

ESSEX PRIMARY HEADTEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

**MINUTES OF THE EPHA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY
24 MAY 2023 at 9.00 am – 11.30 am at The Lion Inn, Boreham**

Membership

*Dawn Baker	Chelmsford West/Mid Treasurer
*Sue Bardetti	Tendring South
*Isobel Barron	West Chair
*Liz Bartholomew	Harwich and Dovercourt
*Dale Bateman	Epping Forest Rural
*Liz Benjeddi	Billericay
*Heidi Blakeley	Wickford
*Amanda Buckland-Garnett	South Woodham Ferrers
*Luke Bulpett	South treasurer
*Dida Burrell	Braintree
*Anna Conley	Witham
Matt Curzon	Uttlesford South
*Dawn Dack	Mid Chair/Maldon
Ceri Daniels	Colchester South (Tiptree & Stanway)
*Paula Derwin	Colchester East
*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 Jarmain	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
Hayley O'Dea	Rochford
*Matt O'Grady	Brentwood
*Richard Potter	North East Vice-Chair
*Harriet Phelps-Knights	EPHA Chair
*Amanda Reid	Mid Vice-Chair/Chelmsford North
*Gary Soars	Rayleigh
*Sarah Stevenson	Colchester South (Tiptree & Stanway)
*Nicky Stone-Riley	South Chair/Basildon East & Pitsea
*Karen Tucker	Canvey Island
Jonathan Tye	Harlow
*Joanne Willcox	Epping Forest South
Vacancy	Basildon West

Also in attendance

Sue Clarke	Substituting for Harlow representative
Mary Evans	Substituting for Rochford representative

Dawn Temme
Andrew Lowing

ECC Equalities and Partnership Team
ECC Equalities and Partnership Team

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Action

Harriet Phelps-Knights, the EPHA Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting. She noted that Karen Tucker, representative for Canvey Island, is leaving headship at the end of term and this will be her last Executive meeting. She was thanked for her contribution and commitment to EPHA over several years, and for representing her colleagues. Her vacancy will be addressed at the South area AGM in June.

In addition, there is a vacancy for the representative for Basildon West, following Angela Russell's retirement at the end of the autumn term. This will also be addressed in June.

Professional
Officer

Apologies were received from:

- Matt Curzon Uttlesford South
- Ceri Daniels Colchester South (Tiptree & Stanway)
- Chris Jarman West Vice-Chair
- James Newell Tendring North
- Hayley O'Dea Rochford

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Executive meeting held on 19 January 2023 were confirmed as an accurate record.

Year 6 – 7 transition arrangements (Minute 8 refers)

The Executive members discussed the experience, so far, of the year 6 – 7 transition arrangements agreed with ASHE. The Professional Officer noted that, county-wide, most secondary schools were sticking to the agreed week for transition visits, i.e. the last week in June. There was a more mixed picture in terms of the use of the agreed transition form, and also when requests for information have been sent by secondary schools. It has been clear that in some cases the agreed arrangements have not been communicated to the Year 7 transition leads, or they have decided to use a different or amended form.

Feedback from EPHA representatives included the following:

Secondary schools that have kept to the agreed arrangements include the following:

Castle View, Cornelius, King John's, William de Ferrers, The Plume, Ormiston, Chelmsford secondaries.

Philip Morant and Tendring College sent totally different forms, and the latter arranged the Year 6 visits for a week in July. The Colchester grammar schools also used different forms, and Stanway Schools asked for the information in March, before primaries could share any useful information.

It was understood that secondary schools do need to plan timetables well in advance of the autumn term, but there is still an issue that some pupils do not go to the secondary school that is listed, and primaries are being asked to share information about children who may go to an alternative school, giving rise to concerns about confidentiality and GDPR.

It was **AGREED** that Carole Herman will be invited to the EPHA Executive meeting on 5th October to review the transition agreement, with a view to ensuring it is more consistent next year. However, it was generally agreed that this is a welcome development contributing to better partnership between primary and secondary schools.

3. EPHA REPRESENTATION ON GROUPS AND COMMITTEES

EPHA Chair's report

Harriet Phelps-Knights, the EPHA Chair gave the following report to the Executive, following a number of meetings that she has attended on behalf of primary headteachers.

i) Schools Forum

There were two key areas of focus at the last Schools Forum meeting held on 17th May: maintained school and academy balances, and SEND top-up funding. It was reported that there is a surplus in school/academy balances of £176.9m, an increase of £12.15m. (It was noted that the academy balances are from last July, so better information will be available after their financial year ending July 2023.)

The Local Authority understands that schools do need a surplus and that setting a 3-5 year budget is extremely challenging, but they explained that it is hard to argue with the DfE about school funding when balances are high. As result, Schools Forum has decided to survey those schools whose balances are above 30% to find out the reasons for such a high carry forward. It was stressed that this action doesn't imply any criticism or judgement, and there is no intention to claw back any excess balances from schools; it is simply to give the Schools Forum a better understanding of how school funds are being used and what is being planned to make use of those funds.

It was agreed that schools should be told that they will be contacted if their balances are over 30% and that an explanation of the survey should be communicated. There was a discussion about whether this should come from EPHA or the Local Authority; Clare Kershaw was keen to stress that this was a Schools Forum directive, but accepted that the survey will be conducted by the LA finance team. It was **AGREED** that this should be clarified with Clare at the meeting with LA Officers later in the day.

ii) Education Taskforce

Harriet reminded the Executive members that she is the primary representative on the Essex Education Taskforce.

The Year of Reading has had a positive impact, particularly due to the reading initiatives and training that has been introduced, including the Herts for Learning programme, Think Reading, every child having a library card, Deputy Lord Lieutenants coming into

school to read with children and so on. There was a discussion about what evidence there is to show positive impact; a number of headteachers whose schools had introduced the Herts for Learning reading programme noted that there were significant improvements, but that it was hard to sustain the number of trained adults needed to continue the initiative successfully.

The next focus in Essex will be the **Year of Numbers – Everyone Counts**

This was launched on 17th May with some good speakers and advocates for what Essex is trying to achieve. Roy Blatchford the independent chair was hoping to come to talk to the EPHA Executive but he was double booked.

There are 4 pillars to the Year of Number

- Numeracy and Maths Skills – 4 seconded teachers with a focus on developing CPD for staff across Essex schools (Number stacks training/ Maths through picture books training.) The outcome is to improve staff confidence with improved outcomes as a longer term goal, narrowing the disadvantaged attainment gap.

The Executive members discussed the challenge of teacher retention and the need to develop a train the trainer model. Also the use of video and recordings of training, so that it is sustainable in schools; it was noted that the Maths Hubs use this model. One headteacher noted that the Year of Reading online directory had been useful and it was suggested that something similar should be developed for the Year of Number.

- Maths populism – making maths exciting – this might include installations such as giant dice in town centres, Lego puzzle sessions, social media campaign. The intended outcome is to improve positive view of numbers and maths, getting communities involved.

Within this pillar there is mention of micro-grants; the Executive argued that installations etc. were a potential waste of money and that families that need support won't engage with this type of activity; there was a strong view that schools should be offered funding to run clubs and groups, and other maths activities, which would have a much greater impact.

- Numeracy, maths and industry – what skills are employers looking for and how to promote a positive view of numbers and maths in all schools. Competitions, co-created projects, Microsoft project, Ministry of Defence Project (RAF STEM). The Executive questioned the link with coding, asking how this was relevant to maths development. There was also a question about which schools would be chosen to be part of these projects.

- Parents – developing parent maths skills through various projects including a multiply project, count with baby sessions, talk listen count sessions, summer maths challenge, something similar to the YoR app content.

One headteacher said that the funding should be diverted to support SureStart centres, which are sorely missed as this supported families effectively and offered help for early education. It was argued that this was the key pillar,

perhaps the most important to engage a social change. It was suggested by some that all of the funding should be focused on this pillar only to help break the cycle of inactive parents and education poverty.

Harriet asked the Executive for other ideas and where they would like to see investment in the primary sector for the year of numbers?

It was agreed that it was good to have early years involved, and the Summer maths challenge was seen as a positive; this is usually focused on reading, and would be effective for pupil learning.

The Executive asked about the engagement of the Maths Hubs and how are teaching schools going to be involved? It was noted that Natalie Banthorpe is one of the four seconded teachers, and she works within a Maths Hub.

It was agreed that schools need to be introduced to the Year of Numbers this term, as the Year of Reading was slow to be introduced. It was agreed that a section of the area meetings in June should focus on the project. There needs to be a greater understanding of the engagement and funding of the Teaching and Maths Hubs.

Some of the Executive headteachers felt that the focus on maths didn't reflect the real challenge of staff retention in schools, which is much more around managing special educational needs and coping with challenging children.

It was suggested that it would be helpful to provide funding that schools, or partnerships, could bid for, to develop maths projects.

Finally the Executive asked about the impact of the use of the wellbeing fund, which is one of the Taskforce strands.

iii) Small School Support Group

Jinnie Nichols, Chair of the Small Schools Support Group, noted that the last meeting was held on 10th May 2023, and Clare Kershaw, Director of Education, attended the meeting to discuss the Local Authority's strategy and support for small schools. Jinnie felt that Clare spoke very genuinely and stressed a renewed focus on small schools, recognising that there are increasingly vulnerable. She considered a review of funding accessibility within federations, and noted the impact of high numbers of pupils with SEND and displaced children in small schools. Clare promised a recalibration of notional funding in schools that have a disproportionate percentage of children with SEN. Jinnie had also argued that schools should know in advance any additional funding, such as top up funding, that they might receive in order to plan budgets more effectively.

There was good attendance at the meeting, which reflects the concern that small school headteachers have about the future of their schools.

The minutes of the meeting are available on the EPHA website at <https://essexprimaryheads.co.uk/files/epha-small-schools-group-minutes-10-05-23.pdf>

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;
- 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;
- Writing and delivering training to governors, focused on exclusions;
- 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 recent governor training sessions focusing on suspensions and permanent exclusions have been well attended and received; around 250 governors have accessed the training so far. The Professional Officer will run a further session on 11th July, and two courses focused on managing complaints, on Tuesday 27th June and Wednesday 5th July.

iv) Suffolk and Eastern Region Associations' survey and report

Matt O'Grady and Richard Potter attended the meeting with Rebecca Leak and Andrew Berry, from the Suffolk Heads' Association, to discuss the development of a survey about Ofsted inspection, particularly following the tragic death of Ruth Perry. They are keen to feedback concerns from headteachers in the Eastern region, with the aim of enacting change. Matt and Richard noted that the approach in the meeting was somewhat militant, but that the resulting survey was balanced. 528 heads and school leaders across the Eastern region completed the survey, many from Essex. The report has now been published and reflects the strength of feeling about the inconsistency and challenge of Ofsted inspection. A particular concern was raised about how inappropriate the framework is for small schools, and primary schools in general; it is

felt that much of the inspection process assumes a secondary bias, particularly when undertaking deep dives of subjects.

The Suffolk Association is planning a follow up article in Schools Week and the Professional Officer noted that there may be some attention from the press. Although a number of headteachers said that they would be willing to talk to the press, it was agreed that, if approached, EPHA should provide a statement. This should include EPHA's concerns that the headteacher, as an individual, is particularly vulnerable if an Ofsted inspection goes badly. Mary Evans noted that the NEU is considering the strengths and weaknesses of Ofsted inspection, and noted that Harlow headteachers recently sent a report to Dame Alison Peacock who is part of a Commission looking at the strengths and weaknesses of the current OFSTED Inspection system; this highlighted their recent experiences of inspection, including inconsistencies and a significant number of failures by inspectors to adhere to the framework.

The Professional Officer noted a recent survey conducted by Headspace that considers stress in the workplace. The Headspace [2023 Workforce Attitudes Toward Mental Health report](#) finds that the British population overwhelmingly deems education to be the most stressful career path, with a staggering 93% of those in the profession feeling stressed at least once a week.
<https://schoolsweek.co.uk/how-stressed-are-teachers-compared-with-other-professions/>

4. EQUALITIES SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

Dawn Temme and Andrew Lowing were welcomed to the meeting. They are part of the ECC Equalities team with a remit of encouraging equality and diversity, as well as levelling up opportunities for Essex citizens. Andrew's role is particularly focused on equalities compliance and impact assessment, and the team are involved with partnership working with faith based organisations and community engagement.

They explained that they work closely with a number of partnership agencies, including the police and health, but have not focused on schools; they are keen to strengthen the link with education and find out the priorities for schools, harness expertise around equalities and explore potential platforms for information and resources.

Headteachers noted that they are missing support for children with English as Additional Language; effective support used to be offered by Peta Ullman and Prue Barnes, but this has now been disbanded. There was a resource hub, but schools are now lacking interpreters as well as advice and guidance, despite the increasing number of non-English speaking children and families in Essex schools.

It was noted that the remit of the ECC team seems to be wide, covering diversity, equality, levelling up and services; schools are mainly concerned with practical and operational issues, such as teachers needing to navigate equalities issues. It is important that governors understand their responsibilities in relation to equality.

One headteacher noted that schools often have to source private advice in relation to diversity, LGBTQ, gender, EAL and so on, as the only Essex support is for specific disabilities such as hearing or visually impaired children.

The DfE is due to publish more guidance for schools in relation to diversity and gender reassignment in particular, and it was felt that an Essex approach would be helpful.

One headteacher asked for a “one-page wonder” guide in relation to equality and the responsibilities for schools.

Dawn and Andrew were asked if their team was talking to children and young people, in particular about their experience of accessing social media and the messages – often toxic - that are given around equality and diversity.

The Executive agreed to continue the conversation with Dawn and Andrew, to ensure that appropriate support and resources can be developed for schools.

5. FINANCE REPORT

a) Current account income and expenditure 01.01.23 - 20.04.23

	Expenditure	Income	Notes
DSG		£0.00	
Subscriptions		£0.00	
Miscellaneous	£42,812.96		<i>Includes £40k transfer to conference account</i>
Supply	£4,943.00		
Travel & mileage expenses	£2,497.07		<i>Includes EPHA Chair</i>
Professional Officer	£23,244.13		
Meetings	£12,675.55		<i>Venues and presenters</i>
Colleague Supporter	£6,363.50		<i>Includes capacity support</i>
Headteacher wellbeing programmes	£4,356.55		<i>Subsidy for wellbeing</i>
Totals	£96,892.76	£0.00	

The Professional Officer expenditure for January 2023 – March 2023 is broken down into

- *professional fees* £20,653.50
 - *mileage* £727.65
 - *expenses paid on behalf of EPHA* £984.84
- £23,244.13**

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. Expenses also includes payments for accommodation, taxis for presenters paid by PO and reimbursed.

We are waiting for a payment from ECC for the annual de-delegated funding - £320 per school/academy –around £149,000.

Bank statements for account 00795978

16.12.22	£255,758.57
13.04.23	£153,140.99

b) Conference account Income and Expenditure 01.01.23 – 31.03.23

	Expenditure	Income
Deputy conference 2022		£900.00
Headteacher conference 2023	£30,990.06	£16,800.00
WEPHA conference January 2023	£2,821.00	£1,312.00
Training events and other	£17,287.48	£40,400.00
Totals	£51,098.54	£59,412.00

Although we have resumed charging for conferences, we are offering more free training, such as the sessions with Tanya Callman. Therefore there continues to be a significant reduction in the balance of the conference account and I have transferred £40,000 from the main account to subsidise the conference account.

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 headteacher conference was held in-person, and so there was a charge per delegate. There are still payments for places at the conference outstanding, which I am chasing.

Bank statements for account 17215168

28.12.22	£19,911.04
31.03.23	£29,641.03

The Professional Officer noted that EPHA's expenditure has increased significantly this year, particularly in three areas:

- There has been a significant outlay on conference presenters; this can be managed and reduced if necessary;
- The Association is running free training for headteachers and this can be expensive; the recent training on suspension and permanent exclusions for heads added up to around £40,000 for the trainer and venues; however, this was very well received and valued by Essex heads. Other training, such as online training, is much more cost effective;
- EPHA is offering an increased amount of financial support to headteachers in relation to wellbeing and capacity. Again, this is valued by the headteachers who have benefited and is seen as a good use of funds.

The Association funds continue to be in a healthy state (and more funding will be received for the financial year in the next few months), but the Executive will continue to review expenditure.

It was **AGREED** that the Professional Officer will circulate the claim form to Executive members, who can then claim for their time out of school attending meetings on behalf of EPHA.

Professional Officer

6. ATTENDANCE –PENALTY NOTICES CODE OF CONDUCT

There was a brief discussion about the effectiveness- or otherwise – of penalty notices for non-attendance. The LA approach has been to strengthen the criteria for penalty notices and there is some feedback from headteachers that this is not making a positive impact on attendance levels; an increasing number of parents simply factor in the cost of a penalty notice fine when paying for holidays. The use of penalty notices increases the administration for a school and can have a detrimental effect on relationships with parents; many headteachers say that addressing attendance issues takes up a significant amount of their time.

It is understood that the decision to trigger a penalty notice is made by the headteacher (a problem in itself) but this can cause issues if other local schools are not using a similar approach. A number of partnerships, including STPP and NESP have developed a common approach and have written to parents explain this, including attendance data for each school. It was **AGREED** that the letter should be shared with the Executive in case other partnerships wanted to develop a similar approach.

Several schools use Aquinas School Attendance Provisions to support the management of attendance and absence. Although this is a cost to the school, many heads said that it is money well spent as the company takes on the administrative burden of managing attendance.

<https://www.aquinasprovisions.com/>

There are an increasing number of families from abroad in Essex schools, and they often take their child(ren) out of school for extended periods of time, impacting significantly on attendance data. It was **AGREED** that it would be helpful to have a model letter, written by the Attendance Compliance team addressing these particular requests from parents who plan to visit family abroad.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no further business discussed.

8. DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS FOR THE 2022/23/24 SCHOOL YEAR

Executive meetings (The Lion Inn, Boreham)

Thursday 5 October 2023

Thursday 18 January 2024

Thursday 9 May 2024

Area Heads Meetings

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

Autumn term 2023

WEST	Wednesday 8 November	Manor of Groves, Sawbridgeworth
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Professional
Officer

MID	Thursday 9 November	The Lion Inn, Boreham
N-EAST	Wednesday 15 November	Colchester Community Stadium
SOUTH	Thursday 16 November	Greenwoods Hotel, Stock

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

Deputy Headteachers' Conference

Friday 13 October 2023 Weston Community Homes Stadium

Headteachers' Conference

Friday 22 March 2024 Chelmsford City Race Course

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Harriet Phelps-Knights
Chair of EPHA

Pam Langmead
EPHA Professional Officer