matt Curzon	EPHA Uttlesford South	ht@st-marys-stansted.essex.sch.uk
Dawn Dack	EPHA Mid Chair/ Maldon	drdack@wentworth.essex.sch.uk
Ceri Daniels	EPHA Tiptree and Stanway	Head@eightashgreen.essex.sch.uk
Paula Derwin	EPHA Colchester East	headteacher@hazelmere-jun.essex.sch.uk
Richard Green	EPHA South Vice-Chair	Head@grovewood.essex.sch.uk
Mary Jo Hall	EPHA Uttlesford North	head@stmsw.co.uk
Nick Hutchings NH	EPHA Vice-Chair/NE Chair	head@hamiltonprimary.com
Becky Keitch	EPHA Tendring North	Head@st-georges-pri.essex.sch.uk
Pam Langmead	EPHA Professional Officer	pam@langmead.me.uk
Ian Macdonald	EPHA Tendring Mid	headteacher@elmstead.essex.sch.uk
Richard McIntosh	EPHA Chelmsford South	head@baddowhall-jun.essex.sch.uk
Jinnie Nicholls	EPHA Halstead	head@sgasa.uk
Matt O'Grady	EPHA Brentwood	Matt@westhorndon.essex.sch.uk
Richard Potter	EPHA North East Vice-Chair	head@homefarm.essex.sch.uk
Harriet Phelps-Knights HPK	EPHA Chair	Head@janetduke.essex.sch.uk
Amanda Reid	EPHA Mid Vice-Chair/Chelmsford North	admin@perryfields-inf.essex.sch.uk
Angela Russell	EPHA Basildon West	angelarussell@st-anneline-inf.essex.sch.uk
Karen Tucker	EPHA Canvey Island	head@canvey-jun.essex.sch.uk
Joanne Willcox	EPHA Epping Forest South	<a href="mailto:headteacher@hillhouse.essex.sch.uk">headteacher@hillhouse.essex.sch.uk</a>
Mary Evans	Sub for EPHA Harlow representative	mary.evans@hiltacademies.org
Nicky Patrick	Sub for EPHA Harwich Harlow representative	head@springmeadow.essex.sch.uk

**1. WELCOME AND ATTENDANCE**

**Action**

Apologies were received from:

Clare Kershaw	Director of Education
Lisa Fergus	Assistant Director – South
Ralph Holloway	SEND Transformation Manager
Jo Barclay	Head of Education Safeguarding
George Athanasiou	West Vice-Chair
Liz Bartholomew	EPHA Harwich and Dovercourt
Emma Dawson	Castle Point and Benfleet
James Newell	Tendring North
Hayley O’Dea	Rochford
Gary Soars	Rayleigh
Nicky Stone-Riley	South Chair/East Basildon
Jonathan Tye	Harlow

Alison Fiala, Lead for Education and Early Years in Mid Essex led the meeting on behalf of the Local Authority. Clare Kershaw was required to attend meetings related to the SEND re-inspection taking place in the county, and she sent her apologies for the meeting.

## **2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE EPHA EXECUTIVE MEETING EARLIER**

### **a) SEND initiatives**

The EPHA Executive had discussed their concerns, shared by other colleagues, about the number and range of new SEND initiatives that are being shared with schools, and the expectation that many of these will be implemented in September and beyond. These include the introduction of the Ordinarily Available framework, which most schools, apart from those taking part in the pilot, have not yet seen. SENCOs have attended training, but were clearly told that the responsibility to provide what is Ordinarily Available and, therefore, expected, in mainstream schools is the responsibility of headteachers. Heads have not yet had information or training, and those heads who are taking part of the pilot have warned that the expectations of the Framework are considerable. One minor expectation is that a school should have signed the Inclusion Statement, and the EPHA Executive was keen to find out if this statement has a positive impact as originally intended.

In addition, the Inclusion Framework is being introduced and expanded across the county. Again, relatively few headteachers have had much introduction or training around the programme, and are concerned about any expectation that they will implement this later in the year.

There is a huge amount of confusion about the timescales and requirements linked to the re-banding and funding of SEND top-up funding; even those headteachers who have attended numerous meetings about the changes were uncertain, and it was agreed that all mainstream headteachers need clearer direction and training as a matter of urgency.

The value of these initiatives is accepted, but there are concerns that schools are being asked to introduce a number of complex initiatives with little information and training, and at a time when the capacity of schools is stretched to the limit.

**AF**

Alison Fiala **AGREED** to feedback these comments and concerns to colleagues in the Local Authority.

**b) SEND home to school transport**

One headteacher expressed his ongoing concerns about the management and quality of home to school transport in the county. He has raised these issues with the Inclusion team, but has been told repeatedly that this is the responsibility of the ECC transport department. However, the headteacher explained that the concerns are not only about decision making and funding of transport, but also the quality and safety of the service, including supervision of children and the suitability of drivers. He reminded AF that parents don't understand the nuances of which department is responsible for transport, and inevitably complain to the school. He argued that this should not solely be the responsibility of the transport department, and the Inclusion team had a responsibility for quality assurance and safeguarding.

AF suggested that Lee Curry (in charge of transport) or Karen Saunders could be invited to the next Executive meeting with LA officers, on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2022, to discuss headteachers' concerns further.

**c) Closure of the Essex Initial Teacher Training**

The EPHA Chair referred to a letter written by the Director of Education and sent to current trainees on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2022, announcing the closure of the Essex Teacher Training Provision. This had led to a number of trainees without placements or training alternatives. The letter had been sent to the EPHA Professional Officer by a headteacher, who was also concerned that there had been no communication with schools about this decision, and certainly no consultation in advance of the closure.

Alison Fiala **AGREED** to feedback these comments and concerns to colleagues in the Local Authority.

**d) DfE White Paper and Schools Bill**

Following the publication of the DfE White Paper in March and, more recently, the various School Bills factsheets which set out the proposed legislation to underpin these changes, the EPHA Executive stressed their concerns about the future direction for all schools in Essex. The Local Authority Academisation Powers proposals are of particular concern

Whilst the DfE's stated aim is that "all schools will be in a MAT by 2030 or will have plans to join or form one", a more immediate concern is how the Local Authority will respond to the proposal that they can direct schools into academies and, potentially, could decide not to maintain schools at all from September 2023.

Although the Executive accepts that the LA has made no decisions or announcements in response to the Schools Bill proposals, this inevitably has created anxiety for school leaders and governors. EPHA hopes that the Education Director will be able to give some direction (and, possibly, reassurance) to headteachers at the headteacher meetings in June.

**Executive  
meeting  
with LA  
29/09/22**

**AF**

### 3. SUMMER TERM LA UPDATE TO PRIMARY HEADTEACHERS

It was agreed that the following information should be included in the Local Authority updates to primary headteachers at the EPHA meetings in June:

- Update on the outcomes of the SEND re-inspection
- Rollout of SEND initiatives, including the Inclusion Framework, the Ordinarily Available and the new SEND top-up funding system
- The LA's thinking around the DfE White Paper and Schools Bills

### 4. UPDATE ON THE ESSEX YEAR OF READING

AF gave an update on the projects and opportunities being delivered as part of the Essex Year of Reading; these are set out in the Project Directory. A conference is planned for the 13<sup>th</sup> December to celebrate the impact of the Year of Reading.

However, some headteachers and staff in schools are still unaware of the range of programmes, and there was a discussion about whether the information gathered by the Partnership Leads in each quadrant was being disseminated to schools effectively. AF was also asked if the SEPs were sharing this information during their visits to schools. However, a number of headteachers noted that they had not had a visit from their School Effectiveness Partner for some time, so this would not necessarily be an effective way of sharing information.

There was discussion about the current system of direct communications to schools and how effective that was proving. The regular School Comms emails to schools, that were introduced to share information about the Covid-19 pandemic were very welcome and are widely read. They are now being used to share information other than Covid-related guidance, and it was argued that this has diluted the effectiveness of Education Essex, the weekly online newsletter. AF mentioned the regular newsletter about curriculum and CPD opportunities that is provided for secondary headteachers by the LA, and the Executive questioned why a similar document wasn't produced for primary headteachers.

On Executive member suggested that this was because of the excellent support and dissemination of information provided by the EPHA Professional Officer. However, although this is valued and essential for many primary headteachers, it is also helpful to have direct information from the Local Authority.

One Headteacher stressed again her concerns about the anticipated workload for schools in September, with local and national changes, including the implementation of a new RE Curriculum over the year. This is alongside recovery from Covid, an increased number of complaints from parents, funding challenges, the increasing demands of Ofsted, the organisation of tutoring (including using and accounting for the complicated School Led Tutoring Grant, alongside the usual demands of running a school. She argued that there is too much for headteachers to deal with and to introduce properly, and that there is an argument to reintroduce the role of a "gatekeeper" in the county, to control and coordinate the expectations of schools.

Alison Fiala **AGREED** to feedback these comments and concerns to colleagues in the

AF

Local Authority.

## 5. HOMES FOR UKRAINE SCHEME

AF noted that 49 children from Ukraine have been admitted into Essex primary schools. There are still some concerns that children are being admitted through Fair Access Protocols, sometimes forcing schools to go above number in Key Stage 1. It was agreed that headteachers should contact Shamsun Noor to discuss any concerns that they have about these admissions.

Schools need to have a National Insurance number in order to claim free school meals for these pupils, and whilst these are beginning to come through the system, there is still some backlog. Other questions included the requirements around assessment and school reports, and also whether support groups have been established for families from the Ukraine.

AF noted that Jacky Castle is developing FAQ guidance for schools.

## 6. MID YEAR ADMISSIONS FUNDING

One headteacher noted that the delay in funding for a child being admitted to a school mid-year, after the October census, is causing a huge strain on funding, particularly for small schools. She argued that there seems to be a real lack of understanding what a day in school is like, and said that many headteachers are simply not coping or are near breaking point. Their stress is compounded when they have to battle the Local Authority for support, funding and understanding.

## 7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Schools have received an invoice for £195 plus VAT from Wonde, to cover the cost of re-registration of tests. This is no longer a requirement, so it was **AGREED** that schools should defer payment for the time being and this would be investigated by the Local Authority.

## 8. DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS FOR THE 2022/23 SCHOOL YEAR

**Executive meetings** (The Lion Inn, Boreham)

Thursday 29 September 2022

Thursday 19 January 2023

Thursday 18 May 2023

### Area Heads Meetings

Summer term 2022

N-EAST      Wednesday 15 June

MID          Thursday 16 June

WEST        Wednesday 22 June

SOUTH       Thursday 23 June

Colchester Community Stadium

The Lion Inn, Boreham

Manor of Groves, Sawbridgeworth

Greenwoods Hotel, Stock

Autumn term 2022

WEST	Wednesday 9 November	Manor of Groves, Sawbridgeworth
MID	Thursday 10 November	The Lion Inn, Boreham
N-EAST	Wednesday 16 November	Colchester Community Stadium
SOUTH	Thursday 17 November	Greenwoods Hotel, Stock

Spring term 2023

WEST	Wednesday 1 March	Manor of Groves, Sawbridgeworth
SOUTH	Thursday 2 March	Greenwoods Hotel, Stock
N-EAST	Wednesday 8 March	Colchester Community Stadium
MID	Thursday 9 March	The Lion Inn, Boreham

Summer term 2023

WEST	Wednesday 14 June	Manor of Groves, Sawbridgeworth
SOUTH	Thursday 15 June	Greenwoods Hotel, Stock
N-EAST	Wednesday 21 June	Colchester Community Stadium
MID	Thursday 22 June	The Lion Inn, Boreham

The meeting ended at 3.00 pm  
Pam Langmead, EPHA Professional Officer