

Meet the Trustees



Sue Bowen – Chair of Trustees

My background is as a primary school headteacher and then as a school improvement officer working with 22 primary schools in the Sale and Altrincham area. During this time I trained as an Ofsted inspector and inspector of Church of England schools. I retired from this work in 2006, carrying on consultancy work including inspection. Since I finally dropped my consultancy work and tried again to retire, I have been as busy as ever with voluntary work! I sit on the panel for Cheshire East's adoption service as an independent member, being adopted myself. I am an active member of Macclesfield Castle Rotary Club and was its first female president in 2013/14. I organise charity lunches for Marie Curie. I also play tenor horn in the Moss Rose Community Brass Band which is based at Ash Grove Academy. I was proud to be awarded NSPCC Cheshire Woman of the Year in 2012 for my voluntary work. In my spare time I am a fundraiser for Marie Curie Cancer Care, a Member of Macclesfield Castle Rotary Club, and a Founder member of Moss Rose Community Brass Band and Granny to four wonderful children. I enjoy reading, creative embroidery, knitting, eating, drinking and socialising with friends.



Ken Newton – Vice Chair of Trustees

I was born and brought up in Cheshire. I am married with three grown-up children and four grandchildren.

My hobbies include photography, painting, reading, walking to name but a few.

I come from a commercial background, working for an International Timber importing company as a management trainee. Eventually, I became M.D. of Manchester and Liverpool companies before moving south and being on the main board of the Mallinson Group, managing their portfolios in London.

I moved back to Cheshire and was a consultant to ailing timber import businesses.

I am a Governor at Ash Grove Academy and I'm able to give my commercial experience to the future of the school's development and success.



Kevin Simpson

I am currently the Executive Principal and CEO of the Aspire Educational Trust and have worked in education for the last 17 years. I have been Head Teacher of Ash Grove Academy for the past six years taking it from 'school causing concern' in 2009 to 'outstanding in all areas' in 2013. Since becoming outstanding we have been designated a National Teaching School, National Support School and DFE sponsor.

I am a National Leader of Education and as a result I have completed several deployments on behalf of the LA and other Academy Trusts. Our work has been recognised by the DFE (Broken Cross Academy) and OFSTED (Peover Superior Primary School). As a DFE sponsor I am currently supporting a school in Cheshire East, results have improved at all levels and the school is on an upward journey. I am passionate about school improvement and giving EVERY child the opportunities to achieve their full potential, regardless of their background.

As a champion for pupil premium I have been commissioned to carry out over 50 pupil premium reviews across Cheshire East. In addition I have developed several CPD opportunities including 'Middle Leadership for Pupil Premium Leads', 'Pupil Premium and SEN' and 'Moving from Good to Outstanding.' All of these courses have been fully attended and rated very highly.

As Head of the Aspirer Teaching Alliance I have been involved in all aspects of the 'Big 3' ranging from running research and development projects, leading ITT, and designing and delivering courses to a range of practitioners.



Michelle Copenhall

I am passionate about the educational standards of the children. I feel that a good primary education is pivotal in developing our children to deal with the challenges that they will face in secondary education and beyond with the right skills and confidence.

Professionally I am an experienced PA and administrator with particular strengths in organisation, systems, communication, planning and time management. I believe that the skills I utilise in my day job are extremely transferrable to being a school governor, in particular, for the role of Chair.

At home, I enjoy spending time with my family, my daughter loves History and Science, so we love visiting museums and National Trust properties. I also enjoy crafts and try and fit that in between being chef, chauffeur and personal assistant to a very socially active nine year old!



Jane Tomlinson

I recently retired after 35 years in primary education. My teaching career spanned the primary age range in schools in Knowsley, Lancashire and Cheshire. All the schools were located in areas of social and economic challenge.

My last 23 years have been spent at Underwood West, one of our Trust schools in Crewe. Initially I was appointed as Head Teacher of the Nursery and Infant School. In 2007 the Nursey and Infant School amalgamated with the partner Junior School to form Underwood West Primary School. In December 2016 the school converted to Academy status and joined the Aspire Educational Trust.

My time at Underwood West presented many challenges and periods of change including a fire which resulted in a new build for the school, an amalgamation, 10 visits from Ofsted and finally a very successful conversion to Academy status.

As a Principal within the Trust I have first- hand experience of the benefits of working together for our community and most importantly for our children to give all the opportunity to aspire to be the best they can be and achieve their full potential. As a trustee I intend to use this experience to actively support the future development of our successful Trust.

In recent years I have become a registered volunteer and fundraiser for Marie Curie and in 2014 I undertook a trek across the Sahara Desert with my daughters to raise funds for the charity. I also support with fundraising for the Maggie’s charity.

I hope this next stage of my life will allow me more time for this voluntary work alongside pursuing my love of travel, cooking, gardening and spending time with my family and friends.



Martin Elliott

Ensuring children get the best educational start is a passion, perhaps because I did not have such a great experience. I left school without any significant qualifications. Fortunately joining the GPO (BT) in 1968 as an apprentice. I worked for BT for almost 40 years, retiring as a contract director in 2007 and during my time I was able to obtain both technical and business/finance qualifications as well as experience in project, contract and commercial management.

We relocated to Holmes Chapel from Leicestershire in 1986 as part of my job promotion to Manchester. My wife is a retired KS1 primary teacher and we have two daughters who live in Cheshire East. My daughters enjoyed a great education at Holmes Chapel primary and wanting to give something back, I joined their governing board in 1990. During my years on the board I chaired all of the committees. When Holmes Chapel Primary joined the Aspire trust in 2018, I took the opportunity to join the trust board.

After leaving BT I was appointed as a school business manager in Crewe and then I worked part time at Waitrose in Sandbach, only finally retiring in Jan 2019. I am a member of St Luke’s Church Holmes Chapel, Congleton U3A and recently joined our local Probus group. Apart from family I enjoy holidays, yoga, pilates, walking and keeping fit in general.



Christopher Dean

I’m the ex-Headteacher of the David Lewis School, Great Warford (all age residential special school). I graduated from Imperial College London and worked in industry for several years before re-training to teach. I’ve worked for more than 30 years in education and held senior positions in a wide variety of schools for over 20 years.

I live in Langley, near Macclesfield, and I’ve lived in the area for more than 40 years. I have two adult children, both of whom attended state schools in Cheshire, and four grandchildren. The two grandchildren who live locally attend another school within the Aspire Trust.

I’m very aware of the demanding environment in which our current generation of schoolchildren may well spend their adult lives, and intend to see that the Trust provides the best possible start to their learning and development.

Kate Egdell

I am a Chartered Accountant by profession, currently Finance Director of a charitable Trust in the leisure sector. I have been a Governor at Ash Grove since 2008 and was Vice Chair for 6 years. I was appointed a Director of the MAT in 2013.