

SEND STRATEGY – HEADTEACHER ROUND TABLE

THURSDAY 23 November 2017

9.00 am – 11.00 am

Hamptons Social Club

1. IN ATTENDANCE

Clare Kershaw	Director of Education
Ruth Sturdy	ECC Lead School Effectiveness Partner – Inclusion
Ralph Holloway	ECC Manager of SEN, Psychology & Assessment
Liz Cornish	
Harriet Phelps-Knights	EPHA Chair/Headteacher Janet Duke Primary (South)
Pam Langmead	EPHA Professional Officer
Debs Watson	Headteacher Tanglewood Nursery
Sean Tobin	CEO Berlesduna Academy Trust (South)
Sarah Thomas	Bentfield Primary and Enhanced Provision (West)
Joanne Newitt	Willow Brook Primary (North East)
Helen Dudley-Smith	Previous Essex primary headteacher
Simon Thompson	ASHE Executive Director
Simon Mason	Headteacher, Honywood School (North West)
Andy Hodgkinson	Headteacher, Sweyne Park School (South)
Catherine Hutley	Headteacher, Philip Morant School and College (N East)
Notty Stone	Consultant

Apologies

Helena Boast	The Thomas Lord Audley School (North East)
Andrew Smith	CEO/Headteacher Lyons Hall (Mid)
Jason Carey	Headteacher, James Hornsby School (South)
Teresa Phillips	Thomas Willingale Primary (West)
Scott Holder	Headteacher, The Stanway School (North East)
Dan Woodham	Edith Borthwick School (Mid)
Jennifer Grotier	Headteacher, Shorefields School (North East)
David Rogers	Bentfield Primary and Enhanced Provision (West)

2. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK REVIEW

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).

Liz explained that the DfE has directed all local authorities to carry out a review of HNB, and they are required to develop a strategic plan. She noted that some LAs have already produced plans, but most are rather high level and vague. ECC wants to undertake a more forensic review, investigating the use of High Needs Block funding and how this scarce resource can be used most effectively.

Co-production of the review must include input from parents/carers, children and young people, schools and settings and other Local Authorities.

Liz explained that the HTRT is a key group as it is solutions-focused.

Key questions include

What do we want the resources to achieve?

To what extent does the current HNB spend offer value for money?

Liz noted that, as part of the review, she visited an independent setting in Norfolk, and met a pupil from Essex. She realised that, despite the cost of the setting, this provision had changed his life positively. She has looked back at his history of support and education, to consider whether earlier intervention might have changed his provision, and concluded that it probably would have done. Part of the change in Essex needs to be around offering earlier and effective intervention to avoid children and young people reaching a crisis situation.

How appropriately is funding allocated?

Anticipating the need for change

- Improving clarity and transparency of HNB
- Strengthening systems for decision-making about the best use of scarce resources
- Increasing the rigour of monitoring and the quality assurance of service
- Effective measuring and reporting of impact
- Resourcing early intervention adequately
- Balancing the distribution/contribution across services

The group discussed early intervention – how soon can we intervene to give a child with SEND the very best chance, and how can this be done cost effectively

Liz questioned how much money is currently spend “undoing damage” of poor or inappropriate provision early on.

Headteachers questioned what comparisons have been made with other local authorities – Liz confirmed that that all have slightly different approaches. The DfE is keen for LAs to work collaboratively and co-operatively.

We know that Essex has a higher number of EHCPs than statistical neighbours, and need to understand why this is the case.

SM asked if any work has been done on mapping the demographics of children/young people accessing funding and plans, in comparison with other LAs, including ethnicity, gender, disadvantaged, causality etc. There is a need to factor in who made the decision to transfer, for example to independent provision – ECC or a tribunal decision? NS agreed that census information can be interrogated, though a deeper analysis will need to be worked through.

Information on the Current High Needs Block expenditure 2017/18 financial year – ECC and schools was shared.

There were discussions around accuracy or consistency of the figures (as they differ from recent figures shared with Schools Forum – for example, does this accurately reflect top up funding?)

The LA is looking at the ECC spend and interrogating how effective this is.

AH noted that it is critical that enhanced provisions are funded on a per-place basis, rather than per-pupil, as the former allows the provision to plan and recruit and train specialist staff, so that the setting can operate effectively whatever its numbers. He agreed that if a setting has low numbers, those specialist staff could and should then be used to support mainstream schools through outreach.

CK noted that there are inevitably a number of historic decisions within the HNB budget, and each cost centre must be analysed and reviewed. She stressed her determination to secure the specialist provision, and more is being created thanks to the SEND capital programme. However, she also sees the need for Mainstream Plus provision – where children are not coping and thriving in mainstream, but do not need to be in Special schools. The challenge is to move money into a new system and the LA needs to strip back and review the current allocations before making future decisions.

Notty Stone explained that she has started the review process by undertaking a desk top review and a review of current literature and research. That stage is complete and she now needs to include the perspectives of others. She wants to talk to a cross section of Essex headteachers to gather their opinions.

PL noted that we have already had numerous discussions, including the STT and SAS review, and discussions at the summer term primary headteacher meetings, followed by quadrant meetings with headteachers. These reviews and meetings have produced huge amounts of feedback already and heads are now keen that action is taken as a result of these discussions.

It was suggested that the questions needed to be fine-tuned, for example looking at the different needs of sections, phases et. There also needs to be more investigation of individual cases/situations- for example, where a school has permanently excluded, considering what different and earlier support and intervention could/should have been put in place that might have altered the outcome.

CH suggested that headteachers would welcome some tangible proposals/ideas for system change, and these could form the basis of future discussion/consultation.

There was a discussion about the views/approaches/needs of different stakeholder groups – particularly parents. Schools have different pressures, as do the LA teams.

The group returned to the discussion around equity of provision, and ensuring that all schools are inclusive. Schools are disincentivised through the need to raise and maintain standards as well as the pressures on funding.

Rising needs?

AH asked if we were working with the hypothesis that needs are rising and, if so, why? Does an improved level of identification and understanding of SEND actually correlate with increased needs?

It was argued that there is an increasing mismatch between curriculum demands and children's responses and needs. However, it was agreed that schools have most level of influence and impact in the classroom and this needs to be a focus for improving provision.

It was argued that there is an increase in the number of children who are not school ready, and part of the solution needs to be a focus on early years and parenting.

Do the number of EHCPs really reflect the actual needs of children/young people, or (in Essex) is this how resources and support are accessed?

CK noted that we haven't tested whether the impact of an EHCP is successful? If so, there is an urgent need to redirect the funding currently used on the bureaucracy of the EHCP system and to use it to fund pre-plan support. There needs to be trust in a system of early intervention and support, without the need for an EHCP.

It was asked whether research with parents suggest that they want a plan, or simply need personalisation for their child. If schools can have that conversation around personalisation (rather than automatic one to one support) this can be very successful in avoiding the need for a Plan.

There was a discussion about early years, the need to identify idiosyncrasies at pre-school level. Health needs to be a key part in this process, not least because some children don't attend pre-school settings at all.

Ideally, all schools should be sufficiently expert and resourced to admit any child, whatever their needs.

It was agreed that, when seeking parent views, it would be vital to talk to a range of parents, not just those who are more confident, articulate and better able to navigate the current system. Schools may be able to help by identifying parents who would be prepared to discuss their experience and needs.

It was agreed that the LA should be considering the correlation between GLD and SEND, and the outcomes for children who do not achieve GLD in Reception. It was agreed that the data is available, but that there should be a more nuanced look at the 12 outcomes within GLD.

In addition, there should be an analysis of the impact of Early Years SEND and STT. These teams do a good job working with individual parents of pre-school SEND children, but the transition into primary school is not smooth.

The transition to secondary is also important – as much about a change in culture, language and approach. AH noted that secondary schools have many feeder primaries (his Year 7 intake come from 30 different primaries) and so children will have had a varying experience of SEND support (including some in different LAs). It was agreed that Liz will follow up an analysis of the Year 7 cohort with AH.

ST asked if there was a planned timeline for change, including the restructure and distribution of the High Needs Block. It was agreed that it is critical that changes are implemented as fast as possible, so that we can see real change in Essex.

The group asked if the HNB review would result in tangible recommendations. CK stressed that this is statutory piece of work that must be published, but there is a need to ensure that the resulting report is meaningful and linked to other changes taking place around SEND. It is important not to make isolated decisions around individual aspects of the service, but to ensure that strategic, coherent decisions are taken.

CK anticipated that changes to HNB and structural progress should be possible in a year to 18 months' time.

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING -MEETING 07 11 17

a) Mid headteacher meeting (Minute 2 refers)

This was held on 21 November, and the notes of the meeting will be circulated once written. Ruth noted that several issues raised echoed those discussed in the West and North East meetings, but some additional helpful suggestions and comments were made. The key issues focused on funding, the need for shared trust between professionals and effective communication.

b) Permanent exclusions (Minute 2 refers)

The number of permanent exclusions has risen, from 32 reported at the meeting (and updated in the minutes to 35), to a total of 40 so far this term – 10 in the primary sector.

c) West secondary representation (Minute 3 refers)

Ruth confirmed that she is meeting a secondary headteacher in the West of Essex, next week, and will discuss whether he will join the HTRT.

d) Terms of reference (Minute 3 refers)

Ruth circulated an updated version of the terms of reference, based on the comments and suggestions made at the last meeting.

A couple of additional suggestions were made, as a result of earlier discussions, including:

A focus on effective transition at all stages, including pre-school to Reception, primary to secondary.

Clarifying the sentence – “The agreement of common terms of reference for SEND and minimum expectations of every school”

Adding health and social care as partners – and emphasising the need for effective working between schools as well as with other partners.

e) Inclusion definition for Essex

It was agreed that it will be important to develop and agree a definition of inclusion in Essex, as without this it is difficult to challenge and hold schools and partners to account. Ruth/Clare to draft some suggested definitions for consideration at the next meeting.

4. SCHOOL LED SEND DEVELOPMENT

Ruth noted that she is working on the School Led SEND strategy, and is focusing on a numbers of areas, including:

Workforce development

This will include the expansion of the Super SENCo programme – probably renamed to be called Partnership SENCos – and the intention is to have at least one in every school-led improvement partnership.

Ruth is developing training modules around SEND, for NQTs, those new to headship etc.

Peer review and support

Based on the London Leadership Challenge – working with Simon Knight. Next term there will be training for around 25 reviewers (funding from SEN ?). A range of schools will need to be identified – not only those schools that are demonstrably “successful” at providing for SEND.

Outcomes Framework

First meeting in December to develop this further.

Identification and assessment

Minimum expectations framework

Other?

To include:

- Funding
- Challenging schools and holding them to account
- Developing curriculum models

- Sharing existing excellent classroom practice