

ESSEX PRIMARY HEADTEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

**MINUTES OF THE EPHA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY
18 JANUARY 2024 at 9.15 am – 12.00 noon at The Lion Inn, Boreham**

Distribution

*Sue Bardetti	Tendring South
*Isobel Barron	West Chair
Liz Bartholomew	Harwich and Dovercourt
*Dale Bateman	Epping Forest Rural
*Liz Benjeddi	Billericay
*Heidi Blakeley	Wickford
*Julie Braithwaite	Basildon West
*Amanda Buckland-Garnett	South Woodham Ferrers
*Luke Bulpett	South treasurer
*Dida Burrell	Braintree/Mid quadrant partnership lead
*Sue Clarke	Rochford
*Anna Conley	Witham
Matt Curzon	Uttlesford South
*Dawn Dack	Mid Chair/Maldon
*Paula Derwin	Colchester East
*Sandra Dorrington	Canvey Island
Mary Evans	Harlow
*Richard Green	South Vice-Chair
*Mary Jo Hall	West Treasurer/Uttlesford North
Bridget Harris	North East Treasurer
*Nick Hutchings	EPHA Vice-Chair/North East Chair/ Colchester West
*Clare James	Dengie
*Chris Jarman	West Vice-Chair
*Becky Keitch	Tendring North
*Pam Langmead	EPHA Professional Officer/County Treasurer
Ian MacDonald	Tendring Mid
Diana Mason	Castle Point and Benfleet
*Richard McIntosh	Chelmsford South
James Newell	Tendring North
*Jinnie Nichols	Halstead
*Matt O'Grady	Brentwood
Katherine Parker	South quadrant partnership lead
*Nicky Patrick	North East quadrant partnership lead
*Richard Potter	North East Vice-Chair
*Harriet Phelps-Knights	EPHA Chair
*Colin Raraty	West quadrant partnership lead
*Amanda Reid	Mid Vice-Chair/Chelmsford North
*Gary Soars	Rayleigh
*Nicky Stone-Riley	South Chair/Basildon East & Pitsea
Joanne Willcox	Epping Forest South
Vacancy	Chelmsford West

Also in attendance

Emily Welton	ESSET
Carole Herman	ASHE

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Action

Harriet Phelps-Knights, the EPHA Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting. New colleagues on the EPHA Executive include:

- Sue Clarke representing headteachers in Rochford
- Ian Kendal substituted for Mary Evans, representing Harlow.

Apologies were received from:

- Liz Bartholomew Harwich and Dovercourt
- Matt Curzon Uttlesford South
- Mary Evans Harlow
- Diana Mason Castle Point and Benfleet
- James Newell Tendring North
- Joanne Willcox Epping Forest South

Sarah Stevenson, who represented the Tiptree and Stanway Consortium has stepped down from the Executive as her school is no longer in the group. Kerry Malcolm **AGREED** to discuss the vacancy with the other headteachers in the partnership.

Kerry Malcolm

There is a vacancy for Chelmsford West, following Dawn Baker's retirement. Headteachers were asked to consider her replacement, and the Professional Officer will follow up with the group.

Professional Officer

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Executive meeting held on 5 October 2023 were confirmed as an accurate record. There were no matters arising.

3. EPHA REPRESENTATION ON GROUPS AND COMMITTEES

i) EPHA Chair's report

Harriet Phelps-Knights, EPHA Chair, gave the following report to the Executive. *Welcome to everyone and thank you for the time that you have given up today to attend this Executive meeting. I appreciate that this term has started with high levels of stress for school leaders and although this meeting is important for strategic decisions to be made and our views put to the local authority this afternoon, it is also an ideal time to have a bit of catch up with colleagues and have that added support from each other at this time.*

Several members have said today that they have been counting down the days to today's meeting and have been looking forward to getting out of school. Please use this meeting for yourself, as well as presenting your views and those views of colleagues from your areas, in order to have a bit of time to focus on your mental health and wellbeing as well. As ever thank you for all you do to support the schools in Essex and

we all know the education landscape is getting harder every year and you do a fantastic job to ensure school leaders have the support they need.

Harriet noted that she and several other Executive members had attended the Schools Forum meeting on 10th January. The focus of the meeting was to explain the Dedicated Schools Grant settlement for Essex this coming financial year. The main increase in funding, nationally, is to support the new childcare offer for 2 year olds, and children aged 9 months to 2 years. Headteachers were reminded about the falling rolls fund which is available if schools meet certain criteria.

ii) Small Schools Support Group

Jinnie Nichols, Chair of the Small Schools Support Group, noted that the next meeting was scheduled for Monday 22nd January. Yannick Stupples-Whyley, ECC Senior Finance Manager, will attend the meeting to explain the Dedicated Schools Budget settlement for 2024/25.

EPHA has also established a Small School Governors' Network, which will meet online half termly to share good practice and ideas. The next meeting is on Tuesday 12th March at 8.30 am and will focus on Effective Meetings.

Jinnie noted that since the last EPHA Executive meeting the Small Schools headteachers enjoyed their annual conference, which included a number of excellent speakers including Helen Youngman and Dolly Slateman.

iii) Professional Officer report

The report gave details of the meetings attended by Pam Langmead on behalf of EPHA. In addition to the attendance at meetings (and writing follow up reports), her work for EPHA has included:

- Information, emails and communications with all headteachers;
- Advice to headteachers, particularly in relation to complaints, exclusions, and where to access support for a range of issues;
- 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;
- Briefings to headteacher groups – 28 partnerships/clusters hold termly briefings – researching and writing briefing notes and presentations –and keeping them up to date as new directives, guidance and documents are introduced;
- Managing the Small Schools Support Group, running those meetings, planning October conference;
- Establishing the Small Schools Governor group and organising future meetings;
- Writing and delivering training to governors, focused on exclusions and managing complaints;
- Planning and organising Deputy headteacher conference and WEPHA conference;
- Planning 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.

The EPHA Executive discussed the training offer that the Professional Officer has provided for governors and headteachers, and it was felt that it would be helpful to offer training for clerks to ensure that they are confident and informed about clerking exclusions meetings and other specialist meetings, such as hearing complaints. It was **AGREED** that the Professional Officer will run a training course, both online and in-person to support clerks, later in the term.

Professional
Officer

The EPHA Professional Officer was thanked for the amount of work that she does for the Association.

4. MATTERS TO TAKE FORWARD AT THE MEETING WITH LOCAL AUTHORITY OFFICERS

The EPHA Chair noted that there were a number of issues raised at the meeting with LA Officers on 5th October, that the Executive had asked Clare Kershaw to take forward. In addition, there were other matters that Executive members wished to discuss with the LA, including:

a) Landlord consent

Headteachers had asked Clare Kershaw to follow up the issue of landlord consent and, in particular, the amount of time it takes to obtain permission for projects.

b) Essex School Meals Advisory Service

The Executive agreed to ask for an update on the viability of the Essex School Meals Advisory Service, following the recent notification that the service cost was going to rise significantly. The EPHA Chair noted that we have asked the Local Authority to consider a slimmed down, cheaper alternative offer, focusing on compliance with food standards, nutritional requirements, health and safety and so on.

It was noted that alternative school meals advisory services are available and a number of headteacher recommended LBA Safety Schools Support
<https://www.lbasafety.co.uk/school-support/>

However, it was agreed that it would be helpful if the Essex Schools Meals Advisory Service was able to continue, to avoid the need for a transition for schools to a new service, or none at all.

c) School improvement traded services

Executive members expressed concern that other Local Authority services, such as the

school improvement traded services, could be at risk in future, causing disruption to Essex schools. It was **AGREED** that this would be raised with the Local Authority officers.

d) Payroll and Pension Contributions

It was noted that Juniper payroll continues to make a number of mistakes, particularly in relation to recording pension contributions. However, a number of issues is because incorrect or insufficient information was transferred from Essex Payroll to Juniper, and it was **AGREED** that this would be raised with Clare Kershaw later in the day.

e) Safeguarding forum

The EPHA Executive discussed the safeguarding forum which is held in person in each of the four quadrants. It was argued that it would be very helpful to headteachers and DSL teams if at least one meeting a term was held online and recorded, so that it was accessible to all DSLs. The Professional Officer confirmed that this had been raised with her a number of times. It was **AGREED** that this would be raised with Jo Barclay at the meeting with LA Officers later in the day.

f) Funding in schools

Dida Burrell noted that the Braintree headteachers had discussed the current funding pressures on schools, and one headteacher had noted that he is having to restructure and make support staff redundant.

g) SEND communication and support

EPHA Executive members expressed their continuing concerns about the lack of pace and helpful support from the Local Authority in relation to SEND. It was agreed that each year there seem to be an increase in the number of children with complex needs, they are younger, and external support and funding is harder to access.

Part of the Essex SEND Sufficiency Plan involves an expansion of GROW provision, but it was noted that existing provisions are not full, partly due to the complexity of the panel system that determines which children should access places.

The Tiptree and Stanway Consortium have recently employed Garry Freeman, SEND Consultant, to discuss the legal rights and responsibilities in relation to SEND provision and needs assessments. There was a discussion about the information that schools are asked to provide when submitting a needs assessment; one headteacher noted that this has been challenged by a SEND Tribunal panel.

A number of headteachers have contacted their MPs to inform them about the challenges that schools face in relation to SEND; Alex Burghart (Brentwood) and Robert Halfon (Harlow) have both met with heads to discuss the issue. Ian Kendal agreed to share a letter that he has sent to Robert Halfon. It was agreed that it was essential to raise the issue nationally, as well as in the local authority, as this is a nationwide problem.

A number of headteachers noted their frustration about poor communication from SENDOps; many heads that the team fails to answer calls and often don't communicate progress and timeframes. It was **AGREED** that these issues should be raised at the

meeting with LA Officers later in the day.

5. ESSET OUTREACH PROPOSAL

Emily Welton, ESSET Professional Officer, was welcomed to the meeting. She last attended the EPHA Executive meeting in October, to give progress on the rollout of the ESSET outreach plan to give support to mainstream schools.

Emily reported that, since then, the following progress has been made:

- Formal presentation of the outreach offer to the LA
- Funding agreed by Schools Forum - £2 million for outreach provision in 2024/25 shared by ESSET outreach and PRU outreach
- Emily met with Strategic Leads (Clare Kershaw, Ralph Holloway, Assistant Directors) on 4th December to discuss the proposal. The proposal now has the support of the LA.

A meeting with Ralph Holloway has been diarised for 22nd January, but this has been postponed.

No funding has yet been received which is slowing the next steps. It was suggested that ESSET should invoice the Local Authority.

Emily explained that preliminary discussions suggest that the access to outreach is managed by the Special Schools Admissions Panels, but these are only working in Mid and North East. The proposal does include the employment of four quadrant coordinators, but they cannot be hired until ESSET receives the funding.

There was a discussion about identifying best practice across the county. Emily noted that she had undertaken a provision mapping exercise, but that this has not been shared by the LA. Dan Gee is undertaking a review of Enhanced Provisions. However, not all headteachers of Enhanced Provisions have been contacted at this stage.

It was noted that special schools in North East have started outreach with 13 primary schools; parental consent is needed to access this support.

Emily noted that the Local Authority now needs to determine Service Level Agreements and the criteria to access support. She asked for a volunteer from each quadrant to form a small working party, to consider what schools need from an outreach offer. The following headteachers agreed to volunteer:

- Heidi Blakeley (South)
- Jinnie Nichols (Mid)
- Nicky Patrick (North East)
- Colin Raraty (West)

Emily **AGREED** to contact the group to set up a meeting.

6. YEAR 6 – 7 TRANSITION

Carole Herman, Executive Director of ASHE, was welcomed to the meeting. She reiterated that all headteachers in primary and secondary schools want a smooth and effective transition of Year 6 pupils into Year 7. She felt that, as a partnership, EPHA and

ASHE had achieved a lot last year to introduce a more consistent and streamlined approach across the authority. She has met with secondary headteachers and they have suggested a couple of tweaks to the agreed process, following its rollout last year.

A draft template, with a number of additions proposed by ASHE, was shared in advance of the meeting.

Surname (First Name) <i>To be completed by the secondary school.</i>	SEN Status	CP	FS M	PP	Interactions		Academic data via teacher assessment/predicted KS2 levels			Further information on student
	SEN (Y/N - type) EHCP in place or in process (Y/N)	CP file Y/N	FSM	PP	Relationships with peers	Relationships with adults	Reading Age	KS2 Eng	KS2 Math	Please indicate for each student if a follow-up conversation is needed on any of the following issues:
										<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding • Attendance • Additional learning needs or access requirements • Medical need • Wellbeing or social issues • Outside agency input or intervention • Behaviour issues • Family background
										Issue: Student requires additional conversation - Yes / No Issue:

The additional columns that ASHE has proposed were:

- To ask for information about free schools meals and eligibility for Pupil Premium, so that secondary schools can make appropriate arrangements, for the transition week and into September.
- More information about the type of SEN, where relevant, and whether or not an EHCP was in place or being sought.
- The suggested list for further discussion was also extended.

These changes were **AGREED** by the EPHA Executive.

Secondary headteachers have asked if the columns asking for information about “interactions” with peers and adults could be reinstated. EPHA has had reservations about including this information as is it largely subjective, and may be challenged by parents at a later date. After discussion, it was **AGREED** that the columns would be included, but primary schools heads would be advised that if they prefer not to include written information about interactions they could simply note that these need to be discussed with the secondary, if relevant.

The timeframe for circulation and completion of the form was **AGREED**: the form should be sent out by secondary schools at the beginning of the summer term, and the completed forms returned by the summer half term.

Secondary schools may use an electronic form to gather the information, but these should not include any questions than those on the transition form agreed by EPHA and ASHE.

It was noted that the transition week for school visits will always be in the last full week of June (this year the week commencing 24th June) and primary schools are asked to keep this week clear of residentials and school trips involving Year 6 children.

It was noted that for the time being Harlow schools continue to use a different transition form, but there will be a discussion about this at a later date. They do hold their transition visits in the last week of June.

7. FINANCE REPORT

Current account income and expenditure 21.09.23 – 07.12.23

	Expenditure	Income
Miscellaneous	£3,792.01	£9,014.24
DSG		
Subscriptions		
Supply	£2,320.00	
Travel & mileage	£301.76	
Professional Officer	£23,057.28	
Meetings	£13,965.84	
Colleague Support	£4,505.61	
Headteacher wellbeing	£1,382.63	
EPHA Chair supply cover	£1,810.00	
EPHA Chair reimbursement	£3,762.15	
Transfer to conference account	£20,000.00	
Totals	£74,897.28	£9,014.24

The Professional Officer expenditure for September – December 2023 is broken down into

- *professional fees* £20,722.00
 - *mileage* £810.00
 - *expenses paid on behalf of EPHA* £1,525.28
- £23,057.28**

£8,941.24 of the miscellaneous income was the subsidy for the Small Schools conference, paid by the Essex Task Force. This will be transferred to the conference account.

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.

Bank statements for account 00795978

14.09.23	£232,474.61
13.12.22	£165,083.76

Conference account Income and Expenditure 06.09.23– 22.12.23

	Expenditure	Income
Deputy conference 2023	£31,613.92	£7,200.00
Headteacher conference 2024	£5,925.00	
WEPHA conference September 2023	£1,780.00	£1,300.00
Training events and miscellaneous	£8,168.24	£20,250.00
Totals	£47,487.16	£28,750.00

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. Income includes a £20,000 contribution from the current account.

Bank statements for account 00795978

24.09.22	£31,518.67
28.12.22	£6,831.04

8. ATTENDANCE

It was noted that current attendance in schools has not recovered to pre-pandemic levels and it is a particular concern for the DfE.

Anita Patel-Lingam is the ECC Attendance Compliance Team Manager and works very cooperatively with schools.

It was **AGREED** that it would be helpful to have a discussion with ASHE (the Secondary Heads' Association) to encourage consistent responses when parents make requests for term time holiday. The Professional Officer will discuss this with Carole Herman, and invite her to the next EPHA Executive meeting.

Professional
Officer

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A headteacher asked if EPHA planned to respond to the recommendations being made by the DfE Workload reduction taskforce. A consultation has not yet been announced, but it was agreed that this could be discussed at the termly headteacher meetings, if time on the agenda permits.

One headteacher asked if EPHA was planning to engage with the new Ofsted leadership team. It was agreed that this will be considered, but that it is a challenge to get inspectors involved in discussions of policy and direction.

10. DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS FOR THE 2023/24/5 SCHOOL YEAR

Executive meetings (The Lion Inn, Boreham)

Thursday 9th May 2024

Thursday 3rd October 2024 (to include the EPHA AGM first thing)

Thursday 23rd January 2025

Thursday 8th May 2025

Area Heads Meetings

Termly headteacher meetings

Spring term 2024

WEST	Wednesday 28 February	Manor of Groves, Sawbridgeworth
SOUTH	Thursday 29 February	Greenwoods Hotel, Stock
N-EAST	Wednesday 6 March	Colchester Community Stadium
MID	Thursday 7 March	The Lion Inn, Boreham

Summer term 2024

WEST	Wednesday 12 June	Manor of Groves, Sawbridgeworth
SOUTH	Thursday 13 June	Greenwoods Hotel, Stock
N-EAST	Wednesday 19 June	Colchester Community Stadium
MID	Thursday 20 June	The Lion Inn, Boreham

Conferences

Headteachers' Conference

Friday 22 March 2024 Chelmsford City Race Course

Deputy Headteachers' Conference

Friday 11 October 2024 Weston Community Homes Stadium

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Harriet Phelps-Knights

Chair of EPHA

Pam Langmead

EPHA Professional Officer