

SEND STRATEGY – HEADTEACHER ROUND TABLE

WEDNESDAY 10 JULY 2019

1.30 pm – 3.30 pm

Hamptons Sports and Social Club

1. IN ATTENDANCE

Ralph Holloway (RH)	Head of SEND Strategy and Innovation
Clare Kershaw	Director of Education
Councillor Ray Gooding	Cabinet Member for Education and Skills
Pam Langmead (PL)	EPHA Professional Officer
Harriet Phelps-Knights	EPHA Chair/Headteacher Janet Duke Primary (South)
Joanne Newitt	Headteacher, Willow Brook Primary (North East)
Simon Thompson	ASHE Executive Director
Miles Bacon	Headteacher, Thurstable School
Dan Woodham	Headteacher, Edith Borthwick School
Jen Grotier	Headteacher, Shorefields School
Philomena Cozens	PRU
John Hunter	ESGA

Apologies

Matt O’Grady (MO’G)	Headteacher, West Horndon Primary
Andrew Smith	CEO/Headteacher Lyons Hall
Sean Tobin	CE Berlesduna Academy Trust, Merrylands Primary (South)
Debs Watson	Tanglewood Nursery School

Ralph has taken over as Chair of the SEND Headteacher Roundtable, following Ruth Sturdy’s departure from the LA.

2. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

Minutes of the last meeting held on 20 March 2019 were circulated following that meeting. The meeting due to be held on 20 May was cancelled.

3. UPDATE ON ESSEX SEND ORGANISATIONAL DESIGN

Ralph Holloway gave an update on the SEND organisational redesign.

The formal consultation of the SEND workforce has concluded, and the future structure will include two key teams:

- i) SEND inclusion team; and
- ii) SEND operations team (which will include assessment, targeted support, training etc).

The teams will include Educational Psychologists, and staff from the (former) Specialist Teacher Teams and Statutory Assessment Service (though the latter two services will no longer exist in

their current form). Team members will work within the quadrant teams, line managed by the Quadrant SEND Manager. The teams will work across the 0 – 25 age range.

The Operations team will fulfil the current statutory functions, including responding to requests for assessment, EHCPs, support for one planning, with a crucial role in transition, and where there has been a breakdown of a placement.

The Inclusion team is school-focused and school-facing, increasingly and ideally working with clusters/partnerships/groups of school.

The overall headcount of the workforce has reduced by 20%, though it was noted that there have been a number of vacancies within the current workforce (so fewer reductions in reality). The final workforce structure and numbers will be phased in over two stages.

Role	Current FTE	New structure FTE
SEND Inclusion and Psychology Lead	4	4
Senior Inclusion	10.6	4
Inclusion Partner	84.9	53.5
Senior EP	14	14
EP	33.5	33.5
Assistant (trainee) EP	5	5
SEND Operations Lead	4	4
SEND Operations	16.2	10
Operations Co-ordinator	22.2	27
SEND Engagement	41.9	30.5
SEND Operations Assistants	24.7	10

It was confirmed that the appointments are currently taking place and that the new teams will be announced as soon as possible, at least in the autumn term. It was suggested that it would be helpful to have brief “job descriptions” for each role, so that schools and LA staff understand the new structure and the scope of the roles.

The SEND School Effectiveness Partners will work within the quadrant teams.

Centralised teams

The Sensory support teams will be organised within a central team, and Ralph confirmed that the workforce numbers in this team will not reduce, but in fact there will be a slight expansion in staff.

There will be an expansion of legal advisers within the SEND structure, reflecting the increased and complex nature of SEND tribunals and the crucial need to work closely with parents, particularly during transition stages.

The role of the School Effectiveness Strategy leader, formerly held by Ruth Sturdy, will continue and a re-appointment will be made. Appointments are being made to lead on key focus areas, such as SEMH (Steve Whitfield) and autism.

Two EWHMS co-ordinator roles have been created to map and manage the very fragmented system, and Beth Brown and Lianne Canning have been appointed to these roles on a seconded basis.

It was stressed that the NELFT contract focuses on Tier 2 and 3 provision, and the capacity and funding of the contract does not stretch to earlier intervention, so it is essential to map and communicate the other support and provision focusing on emotional health and wellbeing in Essex.

There will be intensive engagement with headteachers, SENCos, staff and governors in the autumn term to ensure that they are confident and aware of the new structure and system. It was also essential to communicate effectively with parents, and Ralph (and others) are engaging with parent advocacy groups as well as the Family Forum. Pam suggested that SEND IASS also needs to be part of the SEND re-design conversation, so that they understand the support and provision going forward.

Andy Hodkinson is developing a SEN “route map” for parents to follow when they need support, and sometime legal recourse, for their child. RH and CK will ask him to engage with SEND IASS.

4. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK FUNDING PRESSURES

Ralph noted that there had been a lengthy discussion about the pressures on High Needs Block funding at the Schools Forum meeting that morning (attended by several of the HT Roundtable members). Ralph referred to the report presented to Schools Forum.

Despite the Secretary of State’s agreement to transfer 0.5% from the Schools Block to the HNB in 2019/20 and the DfE providing additional SEND funding for 2018/19 and 2019/20 there remains significant current and future pressures on the HNB. The over-spend on the HNB at the end of the 2018/19 financial year, after the additional funding is taken into account, was £3 million. The table below shows the forecast overspend on the HNB:

Financial year	Accumulative forecast over spend on HNB
2019/20	£5.4 million
2020/21	£16.9 million
2021/22	£28.4 million
2022/23	£39.9 million

The most significant factors on the increased spend and resulting overspend is:

- The rising number of requests for assessment and resulting EHCPs (despite a higher percentage of requests for assessment being refused); **the percentage increase is greater at post-16;**
- There is an increase in the number of places commissioned at special schools, enhanced provisions and independent special schools and an increase in the amount of alternative provision commissioned outside of Essex PRUs due to the rise in permanent exclusions and medical referrals.

Ralph noted that some of the enhanced provisions have vacancies (that are funded) and there needs to be a thorough investigation into what the impact and effectiveness of this provision offers.

In order to identify solutions, further analysis is required into the following areas to determine the root cause of the issue and where to focus efforts:

- The enhanced provision model;
- Our relationship with the independent sector;
- Understand our future needs and develop a school place plan for the next 10 years;
- Review the role and impact of the FE sector;
- Review the role and impact of the Early Years sector;
- Review our relationship with health and the financial impact/opportunities;
- Review the relationship between education provision and support from Social Care;
- Parental expectations and how they are/are not managed;
- Private children's homes in Essex;
- Other areas of analysis to be determined by the High Needs Working Group.

Ralph noted that the relationship and engagement with health has improved significantly in the last couple of months, which has been welcomed.

There will need to be a comprehensive piece of work on relevant data and intelligence sets to inform the root cause analysis:

- Total profile of plans and SEND Support by school, district and quadrant (as-is);
- Total profile as above if all children/young people were placed within their local school;
- Total spend to date and projected spend by budget line;
- Other LA children in Essex schools and vice versa;
- Population of independent schools;
- Rates of Assessment;
- FE placements and spend;
- Permanent exclusions;
- Early Years and SEND profile;
- School case studies;
- Impact of increased special school places;
- Map the touchpoints across the service/s;

- Data/financial analysis to determine where the biggest growth has been in terms of spend (which area of budget/s);
- Map school reserves;
- Understand and set out what our statutory responsibilities are and how we meet them currently;
- Continue to make operational level improvements to reduce spend at that level through the SEND OD Ways of Working groups;
- Overlap the data and financial mapping against SLISS partnerships – this would support school led approach

There are a number of actions which would enable a limited reduction in the predicted spend in 2020/21:

- The ECC redesign of the SEND services will save between £1.5 and £2 million from 2020/21;
- ECC will consider the options for ‘repatriation’ of pupils placed in independent special schools at points of transition (specifically key stage 2 to 3 and key stage 4 to 5);
- Annual reviews should include a greater focus on the need to continue to maintain an EHCP where it is no longer necessary to meet need;
- The review of enhanced provisions in the Autumn Term 2019 will consider the potential to reduce funded places in enhanced provisions where there have been longer-term trends of empty places;
- Work is being done to ensure that ECC’s published policies provide the necessary rigor to enable a stronger defence against SEND tribunals. Engagement with parents is key, and they need to have a better understanding of what the education system can realistically afford and deliver.

There are two more significant options to mitigate the over-spend in 2020/21:

- Decreasing top-up funding (impacting all schools);
- Or, another transfer from Schools Block to HNB (impacting mainstream schools).

One headteacher recently attended a meeting with Nick Gibb (School Minister) who suggested that Government may be minded to increase funding for SEND and post-16 SEN funding, which could help mitigate the over-spend. However, it is unlikely that this funding will be readily or speedily available.

5. DEVELOPING A SEND STRATEGY FOR ESSEX

Ralph gave feedback on the public engagement consultation. There were 1023 responses:

487 parents/careers

358 education

98 ECC staff

41 other

24 parents of children not SEND

Ralph gave feedback on the various questions e.g. around 92% agreed with the vision of the strategy, with health and wellbeing, and participation a high priority.

In respect of the development of a school-led system, more schools had misgivings than parents, and there is some lack of understanding of what a school-led system looks like (with the most negative interpretation being that this is the LA “abandoning schools to get on with it”).

The Roundtable discussed the significant negative impact of the loss of previously established early intervention programmes, such as SureStart. It was agreed that future discussions with, for example Virgincare/Barnados (Family and Child Wellbeing Service) should consider the need for staff to have better training and understanding of SEND, particularly in relation to the youngest children.

The next steps/timeline of the system:

July 2019 – communication engagement plan to schools and setting
July 2019 – further work with Essex Family Forum on engaging parents
Autumn 2019 – Meeting with clusters/groups to communicate system
Autumn 2019 – further engagement with parents
January 2020 – launch of new SEND structure.

It was suggested that it would be helpful for the LA to develop a “parents early guide” to SEND in Essex, and that a small number of schools would be asked to identify parents who might help develop such a document, along with representatives with parent liaison groups.

6. ROLL OUT OF TPP TRAINING

Clare explained that the Trauma Perceptive Practice training programme is linked with the Home Office Embrace project, which provides funding to support victims of domestic abuse. The TPP training is in the pilot stage, and has included schools from the South Tendring Primary Partnership, Basildon Academy and CSS in South Essex.

The aim is to have a full roll out of the programme by Autumn half term. It will be delivered through a “train the trainers” model, including school workforce, Thrive practitioners, EPs and so on. It is likely to be rolled out within school partnerships and secondary schools. Each element of the programme has been piloted, and the trial focuses on all 9 stages. The first session focuses on the engagement and understanding of the school leadership regarding trauma perceptive practice, and will, in some cases require a shift in mindset.

Schools/academies that take part would be expected to have signed the Inclusion Statement (demonstrating their commitment to inclusion), but this will not be a condition of participation.

5. INCLUSION STATEMENT

To date around 30 % of primary schools, 33% of secondary schools and 80% of special schools have signed the inclusion statement. The group had a discussion about the apparently low sign-up rate. Clare argued that schools should be ready to demonstrate their commitment to inclusion and should have nothing to fear about signing the statement. She also stressed that

this was not a Local Authority statement, but one developed by the SEND Headteacher Roundtable.

It was suggested that the focus of the group should be on a school's inclusive practice rather than simply whether or not they had signed the statement, and there continue to be (anecdotal) examples of schools that are not following inclusive practice, especially in relation to the admission of children/young people with SEND, as well as their provision and support.

It was agreed that there are a number of reasons that schools have not signed the statement. Some feel that it commits them to a standard that they cannot attain, although it was agreed that the statement does not contain anything more than the requirements of DfE guidance on exclusions and the SEN Code of Practice. In other cases, governors may have resisted the idea of signing, and some schools feel that it is a directive by the LA. However, it was agreed that the lack of sign-up does not indicate that 70% (of primaries) are not inclusive, and the Roundtable should try to ascertain the reasons that schools have not signed; it was suggested that some simply didn't feel that it would make a difference. Pam Langmead agreed to canvas feedback in the autumn term headteacher briefings.

PL

One headteacher has suggested that the Local Authority should produce a report about schools that are demonstrably non-inclusive and that these should be shared with Ofsted. He believes strongly that finance and accountability are the two greatest motivators for inclusion (this view was accepted, but not entirely shared by the whole group).

Clare suggested that the SEND Headteacher Roundtable should spend time analysing data around SEND provision, as well as exclusions and admission numbers and profile.

It was suggested that parents who access SEND provision in a school could be asked to complete an exit survey about the provision and support they have experienced.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) Sub-group to consider exclusions

This will be considered at the next meeting.

b) CME group

Councillor Gooding noted that he has established a cross party group to discuss the issue of children missing from education. This group consists of himself, all the leaders of the opposition parties, Clare Kershaw and various other key officers in the Council. The rationale for the group is as follows:

Background

This group was set up following conversations I have been having with Cllr Henderson around the monitoring and understanding of children who are not in school either through home education or through exclusions.

You'll be aware of the Children's Commissioner's report 'Invisible Children' which highlighted that 58,000 children nationally are being home schooled. Essex has also seen an increase in the number of those home-schooled over recent years whilst colleagues at other counties are reporting increases in their home education figures. This pattern is certainly not specific to Essex and appears to be a national trend which, some may argue, is linked to the ease with which parents can opt to remove their child from a school roll in favour of elective home education.

Currently there is a lack of statutory powers available to local authorities to ensure that we have oversight of the system. As a result there are considerable variations across local authority areas with regards to support for parents who elect to home school and monitoring oversight (which can only be undertaken if a referral of concern is raised to the LA). This would suggest that some local authorities are more effective at providing support and monitoring provision for this cohort when compared with others. Indeed, some families that move from one local authority area to another will comment on the lack of consistency in respect of the approach taken and support available. Indeed, in a few instances we have seen evidence, albeit rare, that parents who are seeking to avoid intervention will move purposely from one authority to another.

There is also increasing evidence that children who are not in school are becoming involved in gang and county lines activity which coincidentally is also on the rise in Essex.

This is becoming a much greater issue and something that I have raised with Nick Gibb as a concern.

EPHA and ASHE will be represented on the group.

8. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

To be arranged.