



Annette Benny is the Trustee Chairman of the ACE Multi Academy trust. We asked her about her role.

So, what does your job as Chairman of the Trustees entail?

As Chairman of the MAT, I Chair the Board of Trustees. We are ultimately responsible for the running of the charity, making sure that the executive team deliver on the strategy we have all agreed.

How long have you been involved?

8 years in total – I took over as Chairman in January.

What do you get involved in on a weekly basis?

I have weekly contact with CEO, checking on his wellbeing, and the priorities and delivery of the plan. As his effective line manager, I have to challenge and seek assurance that things are happening.

How often do you meet as a Board of Trustees?

Every couple of months.

Do you undertake school visits?

It is important that we have some connection with the schools, but the main assurance around the schools is delivered through the local area representatives; they report to the trustees and provide assurance on educational standards and especially safeguarding.

How did you first get involved?

I was asked to be a governor at one of the Plymouth schools before the multi academy trust was formed.

What is your day job?

I am a Podiatrist by background; working in the NHS. I then had managerial jobs in the NHS, DOH, and commissioning group. Most recently I was Director of Corporate Affairs at Devon CCG, and helped create New Devon CCG, merging with South Devon and Torbay.

This is unpaid and takes up your time. Why do you do it?

The organisation we are part of serves the most vulnerable children in society, young people struggling with mainstream education. They need something more than mainstream. I am really proud of the outcomes that have been achieved. The staff believe in the young people and work with them to help them become contributors to society. As I think back to everything I have been involved in, I have seen that

whatever you do, you need good education and good housing to have a better quality of life. We work with the young people to persuade them that there is a different normal; they can have ambition, and the chance for a better future.

What are you looking for in the new Trustees?

Energy and drive; a strong values base; objectivity. I don't want simple supporters, I want accountability and challenge. Young people have choices and we need a range of expertise and challenge to push us to our next stage.

What can people gain by becoming a Trustee?

It gives a wealth of experience in terms of the education sector; mainstream and specialist. It is both interesting and important and I have gained insight into being part of a Board and the running of an organisation. For people who are new directors, or aspiring directors, it is an excellent way to make that step. You bring your existing skill set (finance, HR) and we can help you apply it to a different business and sector, to develop, enhance and expand your portfolio.