

## Our Team – Members

### **Craig Graham (Chairman of the Board)**

Craig originally wanted to pursue a career in law after studying it at University, but along with his business partner, decided to set up his own commercial estate agency business. Since 2011, his business has grown significantly into a group of companies offering advice, finance and agency services to both buyers and seller of businesses and commercial properties. Craig is hands on in his own business overseeing HR, Finance, Compliance and Operations, and his strengths to the school lie in commerciality and leadership. Craig is committed to enhancing the lives of young people and this fuels his desire for excellence within every aspect of the trust. Craig is an experienced school governor and has been involved with schools as a governor and chair of governors since 2013. Craig is a keen Rugby fan and in addition to the work he does with the trust his business is a patron of the Bolton Lads and Girls Club.



### **Ann Combes**

Ann is a retired teacher who spent the majority of her teaching career at Red Lane Primary School. As a highly experienced teacher, curriculum leader and Early Years specialist with responsibility for leading a large Early Years department, Ann's unwavering determination for high quality teaching and learning has permeated not only through her own career but also in her role as a governor and as Chair of the Local Governing Board at Red Lane for over 10 years. Ann has recently retired from the Local Governing Board.



### **Anthony Connell**

Anthony is a retired mechanical engineer with great experience of leading and building teams professionally as well as over 30 years governance experience within Bolton. Anthony brings a wealth of experience to his role as a Member of BASE Academy Trust. As a councillor for 25 years and as Mayor in 2008-2009 Anthony knows the local community well and is a highly respected member of the Bolton community.



### **Rachel Mercer**

Rachel graduated from Oxford University in 2012 with a PhD in Radiobiology. Having successfully completed a number of professional qualifications Rachel now works as a Patent Attorney and is both a Chartered Patent Attorney and European Patent Attorney. Rachel is an active Orienteer but previously has competed at three European Champion Club Cup events in Slovenia, Gateshead and Switzerland winning the bronze medal in the 1500m in Gateshead in 2004.



### **Gareth Smyth**

Gareth is an experienced Governor, Chair of Governors and CEO of a multi-million pound group of companies.

Gareth began working with schools in 2014 and since then has worked alongside school leaders to improve the school community and drive standards. After completing his LLB Law Degree at Bolton University, Gareth created an initially small Commercial Estate Agency with business partners in 2011. Today he has assumed the role of CEO of a group of companies which now encompasses an FCA regulated Financial Services division, employing a team of just over 50, meaning Gareth is particularly skilled in business, financing, cash flows and forecasts.

Gareth has nearly completed an MSc in Business Administration and plans to continue after completion with further education, whilst juggling his day job and various voluntary functions.

Born in Bolton and having attended a local high school, Gareth is passionate about ensuring children get the most from education. Away from work Gareth is a season ticket holder for Bolton Wanderers and plays football regularly. Additionally he is a gym fanatic and advocate of clean living and cooking. To relax, Gareth enjoys travelling to Spain and walking his dog around the Bolton countryside.

