

SEND STRATEGY – HEADTEACHER ROUND TABLE**WEDNESDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2018****2.00 pm – 4.20 pm****Hamptons Social Club****1. IN ATTENDANCE**

Clare Kershaw	Director of Education
Ruth Sturdy	ECC Lead School Effectiveness Partner – Inclusion
Harriet Phelps-Knights	EPHA Chair/Headteacher Janet Duke Primary (South)
Pam Langmead	EPHA Professional Officer
Debs Watson	Headteacher, Tanglewood Nursery
David Rogers	Headteacher, Bentfield Primary and Enhanced Provision (West)
Joanne Newitt	Headteacher, Willow Brook Primary (North East)
Teresa Phillips	Headteacher, Thomas Willingale Primary (West)
Matt O’Grady	Headteacher, West Horndon Primary (South)
Helen Dudley-Smith	Previous Essex primary headteacher
Simon Thompson	ASHE Executive Director
Simon Mason	Headteacher, Honywood School (North West)
Jo Hickford	Honywood School (North West)
Andy Hodgkinson	Headteacher, Sweyne Park School (South)
Helena Boast	Headteacher, The Thomas Lord Audley School (North East)
Scott Holder	Headteacher, The Stanway School (North East)
Jennifer Grotier	Headteacher, Shorefields School (North East)

Apologies

Catherine Hutley	Headteacher, Philip Morant School and College (N East)
Andrew Smith	CEO/Headteacher Lyons Hall (Mid)
Dan Woodham	Headteacher, Edith Borthwick School (Mid)

Clare welcomed everyone to the third meeting of the SEND Headteacher Roundtable. She reiterated that this is a key group in the strategy to redesign and transform the provision of SEND in the county. The group of headteachers have been asked to guide and mandate strategies and proposals to achieve a better service. Clare stressed that the number of children with SEND will probably increase, given the increasing pupil numbers overall and the expanding number and complexity of SEN children. The SEND strategy aims to improve support and to make the system in the county more effective.

Matt O’Grady was welcomed as a new member of the group, representing small schools. His school also hosts an Enhanced Provision.

2. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK REVIEW FEEDBACK

As discussed at the previous meeting, the LA is undertaking a review of the High Needs Block (HNB) – this work is being led by Liz Cornish, working with Notty Stone (analyst).

Notty Stone has undertaken a series of interviews with headteachers from all phases and categories of schools, and Ruth shared a draft presentation which collated the information she gathered.

Profile of participants

	Mainstream only	Enhanced Provision	Special
Secondary	4	3	0
Primary	7	2	0
Other	2	0	1

Area	Respondents
Mid	5
North East	5
South	5
West	2
Other	2

Respondents came into the sessions with a pessimistic view of SEN in Essex. Frequently used descriptions included: unfair, post-code lottery, inconsistent, under-funded, slow, disorganised, mixed, archaic.

A number of policies were proposed for consideration, including:

Head Teacher Associations to direct/deliver SEND outreach

- The use of Heads associations was widely rejected, over concerns on capacity & expertise to commission, review and deploy services
- They don't want the HT associations to become a branch of the Local Authority, and take over their role. Other systems such as Enhanced Provisions or various Teaching School Alliances were suggested as alternatives
- Organising training as well as evaluating impact was seen as a conflict of interest

Clare and Ruth were both unsure where this proposal had originated, and it was agreed by all that this was not a viable or workable option.

Systems to hold schools to account

- There is a divide over whether a “kite-mark” style system would work, with some favouring it and some not.
- Deep scepticism over the ability to hold any one failing to meet inclusivity guidelines to account, regulators seen as uninterested or without teeth.
- Doubts over if non-compliance could be properly proven, as everyone had second hand accounts of malpractice, but no hard evidence

Funding for SEN support

- Whilst allowing early access to support is greatly favoured, any funding needs to be kept in place for at least a medium term (e.g. 4 school terms) as anything shorter was perceived to make it difficult to enact provision (e.g. needing to offer at least year long contracts)
- But there are concerns that the system would favour those schools with the capacity to submit applications well, and smaller schools whose need might be greater will be left behind and would need something to ensure fair access

Reform of Enhanced Provision

- The greater role for EPs was widely welcomed, and those heads from EPs seemed keen to take the leadership opportunities such changes represented
- Concerns were raised around ensuring the stability of cash flow to protect the level of specialist knowledge held inside the units

Strengthened Early Years Identification & Intervention

- Considered very much needed
- Needs to consider how this will link up with other Early years settings, such as private nurseries and child minders
 - There is currently a deal of repetition in the One Planning/EHCP process as a child moves from nursery to school
- Greater Outreach from exemplar/specialist settings was welcomed
- Schools are seeing an increased in mixed/multiple needs so specialists need to be skilled in more than just single subject
- A whole family approach may also be beneficial

All the concepts but one were well received

- Headteacher Association led SEND training was largely rejected in its initial form
- Progress as a measure to evaluate success of any policy is extremely complex and whilst there was no disagreement to using it in principal, it was always with the caveat that it has to be carefully constructed
- There were concerns over the stability of funding for the policies – fears that funding will only be provided short term, and then cut off suddenly leaving things hanging
- There was concern over the emphasis on decreases in the success indicators,

- Particularly over the emphasis on reducing the level of plans – feel this is a head in the sand approach
- There is also concern over ECC's ability to deliver change

There were multiple points not directly written into the policies that kept coming up in discussion across all policies

- Inclusion is considered the most important issue to resolve
But scepticism was expressed over how enforceable any steps might be with Academy schools
- The system is at breaking point; underfunding of schools is endemic, and underfunding of SEN even more so.
- There is no clarity around how children get plans - criteria are not clear and the process lacks transparency
- The Specialist Teacher Team is criticised over extreme variability in effectiveness and is said to need immediate intervention
- ECC can support schools through campaigns to educate parents on the SEN offer, e.g. awareness of Enhanced Provisions, new & different ways SEN provision can be met; defend schools from attacks based on attainment when they are more inclusive
- At ECC level, success is embedded in individual practitioners, and not in county systems

The group returned to the discussion around how the outcomes for children/young people with SEND are measured, with too much emphasis on attainment and not enough on progress and non-academic and social achievements.

There was also a continued debate about the varying approach to inclusion and how schools/academies may be held to account. It was noted that some “outstanding” schools may rarely be inspected as they are generally exempt from Ofsted inspection. Clare did note that the Local Authority is due a Local Area Inspection and this will feature the success – or otherwise – of how SEND provision is delivered on the county. However, there was still some scepticism that this would impact on individual schools.

It was agreed that developing a definition or statement of Inclusion in Essex, would be helpful.

Simon Mason felt that holding schools to account through challenge is unworkable and won't change practice, and that the focus should be on incentivising schools to be more effective around inclusion. He argued that if there was better use of funding, including huge resources from the Social Care budget, it would be possible to encourage and develop inclusive schools.

There was a discussion about the value of enhanced provisions and the need to guarantee sustainable funding for these settings. It was noted that there is a need to develop Enhanced Provisions, and also to enhance provision across the whole system, including schools working together in local areas.

It was agreed that if there is increased funding made available for more enhanced provision (through spend to save) there must be a clear and convincing case about what future savings will be made by targeting funding in this way. There was also a discussion and a clear desire to enhance all provisions so that they can meet the needs of the children and young people in their community

Matt reminded the group of the pressure on small schools in terms of capacity and lack of funding, compounded by the fact that parents with children with SEN will often choose a small school that they believe will be most suitable for their child. As a small unit, Matt's own enhanced speech and language provision also has very little capacity to undertake outreach work to support other schools.

It was noted that there are around 600 staff in the SEND team in the Local Authority. Many individuals are highly effective and valued, but it was stressed that the performance management of these teams needs to be better and more rigorous. Clare noted that the new quadrant team structure is partly designed to improve working across the SEND teams (including the Statutory Assessment Team, Specialist Teacher Team and Educational Psychology) and enabling the systems for SEND to be much more efficient and collaborative.

Clare explained that the SEND workforce has been overwhelmed by the transfer of EHCP reviews. This enormous piece of work is (at last) reaching its conclusion, which should immediately reclaim capacity in the system.

A secondary head suggested that there should be more engagement with young parents. Schools often have intelligence about previous pupils and should be able to target support for families more effectively.

There was a discussion about parental pressure – in some cases to drive EHCPs, and also the expectation that their child will have 1:1 support from an LSA. Parents sometimes/often expect their child's allocated funding to be spent in this way. Scott Holder noted that his school has overcome this problem by producing a finance report for each child with SEN which explains in detail how "their" funding is spent.

The group discussed the introduction of a Kitemark for SEND best practice. It was agreed that it was good for schools to be recognised when they are excellent at inclusion and supporting pupils with SEND, but the problem of being labelled a "SEND" school remains. However inclusive a school, a higher than average number of children with SEND will have an impact on the budget and, inevitably, on pupil achievement.

The group discussed whether EHCPs are unequal from school to schools. Whilst the SAS team are using the same criteria to determine the need for an EHCP, the decisions are made based on the evidence provided, and that can vary from school to school.

3. INCLUSION DEFINITION FOR ESSEX

Following a discussion at a recent ASHE council meeting, a secondary headteacher had drafted a proposed inclusion statement for Essex. The Roundtable members split into three, and each group considered what should be in an Essex definition for inclusion. It was agreed that the purpose of the statement was to ensure that every school/academy knows what the minimum expectations are in relation to SEND provision, and to allow schools (and the LA) to hold each other to account.

There was feedback from each group and a final (draft) statement was produced:

Draft Position Statement developed by Headteacher Roundtable

What we stand for

Making sure that every child and young person in our schools, whatever their circumstance or ability, has a sense of belonging: feels respected, valued for who they are. .

Delivering education which supports and develops children so that they become positively participating citizens in society.

Ensuring we equip children with the skills, knowledge and confidence to enable them move on to the next phase of learning and life with success.

Understanding that there are different types of provision that a child may need at different points in their lives but that movement between provisions must have a specific purpose which will lead to better outcomes for them as they prepare for adulthood.

We recognise

That an inclusive approach with an appreciation of diversity and ambition for all to achieve to their full potential is essential to getting it right for every child and raising attainment for all.

That collectively we have a responsibility to provide for Essex children whatever their background and current circumstances and ensure that they receive a precise identification of their needs so that high quality teaching leads to positive outcomes for all.

That sometimes we may not have the appropriate provision or capacity to meet the needs of all children who want to come to our schools / academies or settings but that we will work together to ensure that this is addressed and leads to better practice in the future.

That there are currently capacity challenges with our PRU and Alternative Provision settings and our referral systems are outdate and must change.

We strive

To ensure that all schools, academies and setting are equally and effectively inclusive.

We commit

To challenge and be challenged by colleagues to justify our decisions and evidence our thinking in making them.

To honestly examine the way we do things in our own settings to become even more inclusive through systematically reviewing our practice and through working in partnership to review practice in other settings.

To agree to work collaboratively with our colleagues across the system to create a new way forward to meet the needs of all Essex children.

To actively seek and accept any learning, training and development on inclusion for our staff, engage with research and to share our own good practice generously.

To ensure that we follow not simply the letter of the law but also the spirit of the law so that we all put inclusive values into practice in all the decisions we make.

4. BARNET DOCUMENT – ORDINARILY AVAILABLE EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

The London Borough of Barnett has produced (in 2016) guidance about their “ordinarily available” education provision for children and young people with SEND in maintained schools, academies, early education settings, sixth forms and FE colleges. The guidance documents describes the provision that should be available in state funded education settings and provides a baseline and common set of expectations about the provision for SEND.

It was agreed that this would be considered in more detail at the next meeting. However, the group did ask what the outcomes for children in SEND were in Barnet (ie is the guidance successful) and also asked for more research to be done into “successful” Local Authorities. Clare did stress that most LAs are struggling with their SEND provision and outcomes, and some are doing very much worse than Essex. Ruth Sturdy is visiting Barnet on 14th March to talk to them about this approach and will report back at the next meeting

5. NEXT STEPS

- Ongoing engagement with school leaders and SENCOs
- Outcomes framework – draft by beginning of Spring Term
- SEND Peer review – Training 28th Feb review to begin after 16th March. Further training will follow
- Partnership SENCOs recruitment underway. Programme to begin in Summer term
- Visit to Barnet in March
- Identification of good practice on-going, mapping exercise underway.

6. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Wednesday 18 April, 10.00 am – 12 noon (Hamptons Social Club)

Wednesday 13 June, 2.00 pm – 4.00 pm

Tuesday 17 July, 2.00 pm – 4.00 pm