

ESSEX PRIMARY HEADS' ASSOCIATION

NAME OF GROUP/MEETING – Mid Essex SEND meeting with Clare Kershaw and Ralph Holloway

DATE – 21ST November 2017

TIME – 9.00am

VENUE – Hamptons, Chelmsford

Informal notes of meeting

1. IN ATTENDANCE

Name	Role
Clare Kershaw	Director of Education ECC
Ralph Holloway	Manager SEN, Psychology and Assessment ECC
Ruth Sturdy	Lead School Effectiveness Partner (Inclusion) ECC
Emily Welton	SEN Area Manager
Sarah Miller	Mid STT Manager
Jamie Hanson	Mid STT Manager
Kate Ayre	Deputy Principal EP
Tony Sale	SEND Statutory Assessment Service Manager
Dawn Baker	Lawford Mead Primary
Debs Watson	Tanglewood Nursery
Helen Castell	Writtle Infant
Lucy Webb	Powers Hall Academy
Diane Deans	White Court School
Sara Shambrook	White Court School
Jan Marshall	Boreham Primary
Nicola Morgan-Stone	Trinity Road Primary
Melissa Raymond	Kelvedon Primary Academy
Nicola Rainford	East Hanningfield Primary
Heather Shelley(Senco)	Broomfield Primary
Caroline Shingelton	Wethersfield Primary
Mandy Short	St Michael's Primary, Braintree
Paul Sully	Beehive Lane Primary
Lauren Whyte(Senco)	Great Bradfords Juniors
Sam Jones	Mildmay Infants
Karen Barnett(Senco)	Perryfields Infants
Jo Brown (Senco)	Trinity Road Primary
Helen Coote (Senco)	Beehive Lane Primary

Faye Currie (Senco)	Woodville Primary
Anna Graham (Senco)	St Michaels Primary
Suzanne Edom-Baker	Newlands Spring Primary
Ruth Hale (Senco)	White Notley and Maldon Primaries
Helen Hutchings	Highwood Primary
S Tredgett (Senco)	Terling C of E Primary
Claire Miller (Senco)	Steeple Bumpstead Primary
Sue Edwards (Senco)	Notley Green Primary
Jan Marshal (Senco)	Boreham Primary
Nigel Hookway	EPHA Executive Director (<i>and note taker</i>)

2. Clare Kershaw welcomed everyone to the meeting. Clare introduced the team from the Local Authority:

Emily Welton
Sarah Miller
Tony Sale
Ruth Sturdy
Janine Hanson
Kate Ayre

Clare introduced the purpose of the morning. This was the third of four quadrant meetings with the North and West having taken place already. The meetings were about clarification and listening to issues, concerns and day to day challenges with SEND. Clare said she and the team will not be responding to individual children. Ruth Sturdy and I will be taking notes.

Ruth Hale – (Senco) Started the meeting and listed the three major issues as she saw it: Communication/Finance/Trust- issues included emails not answered, finance matrix is not fit for purpose. Everyone is very aware of EHCP costs, trust seems to have disappeared between schools and LA.

A Head asked about children arriving in a small school; funding lags behind pupil admission which puts a huge strain on school budgets.

Dawn Baker raised the issue of the “notional £6000” in the budget and the problems that arise when what we are doing in-house is not sufficient but schools cannot have the funding they need to meet pupil need when a plan has not been issued. She gave specific examples where one child, who had a request for an EHCP rejected eventually went to a GROW provision which would indicate there was a significant SEN. Another child has to work in the year group below; implications are what happens when the child goes to Sec School. She clarified that parents had agreed to this.

Another Head raised the issue of Communication and especially in writing reports, time lag of communication from LA. Statutory services are not responding quickly enough and this is very frustrating for HTs and SENCOs who have to chase for a response so they can tell parents/carers what is happening with requests to assess. It was suggested that new requests should be acknowledged by an email, with a follow up when a case worker is allocated so schools know who to contact. This email should include a date for panel so that schools can keep parents informed.

Another Head raised communication and in addition that when she tried to contact the LA person was on holiday, off sick or no-one knew anything about the child. Clare responded that these issues should be fixable. There should not be a catalogue of minor failings in the system. Clare felt that TRUST is the big issue; but she also said that there will be disagreements. Is this about capacity? It was acknowledged that when schools do speak to the right person at SAS, relationships were generally very positive.

Another Head raised new requests for a case worker and said she had not had a response for weeks on end.

Emily Welton explained that there is a "patch list" – It was agreed that a new list would be helpful to Mid Essex Schools and this could be circulated soon.

Another Head discussed the changing intake in her school. Requests that an EHCP for a particular child with behaviour issues not being accepted. The grounds for refusal do not seem to make sense. It was agreed to discuss this case after the meeting. A wider issue was that the system seemed to be one where a child needs to fail for funding to meet need to be given to a school despite their best attempts to request this.

Another SENCO asked for clarification over IPRA. Emily clarified that interim funding through IPRA was possible. There were more requests than funding available. It is now generally available for transition; Emily was concerned that the message was out there that there was no further funding available is wrong. Pre-schools were mentioned and it was confirmed that they were accessing this funding. It was acknowledged that schools had not been given clear messages about the changes of emphasis on when IPRA funding was likely to be given and that it was around transition.

Another Head raised medical funding issues does this qualify for IPRA. The LA does not understand the individual settings around the Mid area which vary from school to school. Emily replied that she would love to come out to schools but capacity is a challenge for her.

It was suggested that some schools can be seen as very inclusive and that this can lead to an imbalance in the intake; there not parity across the LA. Colleagues can direct families who have children with special educational needs to other local schools. When you have additional provision the challenges are that it can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Clare spoke about the Headteacher Roundtable and their role in terms of system design. The strategy around SEND in mainstream schools is being developed and includes language (common language), standards of inclusion in mainstream education, a toolkit of support, it is unequal currently in Essex and one of the key questions for the headteacher Round table is how do we achieve an equal playing field? There was an acknowledgement that there is a need to develop an outreach support model from Special Schools. Putting in place a system of support and understanding across all schools will be a challenge. Clare said she will always 'champion' inclusion across Essex.

Clare went onto talk about an Outcomes Framework which the headteacher roundtable will support. Ruth outlined that there would be a working party (subset of the HT roundtable) on the 11th of December at County Hall 9.30am to look at this, if anyone is interested in joining this group then please contact Ruth – ruth.sturdy@essex.gov.uk

Clare asked about Governors and what challenge do they offer to Sencos and Heads. One SENCO said that for her governors it is all about money and finance. Another Headteacher replied that her Governors were more concerned about the impact of SEND issues on staff. Another Head raised that working with an Autistic child has been very challenging, especially at lunch times when cover is not available sometimes. Midday assistants should not be placed in the front line including looking after children with complex issues.

Another SENCO raised an Infant problem is that the children who deteriorate between Reception and Year 2 have nowhere to go. There did not seem to be places at Special Schools for pupils in KS1

Ralph explained that historically the pressures were all about KS 2 but now this seems to be at Year 2 and Infants- this is a change which needs to be addressed so that the right provision can be put in place to meet the needs of pupils in Essex.

Another Head mentioned that there are cases where schools are probably all not meeting the needs of some of children with SEND across Essex. This may be true for pupils with physical disabilities where toileting provision may not be adequate to meet individual needs for example. There was a feeling that Specialist Teachers are promoting mainstream every time; Special School is not being presented as an option. Janine Hanson explained that there are limited KS 1 places available outside of mainstream support.

Another Head asked that there should be support for Parents to make the decision that whether mainstream or special will work for them. Clare highlighted that the review process is not working if parents are confused over which school best suits them. The answer is not to double the provision by building more schools, but it is being bolstered; however, as education professionals feel that they are not always able to provide appropriate education but are instead “holding” children until an appropriate provision can be found, then this is a real problem. Clare said she would accept an email short passage about an individual case. Ralph then asked that when writing these it would be useful to know what is the underlying need? Social, family, autism, SEMH etc

Clare felt that some of these children fall between mainstream and special schools? Is this a big group or smaller group of children? This is a piece of work which needs to be completed so we know numbers and the profile of these pupils

A head asked whether the enhanced provision can cover this? The Autism Support Hubs have not yet had the opportunity to build on outreach support so far, but Special School Hub Lead schools do have some capacity.

Clare said Essex have put in a bid to the Strategic School Improvement Fund. A possible cross between Grow and Thrive in the future? We will know the outcome in the new year.

Another Head raised the issue that a child in her school cannot relate to other children and will possibly fall under Social Care in adult life; he needs peer group and social interaction. Clare felt that we need to be more creative and flexible with solutions.

Another Head raised the issue of 21 children on the SEN register in her small school = 24% of the school population. Staff morale in this small primary school has been affected by this influx of children. The Head worked out the extra hours of support for teachers in classroom. FAST team costs her £2500 per year and a counsellor costs on top of this make it unsustainable in the future. Clare listened to this one issue and Ruth Sturdy has already a meeting planned in January to discuss this particular case.

Ralph asked if LDGs stopping has had an effect on support workers and other counsellors. Trying to access services is very difficult for schools. Clare said there is more provision coming on stream next year. The need for Grow is crucial and the purpose of this was to create a school to school model which has not succeeded so far- the needs being met are more complex than expected

Another Head raised the issue of pre-school issues having an impact – some children have not heard the word NO in their setting. Some parents say we do not want to talk to the pre-school.

A head raised about transition process between Primary to Secondary that the personalized support will be lost in a large setting and exclusions will follow and the frustrations schools feel is very tangible. A Nursery Head at Tanglewood; raised the issue that her Nursery is getting early intervention sorted but accepted not all pre-schools across Essex would be the same.

Clare discussed the issues around transition and she has put some challenges into the Secondary Settings about inclusion. As a generalisation the problem is held quite well until KS 4. Children's life chances are then diminished. Another significant issue about SEND is the permanent exclusion issue of 35 children this term (7 primary).

A further issue which needs further investigation is that a third of children are assessed as MLD problems, we are higher than the national picture. Is there a way that these children can be catered for without the need for a plan?

Tony Sale talked about thresholds, the culture of an area and the way that schools meet the needs of children in that area. The recycling of resources would help the overall system.

Clare agreed that the LA does lose Tribunals sometimes but the LA is holding their nerve over specialist out of county provision, when it is something we could deliver within the local authority, which will save hundreds of thousands over the lifetime of a child. Clare talked about parental engagement and 'buy in' to Local Authority Funding of supporting children with SEND. Labels are not helpful and this comes back to language. The more money spent on paperwork means less money for children in the classroom.

Emily talked about the way decision making and maintaining a rigor in these decisions, the challenge is making sure the decisions are fair. Tony reminded colleagues that schools can come as observers at panel.

Another Head talked about decisions for EHCPs for SEMH, the paperwork for an individual case had taken 9 months to be considered acceptable for panel to decide to assess- the paperwork provided did not change over this time. It had been turned down twice over that period. Clare highlighted that schools should understand why these cases are rejected.

Another Head highlighted that they had had the opposite in that they had amazing support for one child and he will succeed at Senior School. Ralph asked the question as to why have cases gone well? Please email him with any

feedback- Ralph.holloway@essex.gov.uk Clare would like to hear more success stories. She then went onto to talk about the review of EP/Specialist Teachers/rest of services the feedback will be valuable.

Another Head raised the whole issue of communication/oracy/language in pre-schools and not such a focus on academic learning. This investment could be crucial in the future.

Another Head raised the issue of parents knowing their rights and parents can sometimes be too frightened. How much support are parents getting to the hard to reach parents?

Clare confirmed a different model is now in place across Essex. Family Well-Being service is much more available in the community and is an out-reach service which targets vulnerable families– Public Office met with families and found interesting stats in terms of who is accessing the support.

One Head wanted to raise the issue of the lack of Health engagement and gave the example of Health sending letters to families and they had to take these into school. The Head then said three examples of how Health had mishandled health/SEND issues with families. Pediatrician has diagnosed that a child had ADHD but the child is not at all ADHD and functioning, at no point had the school been contacted for their views and knowledge of the child. Emily commented that the LA has had to challenge Health Professionals.

Clare explained how Health operated and she assured the meeting that the LA are advocating influencing the EHCP and not allowing them to influence plans without speaking to schools. Clare reiterated that there needs to be meeting with health to share these concerns. One planning should work to solve these issues. One Head said Doctors are still held on a pedestal; 'if the Doctor said' etc.

Another SENCO said that there should be clarification about language. National Curriculum levels need to be removed from the Provision Guidance is essential to get the language correct. Ruth Sturdy will work on this with relevant staff including the EP s and specialist teachers who wrote the original document

Clare summed up the meeting;

- The LA and EPHA will jointly produce notes of meeting
- A document looking at the outcomes of these SEND meetings
- Having these forums are useful – we will keep these going
- Key areas – Communication/Funding/Trust (works both ways)/process of EHCPs/Transparency/IPRA funding

- The need to challenge schools that are not “inclusive” in their practice
- Bigger elements about provision (send Ralph any good news stories)/holding children. Clare would like to know examples about these children
- School Readiness Strategy/Early Years/Transition issues into Reception needs to be further developed
- Great idea around Communication
- More Information about Family well-being – Clare will put more information in Education Essex in the future
- Health Issues in terms of engagement

3. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Clare would like these meetings to continue in the future.