

SEND STRATEGY – HEADTEACHER ROUND TABLE

TUESDAY 7 November 2017

2.00 pm – 3.40 pm

Essex Records Office

1. IN ATTENDANCE

Ruth Sturdy	ECC Lead School Effectiveness Partner – Inclusion
Harriet Phelps-Knights	EPHA Chair/Headteacher Janet Duke Primary (South)
Pam Langmead	EPHA Professional Officer
Sean Tobin	CEO Berlesduna Academy Trust (South)
David Rogers	Bentfield Primary and Enhanced Provision (West)
Teresa Phillips	Thomas Willingale Primary (West)
Joanne Newitt	Willow Brook Primary (North East)
Helen Dudley-Smith	Previous Essex primary headteacher
Simon Thompson	ASHE Executive Director
Simon Mason	Headteacher, Honeywood School (North West)
Andy Hodgkinson	Headteacher, Sweyne Park School (South)
Helena Boast	The Thomas Lord Audley School (North East)
Scott Holder	Headteacher, The Stanway School (North East)
Dan Woodham	Edith Borthwick School (Mid)
Jennifer Grotier	Headteacher, Shorefields School (North East)

Apologies

Clare Kershaw	Director of Education
Ralph Holloway	ECC Manager of SEN, Psychology & Assessment
Gary Smith	Chair ESSET/Headteacher, Market Field School (N East)
Andrew Smith	CEO/Headteacher Lyons Hall (Mid)
Catherine Hutley	Headteacher, Philip Morant School and College (N East)
Jason Carey	Headteacher, James Hornsby School (South)

2. CONTEXT AND INITIAL DISCUSSION

Ruth noted that the SEND Headteacher Round table was being set up as part of the overall review and transformation of SEND in the county. Further details of the purpose of the group are stated in the Terms of Reference, The group members have been invited as headteacher with a good track record and commitment to inclusion and who have the potential to influence other school leaders as an SEN strategy is further developed with them in the coming year.

She noted that Clare would show a more detailed presentation at a future meeting, but gave a number of familiar statistics and statements around SEND in Essex:

- There is some excellent practice in Essex schools in relation to SEND, but it is inconsistent.

- There is an over-identification of SEND from an early age, compared with statistical neighbours – Essex has 3.3% of EHCPs
- Numbers of children/young people on school support are similar to statistical neighbours and national
- Special schools are full
- 32% of children with SEN are identified as having moderate learning difficulties
- SEMH is a big cohort – is this an accurate reflection of the real needs of children/young people? Do they have the right label?
- By far the majority of children with SEND in Essex attend mainstream schools and so the need for an Essex Strategy for SEND which addresses this is paramount

Ruth noted that the two primary headteacher meetings in West and North East, held to gather views and concerns around SEND provision and support highlighted a number of key areas, in particular:

- Communication around assessment
- Parental choice underpinned by the SEND Code of Practice
- Capacity
- Funding

Two further meetings are to be held in Mid and South Essex and a document summarising common concerns will be distributed to this group for discussion at a future meeting

Ruth stated that an additional challenge faced by the LA in the number of permanent exclusions – already 32 since September. Harriet asked for a breakdown of primary/secondary figures.

Since the meeting, Ralph has updated the figures – now 35 permanent exclusions since September, 7 of whom are primary pupils.

Ruth also noted that, anecdotally, there appears to be an increased use of part-time timetables, as well as managed moves of pupils and this is an area that needs to be further investigated and addressed to ensure all children and young people in Essex receive their educational entitlement.

The Local Authority is expecting an Ofsted Local Area Inspection of SEND, which will include a review of health and social care as well as education. The LA has written a SEF, which she suggested should be shared at the next meeting.

Ruth was asked who within the LA was determining these statements. Ruth noted that the SEN headline statements are made as a result of the SEF and an analysis of Local Authority data from a range of data sets and are agreed by the SEND SLT. It was accepted that some are factual – such as making data comparisons with statistical neighbours but others are more subjective, in particular the conclusion that there is over-identification of SEND. It was suggested that it would be accurate to state that there are more children/young people identified as having SEND in Essex, but the

RS

phrase over-identification implies criticism and potentially inaccurate diagnosis of SEND. RS explained that there had been a recent change of emphasis in relation to this and that the question the LA was now asking is “Is this right for Essex?” It was agreed by everyone that identification should be focus on the needs of an individual child and determining how those needs can be met. It is an area that the group will focus on at a future meeting as it links to the High Needs Block and the use of this money to meet need.

One headteacher argued that, since the introduction of EHCPs (adding additional health and care criteria to statements) there should, logically, be MORE children identified as meeting the criteria, not fewer. The expectation from Government (and the LA) was that there would be fewer EHCPs and not all children/young people with statements would automatically need an EHCP.

Another headteacher said that the cohort of children has changed markedly, even over the last 5 years, and she is not at all surprised that there are more EHCPs and children identified with SEND.

The pressure on schools is exacerbated by the raised expectations around the curriculum and standards, coupled with the narrowing of the wider curriculum, which may be more suitable and productive for some pupils with SEND. This is an area for further exploration at a future meeting and should form part of the SEN strategy which will be developed by this group.

PL gave a plea that a couple of myths should be put to bed – that schools apply for EHCPs lightly, and that headteachers choose permanent exclusions before exploring other options. The reality is that both are difficult and, for the vast majority, are a last resort.

It was argued that there has always been a gap in funding, but the key issue for effective SEND provision is the inclusivity of schools. It was accepted that across the county there is a varied picture. One secondary headteacher noted that, at the recent ASHE conference, one of the speakers was arguing for a zero tolerance approach in schools. He and other secondary colleagues did not agree, and he said that what schools actually need is a **maximum tolerance** approach; after all, if schools instantly remove their most challenging children/young people, where are they going to go and how will they access education and a future?

A member of the group suggested that one of the areas the group could develop policy and practice around is exclusions – this will be a focus of a future meeting

It was agreed that one of the remits of the group must be to question and understand the resources in the high needs block – how funds are spent and what the impact of this expenditure is. It was felt that the HNB is not sufficiently transparent, and it needs to be understood and challenged.

Another headteacher suggested that there must be a greater emphasis on early intervention at as young an age as possible.

The group discussed the need to review and develop outreach support from special schools. This is a valuable resource, but varies across the county. Some special schools have more capacity than others to offer outreach to mainstream schools, but this must be developed to ensure that their expertise is shared with mainstream schools.

ST referred to the list of suggestions from the recent meeting of Chairs and Professional Officers from the three headteacher associations – at that meeting it was agreed that this group needed to focus on the following seven areas:

1. The development of a strategy to support SEND provision in mainstream schools
2. A review of the outreach across the county provided by special schools – and a plan for extending this into the future
3. A detailed and transparent analysis of the use of the high needs funding block, and a review of the additional funding from the schools block used to support SEN in mainstream schools
4. A review of and focus on effective working between partners – schools, and teams in the LA (including SAS, STT, SENCAN, Early Years, SEND IASS etc)
5. The agreement of common terms of reference for SEND and minimum expectations for every pupil
6. A focus on inclusion in every school/academy- an end to some schools avoiding or refusing to take and support pupils with special educational needs
7. Working with health and social care to ensure that they meet their statutory funding obligations, and work cooperatively with education.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE GROUP

The suggested terms of reference were circulated in advance of the meeting. A number of changes were suggested, including inserting the above focus areas.

The group discussed:

Membership

Felt to be pretty comprehensive, including representatives from EnPro and special schools. There needs to be a secondary headteacher from the West quadrant. RS agreed to approach the suggested headteacher and invite them to join the group. It was agreed that, if representatives are unable to attend a meeting, they send a substitute.

The number of meetings over the next year were agreed and proposed dates (see below). (Some clash with EPHA meetings, so it would be helpful to check this in the future.)

Agendas will be agreed at the meetings or items suggested prior to the next meeting.

Minutes and papers

Pam Langmead and Ruth Sturdy to write minutes jointly – and these should be made available to all headteachers – via the Infolink, EPHA website etc. It was felt that it was very important that this group should not be a closed shop, but that headteachers and Local Authority officers are aware and clear about the ongoing discussions.

Changes are attached to these minutes.

The group asked who was on the SEN Leadership group. Ruth confirmed that Clare Kershaw, Ruth Sturdy, Ralph Holloway, Anita Kemp, Liz Cornish are currently in this group but reminded the meeting that the on-going Education re-design will bring about changes to this in the future

Ruth agreed to let the group know who is on the Local Authority SEND Governance group.

RS

4. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Ruth has met with Simon Knight, lead for the London Leadership Challenge “Whole School SEND”, to discuss Essex approaches and to gain the expertise of the work already carried out by this group. One of the tools they have developed is an SEND review guide which Essex has been developing with a group of SENCOs who work across a group of schools. This will be rolled out across the county in the spring term.

The Local Authority is currently undertaking a review of the High Needs Block funding- this is work that all LAs are currently being expected to undertake. This is being led by Liz Cornish with Notty Stone (analyst). A number of questions were circulated, which they would like headteachers to consider.

It was felt that some of these questions were more around general practice, rather than high needs, and the group urged, once again, that there was a forensic review and analysis of the high needs block funding as part of this review. There was a request that there was an open and transparent approach to the use of the high needs block. It was agreed that this would be a key focus of the next meeting and that relevant LA officers would be invited to discuss this issue with the HTRT.

The group asked for further information about key LA officers including those responsible for areas of SEND delivery and practice. RS agreed to provide the group with the current staffing but reminded the group that this may change as the new re-design is implemented.

The group agreed that when the Essex HTRT for SEND is established that quadrant meetings would be a positive next step. These could focus on wider local authority issues as well as local concerns.