

Harlow Fields School and College - Strategic Intervention Board Pen Portraits

Heather Faulkner

Heather is recently retired and has experience in supporting schools and governing bodies in both LA maintained schools and academies. She has a degree in business administration and has extensive experience managing teams and projects. She worked for Essex County Council (ECC) for over 14 years and had responsibility for overseeing aspects of school improvement, the Early Careers Teacher and Initial Teacher Training programmes, workforce development and performance data for schools. She has experience of supporting governors through coaching and mentoring, finance and health and safety. She also has experience linked to statutory intervention boards in schools causing concern, appointed by Essex County Council and the Department for Education. Prior to her career at ECC, she worked at an international school in Singapore where she was responsible for the management of transport logistics and operations serving over 2000 pupils.

Jennifer McCutcheon

Jennifer has extensive teaching experience in Primary Schools and Special Education. Working for the local authority as a Specialist Teacher she supported pupils in mainstream schools and managed an Inclusion Project for the Local Authority. She believes passionately that all children are entitled to a good education.

Jennifer served as a Headteacher for 17 years. Under her leadership she empowered a strong and principled leadership team to ensure the Primary School remained a good school. Importantly, the team worked with other agencies to secure services for children and families. As Chair of the Basildon Education Partnership, Jennifer undertook a major role in the delivery of educational services in Basildon. Commissioned by Essex Local Authority, she undertook Executive and Associate Headteacher roles, improving schools in complex and challenging circumstances.

Following her retirement in 2019, Jennifer has continued to follow her commitment to secure a good education for all pupils, through her work in Governance. She has served as a member of Strategic Intervention Boards and Interim Executive Boards at the request of the Local Authority. Through this work, she has supported schools to improve their practice in key areas. She has worked with Governing Boards dealing with parental complaints and other sensitive investigations.

Currently, Jennifer is Chair of the Governing Board in a primary school.

Ruth Sturdy B.Sc, MA, NPQH

I have been involved in education for many years and am an experienced Senior leader who has worked in the mainstream and special school sectors as well as for Essex Local Authority.

I have just retired as the CEO of The SEAX Trust which is a trust of special schools in Essex. Since taking up the post seven years ago, all the schools in the Trust are judged Good or Outstanding by Ofsted with our newest school, The Hawthorns achieving 5 Strong and 2 expected grades in its inspection in January 2026 under the new Ofsted Framework.

I am passionate about young people with SEND being given the best opportunities to have a great life, whatever that means for them as individuals.

As well as my work for SEAX, I am also a trustee of The Solent Academy Trust, a member of Challenge Partners SEND Advisory Board and chair of the Essex Virtual School Governing Body.