

**MINUTES OF THE LA AND EPHA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
THURSDAY 23 JANUARY 2020 starting at 1.00 pm**

In attendance	Representing	email address
Clare Kershaw CK	Director of Education	clare.kershaw@essex.gov.uk
Lisa Fergus	Assistant Director – South	lisa.fergus@essex.gov.uk
Alison Fiala	Education and EY Lead Mid	Alison.fiala@essex.gov.uk
Lois Ashforth	EPHA Dengie	Head@coldnorton.essex.sch.uk
George Athanasiou	EPHA West Vice-Chair	head@greatsampford.essex.sch.uk
Sue Bardetti	EPHA Tendring South	admin@hollandhaven.essex.sch.uk
Isobel Barron	EPHA West Chair	head@roseacres.essex.sch.uk
Liz Bartholomew	EPHA Harwich and Dovercourt	head@mayflowerprimary.com
Liz Benjeddi	EPHA Billericay	head@southgreen-jun.essex.sch.uk
Amanda Buckland Garnett	EPHA South Woodham Ferrers	abg@collingwood.essex.sch.uk
John Clements	EPHA Uttlesford South	jhclem@hotmail.com
Anna Conley	EPHA Witham	head@howbridge-inf.essex.sch.uk
Dawn Dack	EPHA Maldon	drdack@wentworth.essex.sch.uk
Shelagh Harvey	EPHA Brentwood	headteacher@ingatestone.essex.sch.uk
Nick Hutchings	EPHA Vice-Chair/NE Chair	head@hamiltonprimary.com
Pam Langmead	EPHA Professional Officer	pam@langmead.me.uk
Kate Mills	EPHA Braintree	head@johnrayinfants.essex.sch.uk
Nicola Morgan-Soane	EPHA Mid Chair	head@trinityroad.essex.sch.uk
Donna Parker	EPHA Tendring North	head@st-marys-ardleigh.essex.sch.uk
Paula Pemberton	EPHA Colchester East	paula.pemberton@hazelmere-jun.essex.sch.uk
Harriet Phelps-Knights	EPHA Chair	Head@janetduke.essex.sch.uk
Richard Potter	EPHA North East Vice-Chair	admin@perryfields-inf.essex.sch.uk
Amanda Reid	EPHA 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
Jonathan Tye	EPHA Harlow	head@churchgate.essex.sch.uk

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from:

- Dawn Baker Chelmsford West
- Nicky Barrand South Chair/Basildon East & Pitsea
- Heidi Blakeley Wickford
- Emma Dawson Castle Point and Benfleet
- Richard Green South Vice-Chair
- Julie Lorkins Epping Forest Rural
- Hayley O’Dea Rochford
- Gary Soars Rayleigh

Clare welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Action

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE EPHA EXECUTIVE MEETING

a) SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING AND FORECASTING

A member of the EPHA Executive had expressed concerns about pupil place planning, particularly when some schools increase their numbers on roll despite places being available at other local schools.

Clare Kershaw referred the group to the ECC 10-year place plan, which is updated annually. The methodology of place planning has changed and is generally felt to have improved. Annual reviews take into account changes to population and school place planning, taking into account birth data (information provided by GP surgeries) and housing data. Clare stressed that this forecasting can never be totally precise.

In the 10-year place plan schools are clustered in planning groups. Whilst the forecast numbers are usually reasonably accurate in urban areas, where there is a mix of urban and rural this is more challenging. The forecast also looks at in-year movement and includes that as a factor.

The LA aims to ensure that there is sufficient capacity across each planning group, and the authority will not expand a school by an additional form of entry where there is sufficient capacity in a group. However, the Local Authority does not have control over the expansion of academies, and they are able to expand their pupil numbers if they have space. This may disrupt the number of places available in a planning group, and may impact on other local schools.

b) INSPECTION OF PLAY EQUIPMENT

A headteacher explained that his school's play equipment is approved each year by the Health and Safety team and he was concerned to find, at the last inspection, that the equipment was not meeting required standards (e.g. the size of the fall zone). Clare Kershaw **AGREED** to follow this up with Frank McEwen.

Other questions that arose during the Executive meeting were considered under the following agenda items.

Clare
Kershaw

3. SEND LOCAL REVIEW INSPECTION

Clare Kershaw reminded the Executive that the SEND local review is not a graded inspection; the inspection team assesses to what extent the Local Authority is delivering the SEND reforms from 2014 – 2019, and so assessing and meeting needs and delivering outcomes for children.

The inspection included detailed scrutiny of education, health, EWHMS, the Children and Family Wellbeing Service as well as the LA SEND provision.

The parent voice is taken very seriously in the inspection, and Clare confirmed that there had been 600 responses by parents; the inspectors regard their "lived experience" as a crucial part of the assessment of the service.

The final report was published on 23 December (delayed by purdah in advance of the General Election); it was sent out to schools on that day, and again at the

beginning of the term.

It was confirmed that the inspection team found weaknesses in the system, but all had been identified with the SEF. Clare explained that the report notes “exceptions” and doesn’t comment on positive aspects of provision, just comparative strengths and weaknesses. Whilst Essex was found to have 3 areas of weakness the county fared reasonably well when compared with other LAs – for example, Kent had 9 areas of weakness, Southend had 4, Thurrock had 3.

The strengths within the report included preparation for adulthood, a strong parent forum, an effective sensory team, and noted that the LA was building foundations for improvement.

As a result of the findings of the inspection and in accordance with the Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector (HMCI) determined that a Written Statement of Action is required because of significant areas of weakness in the local area’s practice. HMCI also determined that the local authority and the area’s clinical commissioning groups are jointly responsible for submitting the written statement to Ofsted.

The key weaknesses noted in the report are:

- Joint commissioning, especially with Health;
- The quality and consistency of EHCPs;
- An over-identification of MLD.

Clare explained that there was no challenge from Health around the conclusions in the report, and the LA did not make any changes either. Following the inspection an Improvement Board was established, and the LA and Accountable Officers from the five Clinical Commissioning Groups are now required to write a written statement and a meaningful action plan. One of the Accountable Officers (from the North East CCG) has been designated the Lead SEND Officer, and he will liaise with the LA.

The inspection found that joint commissioning was insufficient, currently offering inconsistent provision and diagnosis, for example in relation to autism. Clare noted that there is a need to develop a joint commissioning outcomes framework, agreed by all practitioners.

The review of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) must address the need to find the best system of assessment to create a meaningful plan for outcomes, with sufficient information to make an assessment about a child/young person, but without being too complex.

The over-identification of MLD (Moderate Learning Difficulties) is due to a number of factors, including categorisation on the census. There are six MLD special schools in the county, which contribute to high numbers; Essex is a significant outlier in terms of the numbers of children identified as MLD and there are a number of schools in the county where over 50% of the pupils with SEND are categorised as SEND. Clare stressed the need to work with schools to improve expertise around assessment, and it will be important to develop a clear definition

of MLD.

One headteacher asked about the paragraph in the report which stated:
The number of children and young people identified with moderate learning difficulties is high. Local authority leaders have suspected for some time that the over-identification may be linked to weak teaching or to under-identification of speech, language and communication needs, and social, emotional and mental health needs.

Clare noted that the attainment gap for children with SEN Support compared with all other children is significant in Essex. It will be important to explore further the reasons for the high identification of MLD. The EPHA Executive noted that one reason is the length of time it takes to get a diagnosis for a child with SEN; without that diagnosis (e.g. of autism) the school will choose the category of MLD on the census. Clare stated that there will be an improved SEN system including early diagnosis, a delivery system, and an improved system of earlier support and intervention.

The Written Statement of Action must be produced by 27th March. If it is deemed fit for purpose the plan will be put into place. There will be quarterly monitoring visits from DfE and NHS England and a full reinspection in 18 months from this date.

4. **RESTRUCTURE OF THE SEND WORKFORCE**

The new structure went live on 6th January, and embedding the new system will take some time. The language and culture of the workforce is purposely changed; now working “in partnership” with schools and families.

The Inclusion Partner is a new role within the system, and each school will have a named IP, who will help facilitate services and support for SEND. There are a number of new teams in the system, including:

- Inclusion and Psychology Team;
- Operations Team;
- Sensory Team (within a county team).

There are some vacancies within the teams. In the first couple of weeks all staff underwent training, and there will be ongoing training during the year.

Headteachers gave some feedback around the introduction of the new structure. Of particular concern is that some EPs are saying that they no longer work with children, or will only work with one child at a time. In other cases staff are saying that they won't write up a former report for a child, as their role has changed. Clare noted that the EP role hasn't changed significantly.

It was **AGREED** that it would be helpful if the job descriptions of new roles within the service are shared with headteachers.

The SENCo cluster meetings will continue, and the agenda for the meetings should be set collaboratively by the Inclusion Partner and schools within the cluster.

Concern was expressed about the continued lack of support for the youngest children and, as a result, the increase in exclusions. Clare noted that part of the redesign is to enable work with pre-school providers, and the service is focused on 0- 25 years. There is a need to ensure that paperwork reflects this age span.

One headteacher asked how many children with EHCPs should a school be expected to support. For example, she will have 16 children with EHCPs in Year R and KS1 next September. Clare reminded the Executive that the Schools Effectiveness Partners are now involved with inclusion and they meet half termly at management meetings to discuss the pressures on schools, including around SEN.

5. TRADED SERVICES BROCHURE

Lisa Fergus explained that the Education Team and ECC teams are offering a wide range of training and services for schools and these have been set out in a service brochure. This will be published on the Essex Schools Infolink and will be distributed to schools.

6. SCHOOLS BROADBAND SERVICE UPDATE

Clare Kershaw explained that the decision to end the Essex Schools Broadband Service was made by the Cabinet, as the DUCL contract is integrated within the ECC corporate provision. The Cabinet has agreed to end the contract with schools and maintained schools will no longer pay a de-delegated amount for the service. There will be an exit fee payable for leaving the contract early, but this has been lower than anticipated.

The team (overseen by Emma Toublic) has been providing information to schools about the steps that need to be taken to decide on a new contract with an alternative provider. There were some concerns that this support has not been consistent (e.g. some difficulties with the transfer of Zone Files) but it was recognised that there has been a great deal of work to do to facilitate the transfer of all schools to new providers.

7. ESSEX PAYROLL

Clare Kershaw confirmed that the Essex Cabinet members will make a formal decision to move the Essex Payroll system to a new provider in the coming year. Schools will have the option to remain with a new provider or choose an alternative provider. A headteacher group will be established to ensure that a future service is suitable for schools.

8. SPRING TERM HEADTEACHER MEETINGS

It was agreed that feedback and lessons learnt from recent Ofsted inspections that have taken place this term would be valuable for headteachers to hear, focusing on curriculum deep dives. Other agenda items will include the SEND inspection outcome and introduction of the workforce. In addition, headteachers will be asked to input to the discussion about a future EWHMS contract.

9. DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS FOR THE 2019/20 SCHOOL YEAR

Executive meetings (Chelmsford City Football Club)

Thursday 23 January 2020

Thursday 7 May 2020

Area Heads Meetings

Autumn term 2019

N-EAST	Wednesday 13 November	Colchester Community Stadium
SOUTH	Thursday 14 November	Holiday Inn, Basildon
WEST	Wednesday 20 November	Weston Homes Business Centre, Takeley
MID	Thursday 21 November	Chelmsford City Football Club

Spring term 2020

N-EAST	Wednesday 4 March	Colchester Community Stadium
SOUTH	Thursday 5 March	Holiday Inn, Basildon
WEST	Wednesday 11 March	Weston Homes Business Centre, Takeley
MID	Thursday 12 March	Chelmsford City Football Club

Summer term 2020

N-EAST	Wednesday 10 June	Colchester Community Stadium
SOUTH	Thursday 11 June	Holiday Inn, Basildon
WEST	Wednesday 17 June	Weston Homes Business Centre, Takeley
MID	Thursday 18 June	Chelmsford City Football Club

The meeting ended at 3.10 pm
Pam Langmead, EPHA Professional Officer