

Board of Trustees

Carlton Midgley (Chair, MAT Board) (re-appointed January 2022, for 4 years)

Amanda Bennett OBE (CEO)

John Midgley (re-appointed January 2023, for 4 years)

Illy Jaffar and James Power – ('new' Trustees recruited June 2020, re-appointed June 2024)

Mark McManus, David Purdon (Chair of Finance) & Vicky Stoneman – (new Trustees recruited July 2024; appointed w.e.f. September 2024)

Diane McConnell (appointed December 2024, previously Chair of LGB Carlinghow)

Trustees and areas of expertise/specialism (in alphabetical order of surname):

Amanda Bennett OBE – (Trust Chief Executive Officer)

As CEO of GHAT, Amanda has strategically lead developments and improvements across a growing MAT, including recently taking on 2 sponsor schools who both improved from special measures to good within 3 years. She has developed the MAT offer over the past 10 years from a SAT to a MAT with 9 schools across a 2-18 age range and 3 local authority regions. Amanda led the original successful DfE approved designations and school improvement designations including a SCITT, Research School and English Hub and as CEO she has steered the successful their recent reaccreditation. She has contributed locally to educational forums and boards, regionally with developments as a previous Chair of Calderdale Primary Headteachers' Association, Teaching School Council member and as an NLE/Pupil Premium Reviewer. She continues to provide academy leader representation and advice as an NLE Champion for Y&H NLEs with the NIoT, RDP contract holder supporting the matching of system leaders to the current DfE school improvement offer in Y&H and to the ESFA nationally as a Finance Steering Group member. Most recently as a CEO member of the Financial Oversight Simplification (FOS) Advisory Group, supporting ESFA compliance simplification developments.

Amanda was the Principal and Executive Principal of The Greetland Academy for over 20 years, after successfully applying for the post of Headteacher at Greetland School in 2002. Having worked to ensure its continuing success, the school was awarded the outstanding grade in all areas in 2007 - the end of Key Stage results being consistently above national averages. It converted to an academy in 2010 and in 2015, The Greetland Academy was recognised as 49th in the country in the Sunday Times School Guide. As CEO Amanda supported Greetland Academy regaining Outstanding in October 2021.

Illy Jaffar (Trustee)

An award winning, commercially astute, creative marketing and communications professional with over 25 years' experience including retail, managing iconic global/luxury brands, as well as launching and developing challengers. Illy has extensive experience from both his professional career and latterly running his own consultancy company. He worked for Asda, then Pernod Ricard for 11 years during which time he was promoted to Head of Marketing and Head of Brand Advocacy, where he travelled the world promoting the company's drinks products at various events and to large scale customers. He has created and delivered branded commercial properties such as the Perrier Jouet bar at Harvey Nichols. Illy spent 4 years as a Tour Manager for performing bands/artistes, organising several UK and world tours. He has always believed in nurturing and supporting the next generation of talent and is an active fundraiser for Teenage Cancer Trust and Childline.

Diane McConnell (Trustee)

Diane began her teaching career in a large Tameside Comprehensive school in the 1970s. Before leaving to start a family she had been promoted to Head of Mathematics.

After a move back to her native West Yorkshire she returned to work as Head of Department in a local high school. Diane's subsequent career involved leading and managing curriculum development; being responsible for pastoral development, behaviour, attendance and inclusion; safeguarding; timetabling and line managing core subject leaders. Diane spent the last ten years of her career as Deputy Headteacher before retiring in 2016.

Since then Diane has continued to be involved in education through governance. She Chaired the IEB when Carlinghow Academy joined GHAT and continued to Chair when Carlinghow moved to an LGB, resigning this position on being appointed a trustee in December 2024. Diane is also a member of the Colne Valley High School IEB since its inception in early 2024. Outside the Trust Diane is also Chair of Governors at a high performing LA primary school in Kirklees.

Mark McManus (Trustee)

Mark is a retired Chief Superintendent having served with West Yorkshire Police for over 32 years. He has 15 years senior leadership experience, working on various management teams within Districts, Departments and HQ.

He has vast crime investigation and safeguarding experience, being a District Detective Chief Inspector and former Senior Investigation Officer within West Yorkshires' Homicide and Major Enquiry Team. He has led and implemented several force-wide organisational change projects. Mark has significant partnership experience, working on various executive level boards, including community safety and child safeguarding partnerships.

Carlton Midgley (Chair of Trustees and a Member of the Great Heights Academy Trust)

Carlton is a former Headteacher who has worked as a School Improvement Partner since 2006, providing support and challenge to primary and secondary schools/academies. From 2008, for four years, he was National Challenge Adviser to five schools/academies, each of which significantly improved their percentage of GCSE 5ACEM. Carlton made a substantial contribution to their improvement through involvement in quality assurance, monitoring and review. He was also a member of the national DfE Steering Group.

Carlton led the successful Halifax Excellence Cluster for 11 years – providing support, challenge and additional funding to 26 schools. This organisation was a major factor in Cluster schools achieving the best ever KS2 and KS4 results in 2011 and in 42% of the schools becoming outstanding (from 0% in 2000). He has wide experience of working with schools causing concern, co-ordinating the necessary support, monitoring and evaluation. As a Registered Ofsted Inspector, he led over 40 inspections and acted as team member on 60.

Governance is a strength. Over the last 20 years, Carlton has been an effective Chair of six schools/academies – two secondary and four primary. During that time, he has led the governance of three schools from special measures to good, one school from maintained to academy status and one school to change its age range by closing its sixth form provision.

James Power (Trustee)

James is Head of Procurement for the Cumberland Building Society, responsible for all procurement and supplier management. He spends much of his time deeply involved in contracts and legal matters relating to performance and delivery. His areas of expertise include financial, legal, communications and marketing, human resources and facilities management. James has worked for a number of financial services firms, most recently NatWest, as well as a management consultancy firm specialising in procurement.

David Purdon (Trustee)

An experienced CEO, CFO, Non-Executive Director & Trustee with excellent motivational, organisational and communication skills. David is a fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. Having trained with EY, he had a successful business career becoming the managing director of a large multibranch electrical wholesaler, growing its business through a number of successful acquisitions. He then went on to serve as a non-executive director and chair of audit and assurance for a not for profit health and social care company, Sirona Care & Health CIC, who were responsible for all community health provision for the Bristol and Bath area. David was also a trustee and chair of audit for St John's Foundation, a large charity based in Bath with assets in excess of £130 million. In 2014 David spent a year in Albania with his wife (a qualified teacher) setting up and running a small school for the children of British, American and Dutch missionaries in Albania. He has recently relocated to West Yorkshire to be close to family.

(last updated, 22.09.25)