

**MINUTES OF THE LA AND EPHA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
THURSDAY 28 JANUARY 2016 starting at 11.45 am**

In attendance	Representing	email address
Clare Kershaw CK	Director of Commissioning, Education and Lifelong Learning	clare.kershaw@essex.gov.uk
Graham Lancaster	Primary Improvement Commissioner NE	Graham.lancaster@essex.gov.uk
Alison Fiala	Primary Improvement Commissioner M	alison.fiala@essex.gov.uk
Maz Norman	Standards and Excellence Commissioner	maz.norman@essex.gov.uk
Nicola Woolf	Primary Improvement Commissioner W	Nicola.woolf@essex.gov.uk
Ralph Holloway	Manager of SEN, Psychology and Assessment	Ralph.holloway@essex.gov.uk
Cheryl Allard	EPHA Central Chair/Chelmsford South	head@oaklands-inf.essex.sch.uk
Lois Ashforth	EPHA Dengie	Head@coldnorton.essex.sch.uk
Dawn Baker	EPHA Mid Treasurer	headteacher@lawfordmead-jun.essex.sch.uk
Sue Bardetti	EPHA Tendring South	admin@hollandhaven.essex.sch.uk
Nicky Barrand	EPHA South Vice-Chair	htpa@cherrytree-pri.essex.sch.uk
Isobel Barron	EPHA West Vice-Chair	isobelbarron68@gmail.com
Claire Claydon	EPHA Tendring Mid	cclaydon@brightlingsea-jun.essex.sch.uk
John Clements	EPHA Uttlesford South	jhclm@hotmail.com
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Brenda Dalley	EPHA South Chair	brenda@hadleigh-inf.essex.sch.uk
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Fiona Dorey	EPHA Braintree	Head@greatbradforbs-jun.essex.sch.uk
Helen Dudley-Smith	EPHA Colchester East	headteacher@friarsgrove.essex.sch.uk
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Shelagh Harvey	EPHA Brentwood	headteacher@ingatestone.essex.sch.uk
Nigel Hookway	EPHA Executive Director	nigelhookway@hotmail.com
Ceri Jones	EPHA Mid Chair	Head@chippinghill.essex.sch.uk
Pam Langmead	EPHA Professional Officer	pam@langmead.me.uk
Lesley Lewis	EPHA West Treasurer/Epping Forest	admin@theydonbois.essex.sch.uk
Jacque Martin	EPHA Colchester South	Headteacher@langenhoe.essex.sch.uk
Kate Mills	EPHA Chelmsford North	Headteacher@barnesfarm-inf.essex.sch.uk
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Daren Partridge	EPHA Canvey Island	admin@leighbeck-jun.essex.sch.uk
Lorna Pigram	EPHA Rayleigh	head@canewdon.essex.sch.uk
Harriet Phelps-Knights	EPHA Chair	Head@janetduke.essex.sch.uk
Lorna Pigram	EPHA Rayleigh	admin@rawreth.essex.sch.uk
Angela Russell	EPHA Basildon West	angelarussell@st-anneline-inf.essex.sch.uk
Kay Wills	EPHA Harwich and Dovercourt	admin@twovillage.essex.sch.uk

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Lehla Abbott, Amanda Buckland Garnett, Rachel Callaghan, Lyn Corderoy, Nick Hutchings, Julie Lorkins, Donna Parker and Clive Reynolds.

Clare Kershaw (CK) welcomed headteachers and LA Officers to the meeting.

Action

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM EPHA EXECUTIVE MEETING

a) Insurance for LLEs and NLEs

CK confirmed that she still needs to find out who insures Local and National Leaders of Education and that she would follow this up after the meeting.

CK

b) Use of Jobscene to advertise vacancies in other Local Authorities

CK noted that she had followed this up but has not received an answer from the Workforce Development Team; she confirmed that she would follow this up to obtain a final answer.

CK

c) Encouraging parents to apply for Free School Meals

CK accepted that the current form on the ECC website did not encourage parents to apply for free school meals where their children are infants. In fact, the form states that if children are infants, there is no need for the parent to apply; this has a direct effect on the number of children eligible for the Pupil Premium Grant, with a negative impact on school budgets. CK noted that she is in the process of getting the current form changes. It was agreed that the information on the website about free school meals eligibility and the link to school funding needs to be clear and up to date, including guidance about pupils who are moving from an Infant to a Junior school.

d) Broadband attack

The recent intermittent shut down of the Schools Broadband was caused by a cyber-attack. It was **AGREED** that information should be sent to schools in the Education Essex newsletter.

e) Assessment data

Headteachers noted that the DfE is requiring schools to submit Key Stage assessment data nearly a month earlier this year. Alison Fiala reassured the Executive that the Local Authority will not be asking for the data a fortnight in advance, as has been the case for the last couple of years. (Minute 8 also refers)

3. SEN REFORM UPDATE

Ralph Holloway (RH), the newly appointed Transformation of SEN Services Manager, who is leading on the transformation of special educational needs and disability provision in the county, was welcomed to the meeting. He gave the following update on the SEND reforms.

a) SEN funding allocation

There have been a series of meetings (which include EPHA representatives) considering the potential for using SEN clusters of schools to distribute and allocate SEN top-up funding. Following a number of concerns about the complexity of such a system and the variability of SEN clusters, this approach has been modified and two pilot schemes are being considered to test a new way of working to support SEN and the allocation of funding. The pilots are intended to find out what needs to be into place for a successful delegation model in the future.

RH also noted that there are planned changes to the national IDACI and SEN funding formulas and that it is important to factor in any changes to a new model of funding. In addition, the Local Authority wants to learn from and use the good practice developed as part of a recent SEN Innovation Project.

The two pilots are being proposed by Coast2Coast, in the North East, and a group of 25

Rochford schools in the South. It has been suggested that it would also be helpful to run a pilot with a cluster of schools that is less formed or effective (perhaps with a group of rural schools) to discover what challenges such a group might face.

b) Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) hubs

Eight ASC enhanced provisions will be set up, two in each quadrant of the county, based in primary and secondary schools and supported by a special school hub. The provisions will be delivered by:

- Millwards Primary, Passmores Academy, Oak View special school – in the West
- Kelevdon Hatch Primary, Honywood School, Thriftwood special school – in Mid
- Hamford Primary, Tendring Technical College and Market Field special school – in the North east
- Merryland Primary, Bromfords School and Castledon special school – in the South

The West provision is already operational and the intention is that the other provisions will start up in September 2016.

c) Social Mental and Emotional Health (SMEH) provision

Ralph noted that around 10 enhanced provisions, each with a capacity of up to 10 pupils, are being developed and should be operational sometime next year. He accepted that there are still some areas with insufficient or no coverage, for example in the West, and he is actively looking for a school in the Uttlesford area that can host a unit.

4. PRIMARY EXCLUSIONS AND REDUCED TIMETABLES

Ralph noted that last term presented Essex with a real challenge in relation to the number of permanent exclusions being made. There has been a significant increase, particularly in primary schools and increasingly in Key Stage 1. This has a direct impact on the capacity of the GROW projects, as permanently excluded pupils are given priority in this provision due to lack of capacity in Essex PRUs.

RH noted that last school year there were 19 permanent exclusions in the primary sector, whereas there have been 22 exclusions already in the 15/16 school year. However, this is a common feature across the Eastern region; there were 70 in Norfolk LA in 2014/15!

RH noted that if a secondary school permanently excludes a pupil it pays a “fine” of £5,500. This is not applied to primary schools and the secondary sector increasingly feels that it is subsidising primary exclusions. There was a long discussion about the transfer of pupil-led funding; if a child moves as a positive referral the school has to transfer their pro-rata AWPU. However, if a child who has been excluded moves into another school mid-year they do not bring their funding with them. The EPHA Executive members felt strongly that the funding should always “follow the child” to enable the host school to provide appropriate provision.

RH explained that there may be a need to ask Schools Forum to provide more funding for Pupil Referral Units; there is already pressure on PRUs to take out of county referrals and there is insufficient capacity in the system to provide appropriate support for excluded pupils, and those who are at risk of exclusion.

Executive members noted that there it was still difficult to access IPRA (Individual Pupil Resourcing Agreement) funding. The IPRA has been introduced to allow schools to receive funding more quickly than is possible through the statutory process.

RH noted that the North East Essex Additional Provision School (NEEAPS) is at full capacity and it is required to take a child who has been permanently excluded before a

positive referral. As a result, the LA is occasionally having to provide one to one home tuition, which is very expensive.

One headteacher stressed that mainstream schools are having to cope with pupils with more and higher level complex needs, at a younger age. She argued that it is incredibly difficult to access places for special schools as often the child does not fit the “label” that would allow their admission. Schools are left to manage children with complex needs and sometimes permanent exclusion is the very last option; she also noted that Behaviour Support is not always effective in brokering an effective alternative solution for the child. RH accepted this, acknowledging that school readiness is declining and family issues are increasing.

One headteacher asked whether the LA officers work collaboratively with those in the Health service, as many children have medical needs, such as speech and language difficulties. It was suggested that early intervention funding is being diverted to pay for crisis management; RH accepted that engagement with the CCGs (Clinical Commissioning Groups) is essential. Clare Kershaw stated her belief that schools should be able to access the support they need, when they need it, which is a key reason for the SEN provision transformation. It was agreed that there is an urgent need to find out what CCGs are prepared to commit to, but it was noted that the current priority and challenge for the Health service is the care of vulnerable adults and the elderly and it is unlikely that health funding will be available to meet all of the needs of vulnerable children as well. There is also a problem that the 5 CCGs across Essex are inconsistent at the moment and, if inspected, the provision could well be judged to be inadequate.

RH explained that a recent decision by the Local Government Ombudsman had resulted in a hefty fine for ECC. The case centred on a child who had been given an “open ended” exclusion and had been out of school for 2 months with no alternative education provided. RH stressed the need for schools to discuss a part-time timetable action plan, if that is used as a short term strategy for a child. RH reminded the Executive that schools cannot rely on the “goodwill” or cooperation of parents; “informal” exclusion from school is illegal and should not be used without a clear plan in place for the child’s reinstatement or alternative provision. RH did accept that primary schools generally are good at keeping the LA informed about part time timetables and reduced provision, and that this is essential to ensure that both the school and the LA are operating within the law. There was a brief discussion about elective home education.

5. PERSPECTIVE LITE UPDATE

Nicola Woolf reported that user names and passwords had been sent out to enable schools to log in to Perspective Line, the new online platform for data and visit notes which will be used by the Standards and Excellence team from Easter. She noted that around 165 schools have logged in so far and asked those who have not received the log-in information to search their “junk” boxes or to contact Nexus support.

A headteacher questioned whether the LA one page summaries will be published on Perspective Lite, and it was noted that theoretically this will be possible. This would be welcomed by headteachers.

A headteacher noted that, although the SE team is moving over to using Perspective Lite as their information portal, EES is still asking schools to renew SSET and GSET at a cost. It was argued that there will no longer be a need to buy in to SSET to access visit notes and data and so there is probably no clear reason for schools to continue to pay for that service.

6. SCHOOL LED IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM UPDATE

20 school led improvement partnerships have now been approved and have been awarded grants of up to £25,000 and 5 partnerships are trialling a peer review system with CfBT. The Funding Review group, which determined the allocation of the grants, included representatives from the Local Authority, the Headteacher Associations (Pam Langmead represents EPHA), ESGA (Essex School Governors' Association) and the diocese. The group considered the bids in detail and gave feedback to both the successful partnerships and those who did not meeting the criteria.

As a result, a total of 362 schools are now within partnerships of some form or another:

- 254 in school improvement led partnerships
- 26 in HEP (Harlow Education Partnership)
- 32 in BEP (Basildon Excellence Panel)
- 50 in Tendring

Debbie Botham (Governor Services Manager) has contacted the lead school in each partnership to recommend how best to work with their governors. Clare Kershaw and the Area Commissioners have also met with groups of governors across the county, to ensure that they understand the value and importance of school-to-school collaboration.

Nicola reminded the Executive that the LA is working with CfBT (following a tendering process) to trial and roll out an effective peer to peer review model, whilst recognising that other P2P systems are being used by schools across the county. The Peer to Peer system involves schools grouping in threes and, following an initial review of a school, holding a follow up meeting to discuss outcomes, strengths and any support that might be needed. The CfBT model involves training Improvement Champions in schools to help facilitate these meetings.

A headteacher asked about the CfBT's academy trust work and whether there was any conflict of interest in using them to deliver the P2P system. It was noted that the Academy Trust does not have any academies in Essex and CK was adamant that their intention is not to create academies in the county.

CK reminded the Executive that the Comprehensive Spending Review in November stated that the Education Support Grant is being cut by 75% and that the Government is undertaking a review of Local Authority statutory responsibilities, with the intention of cutting these even further. Therefore, developing an alternative school improvement system that is much less dependent on Local Authority resources is critical and the School Led Improvement Partnership strategy is a key part of this.

CK noted that Essex schools' outcomes have improved, both in relation to the data and to Ofsted results, but that national expectations are raising all the time and so the LA is determined and committed to investing in schools and school improvement while it still has the means to do so.

7. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGY

Graham Lancaster explained that the LA has recognised that there are insufficient teachers in schools in Essex, in all sectors including the special schools. Therefore, the LA has established a Task and Finish Group working with the three Headteacher Associations and Sue Hammond of the National College, to roll out an effective recruitment and retention strategy. He noted that the survey conducted by EPHA at the termly headteacher meetings in November was very helpful, giving a range of views, reasons for the shortage of teachers and some possible solutions.

The Schools Forum has pledged £270,000 to fund the strategy and the LA Communications budget has funded an initial advertising campaign. This has been targeted at other Local Authorities, including neighbouring authorities, but also Local Authorities where there are a surplus of teachers such as the Midlands, using intelligence from the National College.

The Task and Finish Group will also be interrogating data in order to inform the campaign, so that there is an accurate understanding of vacancies, potential vacancies, which specialisms are particularly affected. This could inform ideas around recruitment incentives, such as providing subsidising housing for teachers in the hardest hit areas. The group has discussed the possibility of recruiting from overseas, and Sue Hammond will spend time during a trip to Adelaide to recruit teachers, as that state has a surplus of qualified teachers (at least in the secondary sector).

One Headteacher asked if it would be possible to keep track and maintain a register of teachers who were interested in coming to Essex; it was agreed that this would be a good idea.

The suggestion of creating an independent recruitment or supply agency was discussed, but it was noted that it was essential that this should be an independent broker, as existing agencies will have their own agenda.

It was noted that much of the discussion and strategy had focused on recruitment, whilst the issue of retention was just as critical. The need for a having a say in the national arena was stressed, with some changes needing to be at DfE rather than local level. For example, a headteacher noted that in Norway tax breaks are offered to those who work with hard to reach pupils, and this and other ideas could be usefully replicated in England. An observation was made that, unfortunately, Roger Pope, the Chair of the National College (in common with the DfE) is not currently prepared to accept that there is a recruitment crisis in schools.

It was suggested that partnerships of schools could work together to provide opportunities for staff movement, advancement and retention.

The EPHA Executive Director finally noted that there was a need to consider and strengthen HR support for schools, including clarity and development around recruitment and retention processes.

8. MODERATION AND ASSESSMENT 2016

EPHA has contacted Russell Hobby, (General Secretary of the NAHT) expressing concerns about the requirement to submit KS2 assessments on the 27th May. This is a month earlier than in previous years, and headteachers are concerned that, as a result, assessments will be more cautious and therefore results will appear to be lower than in previous years.

Alison Fiala (AF) explained that Jacky Castle will publish an article on Education Essex in the week commencing 1st February, setting out the timeline for the submission of assessment data to the DfE. She noted that the Key Stage 2 writing assessments must be submitted on 27 May. The Local Authority will not ask for data to be submitted earlier than this date.

Moderation will now take place after the assessment data has been submitted and the STA (Standards and Testing Agency) will select 25% of schools to be moderated.

Moderation will take place between the 9th and 24th June. It was accepted that everyone

is struggling with the interim assessment frameworks and the need to understand and meet the “I can” statements.

AF noted that if a school is moderated and the LA moderator agrees with their assessments, then that will be accepted. However, if there is a disagreement, it is likely that there will be an appeals process, although it is not yet known how meaningful this will be. The LA is keen to work with schools and is happy to train additional moderators, to ensure that as many staff as possible are familiar with the expectations. The training is likely to take place in March and there was a discussion about the potential numbers that could be trained; a suggestion was made that training could accommodate a couple of teachers from each Key Stage across a cluster of schools.

The final submission date for Key Stage 1 assessments in all subjects is 13th June 2016.

CK stated her intention to write to headteachers acknowledging the significant changes and resulting disruption this year, and alerting governors to ensure that they understand the potential impact on results. She also confirmed that the LA will take a pragmatic view on outcomes, helping to support Year 2 and Year 6 teachers in particular.

9. PARENTAL COMPLAINTS

Graham Lancaster reported that there have been an increased number of complaints from parents to Ofsted this school year, mostly allegations focused on safeguarding or how a school is managing bullying. Whilst the vast majority of these complaints are investigated and closed satisfactorily, they are taking up a great deal of time, particularly affecting Jo Barclay (Schools Safeguarding Adviser) and the Area Commissioners.

Graham confirmed that a complaint to Ofsted won't automatically trigger an inspection and generally there needs to be a significant number of complaints to do so.

The Local Authority will always give out the message that parents should follow the school's complaints procedures; the headteachers were reminded that the DfE has recently published new guidance: Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures January 2016, and schools should ensure that their existing complaints policy reflects this guidance. The EPHA Professional Officer agreed to update and circulate a “Concerns” leaflet that schools can use to inform parents.

EPHA
Professional
Officer

It was **AGREED** that it would be useful for Governor training to include guidance on handling complaints in schools and how they should be investigated (particularly when the Chair of Governors is involved in investigating a complaint about the headteacher).

CK

10. SPRING TERM AREA HEADTEACHER MEETINGS

The agenda included a number of suggestions for the termly area meetings and the following were agreed:

- information about Early Years changes and initiatives
- implications of the Education and Adoption Bill
- Ofsted lessons learned.

The EPHA Executive stated that it did not feel that it was necessary to provide a Headlines briefing paper this term, although the message to schools to ensure that they read the weekly Education Essex bulletin should be stressed once again.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

On behalf of the EPHA Executive, the Chair of EPHA congratulated Clare Kershaw on her appointment as substantive Director of Commissioning, Education and Lifelong Learning. Harriet stressed that EPHA appreciates the cooperative and productive working relationship that Clare has developed with primary headteachers and the EPHA Executive and officers.

12. DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE SCHOOL YEAR 2015/16

Executive meetings (Chelmsford City Football Club)
Thursday 5 May 2016

Area Heads Meetings

Spring term 2016

SOUTH	Wednesday 24 February	Holiday Inn, Basildon
N-EAST	Thursday 25 February	Weston Homes Community Stadium
WEST	Wednesday 2 March	Weston Homes Business Centre, Takeley
MID	Thursday 3 March	Chelmsford City Football Club

Summer term 2016

N-EAST	Wednesday 8 June	Weston Homes Community Stadium
SOUTH	Thursday 9 June	Holiday Inn, Basildon
WEST	Wednesday 15 June	Weston Homes Business Centre, Takeley
MID	Thursday 16 June	Chelmsford City Football Club

The meeting ended at 3.05 pm

Pam Langmead, EPHA Professional Officer