



# ESSET UPDATE – SPRING 16

***Welcome to the third edition of ESSET UPDATE, a termly newsletter aimed at keeping colleagues informed regarding all ESSET activities and developments.***

***So we reach the end of an incredibly busy Spring Term and reflect on the continued development of the Essex Special School Education Trust.***

Since the last Update Grove House School has now formally joined ESSET meaning the Trust now consists of 19 schools, importantly all maintained special schools and special academies in Essex are members of the Trust.

ESSET has established its own website which can be viewed at

<http://www.esset.org.uk/>

The site, whilst in its infancy, includes links to each of the member schools websites, details of a couple of the key training opportunities offered by ESSET and a link to a shared calendar providing details of ESSET meetings.

## **ESSET School Organisation**

As mentioned in the last Update ESSET is continually reviewing its organisation to ensure the company is effectively structured to deliver its strategic objective of Leading SEN innovation in Essex

ESSET is currently structured as a School Company governed by the School Company Regulations 2002, which permit ESSET to carry out the following 3 main activities:

1. Provide specialist services or facilities for other schools e.g. providing training courses or specialist curriculum support;
2. Provide functions that LAs can contract out and
3. Purchase goods or services for schools that are members of the company e.g. to achieve economies of scale.

In its current organisational state ESSET is not able to achieve two of the key developments outlined in the Strategic Development Plan, namely;

- Make proposals to open and run free schools;
- Employ staff on either Teacher's or Local Government Pay and conditions (LGPS) to deliver services on behalf of the company.

Recognising the significant savings to be made in Capital Expenditure by establishing new schools under a free school bid rather than a special school

expansion and acknowledging the direction of travel regarding the Academy programme in the recent Government White Paper ESSET members are currently engaging governing bodies around establishing multi academy trusts that could work in partnership with the ESSET School company to achieve all of the objectives laid out in the ESSET Strategic Development Plan.

By establishing a number of small (max six schools) Multi Academy Trusts, possibly on a geographical basis ESSET, would have the structural capacity to propose new free schools including those identified in the SEN Capital Investment Strategy in Chelmsford, Braintree and Harlow. This would attract DfE Capital funding ensuring both sufficient funding to deliver the whole SEN capital investment strategy and releasing capital resources to ensure the best possible quality buildings for our learners.

These Multi Academy Trusts could also offer employment on both Teachers and Local Government pay and conditions, working in partnership with ESSET to ensure that commissioned services could be delivered most effectively.

ESSET hopes to be in a position to make proposals to establish three new free schools in the September 16 round of free school applications.

### **What are the benefits of this proposal?**

Firstly and possibly most importantly it puts special schools in charge of their own destiny against a backdrop of a significantly reduced commissioning role for Local Authorities. If ESSET does not take a lead in establishing, designing and running these new schools and delivering services to schools then somebody else will.

Moving forward would be on the basis of firstly (and continuously over time) creating additional capacity across ESSET to deliver specific projects and perform specific functions **and not relying on existing capacity being stretched even further**. Headteacher and governors should be encouraged to consider how additional capacity achieved through the ESSET model could actually create more time for core work rather than deplete it.

*Governance especially should be aware of the national drivers for school organisation and the pressures of reduced funding and the implications of remaining 'as is'. Governing body commitment and care over an individual school will, in the future, rely on partnership and collegiate working to achieve exemplary outcomes for their young people to a much greater extent.*

**Recruitment and retention;** building on the newly ESSET developed Aspiring Leaders in Special Education Programme by approaching staffing collegiately.

The Recruitment and Retention 'draw' of potential experience and CPD over the full range of Essex special schools; the opportunity to develop skills over a greater range of learner profile types, a wider range of roles and much greater opportunity for career development and progression.

The potential of using staffing flexibly across settings would present a solution to finding the right calibre of staff to meet needs with fewer issues caused by shifting funding for an individual school.

The ability to 'overstaff' in order to create capacity for outreach and to take on strategic projects over Essex and beyond.

***Economies of scale for goods and services to improve outcomes:***

Very simply, securing significantly better deals across ESSET and the increased influence over providers to improve rates and quality. Timely access to services, especially therapeutic, could be created if services were developed in house and this would also ensure schools had influence over the content and quality of what was on offer. Adding breadth to the curriculum and flexibility around pedagogy could be achieved through this model at less cost.

Headteacher and governors should also consider the benefits of pooling funding streams such as pupil premium grants and catch up for children in care; also by supporting better administration and devolution of SEN High Needs Block funding over school clusters.

***Standards, Performance and Outreach:*** building on the peer review process by developing in-house school improvement/development capacity in advance of diminishing support from the LA team. Support and guidance to reach and maintain 'Outstanding' could be made more easily accessible and bespoke; a robust mechanism for moderation of both learner assessment and wider school standards and sharing best practice could be developed. A rigorous moderation process across all ESSET schools would add credence to individual school self-evaluation.

ESSET wide practices and policies developed centrally would reduce the burden for individual schools and governing bodies.

Again with maintaining the out-facing nature of an 'outstanding' school In addition schools could benefit from additional capacity to deliver exemplary outreach to the mainstream sector; where more effective systems around admin, meeting a wide range of school advisory needs and providing CPD could be developed.

ESSET would be a market leader in specialist training and outreach support.

## ESSET Workstreams

In the last Update we identified the main workstreams ESSET are involved in supporting as follows.

<b>Finding Solutions for Hard to Place/maintain pupils</b>
<b>Joint working with Social Care</b>
<b>Joint Training and Induction for ESSET staff</b>
<b>Aspiring Leaders in Special Education – Training Programme</b>
<b>Securing appropriate therapeutic support for ESSET Schools</b>
<b>Essex Steps Training Programme</b>
<b>Special School Building Programme</b>
<b>Reviewing the SEN Funding Scheme and SEN Banding Descriptors</b>
<b>School Improvement Clusters and Funding</b>

Picking out a few highlights from activity around these workstreams last term;

**The Aspiring Leaders in Special Education course** continues to attract candidates. The third module (Effective Teams) of the four module course that can lead to a Masters accreditation will be rolled out over the Summer Term. This is the first module that will be chargeable as we refine the course structure.

Given what was read on page 43 of the Government's White Paper 'Excellence Everywhere'

*"We will convene experts to redesign voluntary, world class National Professional Qualifications to prepare leaders more effectively for the full range of leadership roles in the new schools system."*

ESSET have written to the Secretary of State for education offering our Aspiring Leaders Course as an example of a world class National Professional Qualification.

### Essex Steps Training Courses



Continue to be well subscribed, whilst the delivery to secondary mainstream schools has increased, this has always been at central venue courses with other schools present. Clacton County High School have been the first school to receive training for their entire Leadership Team in Step On.

A summary of our secondary colleagues' comments are as follows:

'Extremely helpful and applicable to practice'

'More secondary schools should have this training'

'Really enjoyed it and found it useful'

'Very useful for my role'

### **Overall Course Evaluations**

Delegate evaluations for all of these courses have been unanimously positive; regardless of the setting and with only marginal variations on the tutor delivering.

The product itself is clearly very robust and effective.

Tutors have asked delegates to rate Step On as: Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor and Inadequate on three issues:

1. Tutors knowledge of subject area  
This remains consistently over **92% excellent over the course of the year.**
2. Tutors presentation styles  
This remains consistently over **92% excellent over the course of the year.**
3. The extent to which the course met your needs  
**Over 85% graded this as excellent.**

(This statistic *remains* impressive as so many of the Step On courses run have been central venue EES courses with a wide variety of schools in attendance).

In its first year of operation Essex Steps has been delivered to well over 1,000 staff trained from a wide variety of 140 mainstream schools.

### **Restraint impact in ESSET schools**

At this stage, the impact on restraint reduction is predominantly anecdotal in nature, we have had countless testimonies to the effectiveness and impact of Steps from ESSET tutors.

Here are just a few of the testimonies from tutors from ESSET schools when they were asked to reflect on how Steps has developed in their schools:

'Big change, ethos is very different. Restraint is down from as many as 7 a day to 1 a term! Elimination of restraint is almost there. 3 children where there may be an issue. No step up needed!'

'We put a plan together for a specific pupil and there has been no RPI; we have just focused on de-escalation. Just using Roots and Fruits has been enough.'

'Only 4 audited need for students to be on an Individual Child Risk Management Plan. One student has been restrained once since September whereas previously it was 2-3 per week.'

ESSET members are playing an active role in the **review of the Banding Descriptors** as we look to reshape how pupils' needs are resourced.

A small number of innovative solutions have been found to support **pupils that were hard to place** or whose place was hard to maintain. There has been ESSET representation and input into all of the Hard to Place panels since the last Update.

The **recruitment and retention group** are operating a recruitment drive to attract special school teachers from Australia where schools have a very good reputation of supporting pupils with Severe Learning Difficulties. The ability to recruit and retain outstanding special school teachers is a key objective for ESSET especially as we move towards establishing a number of free schools and expanding existing special school provision.

The **special school building programme** continues to move forward with Edith Borthwick and Market Field Schools operating from new buildings. Expansion proposals for Glenwood School are now moving ahead and capital schemes have been given initial agreement for Oakview, Lexden Springs and Southview. Exploiting the government's Free School programme will make further new special schools affordable and allow the establishment of three or four new schools.

### **And Finally**

Congratulations to the following Headteachers and their staff following recent inspections

John Chadwick and staff at The Endeavour on a Good Ofsted inspection

Garry Walker and the staff at Ramsden Hall and the Interim Executive Board Members Steve Horsted and Judi Salter CBE, as the school moved from special measures to good following a full section 5 inspection

### **Meaning all ESSET schools are rated good or better by Ofsted**

Ramsden Hall also received a good judgement in a care inspection.

We welcome Michelle Kelly to the ESSET board of directors as she takes up her role as Head of Wells Park School after Easter and we brace ourselves to say farewell to four esteemed ESSET directors who have announced they plan to retire from their headteacher roles at the end of the 15-16 academic year.

Sally Davies OBE – Thriftwood

Steve Horsted – Pioneer

Jo Hodges – Shorefields

Ian Boatman – Edith Borthwick