

PROPOSAL FOR
Corfe Hills School
Ferndown First School
Ferndown Middle School
Ferndown Upper School
Parley First School

to join

Broadstone First School
Broadstone Middle School

as part of
CASTLEMAN ACADEMY TRUST

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION DOCUMENT
January 2020



Ferndown
Middle School



1. What is the proposal?

The Governing Bodies of five schools in the Poole and East Dorset area are individually and collectively proposing that their schools join an existing multi academy trust, Castleman Academy Trust, through either academy conversion or academy transfer.

The five schools proposing to convert to academy status are Corfe Hills School, Ferndown First School, Ferndown Middle School, Ferndown Upper School and Parley First School. This would mean the new expanded Trust would comprise the following schools.

Name	Age Range	Year Groups	Headteacher	Pupils	Most Recent Ofsted
Broadstone First School	5-9	R, 1,2, 3, 4	Mrs D Wilks	300	Outstanding
Broadstone Middle School	9-13	5, 6, 7, 8	Mrs D Wilks	514	Good
Corfe Hills School*	13-18	9, 10, 11, 12, 13	Mr P Keen	877	Requires Improvement
Ferndown First School	5-9	R, 1,2, 3, 4	Mrs J Di-Pede	340	Good
Ferndown Middle School	9-13	5, 6, 7, 8	Mrs G Allen	566	Good
Ferndown Upper School	13-18	9, 10, 11, 12, 13	Mr P Jones	886	Good
Parley First School	5-9	R, 1,2, 3, 4	Mr J Bagwell	312	Good
			Total	3,795	

* Corfe Hills School converted to academy status in 2011

The five schools would convert to academy status or transfer to join Castleman Academy Trust from September 1st, 2020. At this point, Castleman Academy Trust would become accountable and responsible for the schools' performance, standards and pupil outcomes. The schools' staff would become employees of Castleman Academy Trust.

2. Why and how have Governing Bodies arrived at this proposal?

2.1 The changing educational landscape

Each school is already successful in its own right, playing an important role within the communities they serve, with a distinctive ethos and individual approach. Each Governing Body is absolutely determined that their school should offer the very best quality of education enabling each pupil to fulfil their potential.

Yet this ambition is becoming harder to achieve in an increasingly challenging educational landscape of tightening budgets, greater scrutiny of school performance and pupil outcomes and the need to meet wider needs of children and their families.

It is government policy that schools should become academies and currently there are nearly 9,000 academies, the majority of which chose to convert to academy status. Around 35% of primary phase schools have become academies while 77% of secondary schools are academy status (*Source: DfE academies list census Oct 2019*). A key part of the academy policy is that schools should work in partnership with other schools through multi academy trusts rather than be on their own.

One consequence of Government policy is that there is less central money for Local Authorities, which in turn means less resources to support schools. It also means that in some cases, services previously provided to schools for free are now charged. So, schools are having to spend much more time and work harder to commission value for money, quality services.

Overall, it is getting harder and harder for single schools to continue to offer an excellent quality of provision and retain the very best staff while balancing their budget.

2.2 Making the three tier school system work

Castleman Academy Trust has been working with these schools on an increasing level, to develop and strengthen transition arrangements and curriculum pedagogy and practice. Geographically, they are very

close with no more than a 10 to 15 minute car journey between the furthest schools apart. The schools are all part of the three-tier system that operates within an area that is predominantly two-tier. However, most importantly, the schools recognised that the strategies they are already employing in their partnership working, their individual school's ethos and values and their commitment to helping each other improve, would be easier if the schools are legally aligned to each other.

In July 2018, the CEO was invited to meet with the secondary heads of the Trust's local feeder school and the secondary school they had been working with to support school improvement. The meeting was very positive and in November 2018 the CEO presented the strategic aims and educational vision of the Castleman Academy Trust to governors and headteachers of the proposed new schools. Their response was positive, and visits were then organised for the governors of the new schools to learn more about the Trust, how it works and share their own individual concerns and questions about joining a Trust.

2.3 Developing Trust plans

It was also recognised that the Department for Education would require robust Trust plans for school improvement, governance, leadership and financial management before they would approve academy applications from the five schools. The Headteachers and Heads of Schools of the seven schools and the Trust CEO came together to form a leadership group to develop detailed Trust plans. In parallel, with the strategic planning there was a thorough process of mutual due diligence between schools.

In September 2019 the five Governing Bodies and the Castleman Board of Trustees met to consider the Trust plans and the outcome of due diligence. All agreed to proceed with the proposal to expand Castleman Academy Trust, to submit applications to the Department for Education and to consult with stakeholders on the proposal. These applications were approved by the Department for Education on January 15th, 2020.

3. How will joining an expanded Castleman Academy Trust benefit our schools?

First and foremost, each school will be able to retain its particular ethos, values and culture, within a family of schools that share important beliefs and principles about the education of children.

Each of the schools will be able to develop stronger leadership and teaching staff because they can share expertise and best practice with a wider pool of colleagues, access better professional development and draw upon greater resources.

For pupils, this support for teachers will result in enhanced teaching and learning and a strengthened curriculum experience, giving children the very best opportunity to achieve the optimum educational outcomes.

Governors and senior leaders will have more time to focus on what happens in their own schools. The schools will be able to run more efficiently by accessing services and resources managed and commissioned across an organisation with funding of more than £20 million. The expanded Trust will be financially stronger and more operationally robust. Further benefits can be broken down by different groups within the school community.

Benefits of being part of Castleman Academy Trust			
Pupils & Students	Staff & Leadership	Leaders & Governors	School
Enhanced... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching and learning • Curriculum • Provision for SEND and vulnerable students 	Better... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional development • Coaching & mentoring • Subject/Dept expertise 	Greater... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership support & challenge • Leadership training • Governor training 	Effective and efficient... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central services • Procurement and commissioning • Resource sharing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra-curricular opportunities • Access to resources • Pastoral support provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic planning • Resource sharing • Peer-to-peer network • Career opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governor support • Operational management support • Focus on their school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy management • Systems & procedures

4. What is Castleman Academy Trust?

4.1 Trust History

Castleman Academy Trust (CAT) was established by Broadstone First School (BFS) and Broadstone Middle School (BMS) in 2014. Prior to that BMS had been identified by the Department for Education as under-performing and therefore needed to become a sponsored academy.

It was agreed that BFS, as a school judged *Outstanding* by Ofsted, would be that sponsor providing important school-to-school support and challenge to secure the sustainable improvement needed. The then Headteacher of BFS, Rhonda Moore, was appointed as Executive Headteacher of both schools and CEO of the Castleman Academy Trust.

The two schools have worked together almost seamlessly with Mrs Dawn Wilks as the Executive Headteacher and the two Heads of Schools, Ms Rebecca Wood (BFS) and Ms Jade Palmer (BMS). In December 2019 Ofsted judged BMS as *Good*.

4.2 Trust Vision & Values

In recent times the cohesion of local networks has been diluted by the initiation of different trusts and, as a result, links between headteachers have diminished. The proposed trust sees massive potential in the more formal relationships between the headteachers and wider staff in collaborating to deliver the highest educational standards for all pupils.

Working together to prepare our application has highlighted that we share common beliefs and values about education. We agree that together we will be more successful in:

“providing the highest quality, inspirational education and care that ensures every child in our local community reaches their potential, regardless of their background.

Learning at Castleman Academy Trust will enable all young people to become:

- **Successful learners** who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve
- **Confident individuals** who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives
- **Responsible citizens** who make a positive contribution to society.

Our schools reflect the values in our community that promote personal development, equality of opportunity, economic well-being, a healthy and just democracy and a sustainable future.”

The Trust believes in engaging fully with all parties with an interest in our children and will continue to work collaboratively and constructively with the Local Authorities we are a part of.

The characteristics of all the schools differ, but many of the challenges are the same. For example, the level of SEND learners ranges from 10% at Broadstone Middle School to 21% and 35% at Parley First School, respectively. Although the number of pupils with SEND is slightly below the national averages in most of the schools, there are still universal challenges in delivering optimum provision. There is significant expertise in this area at Parley who host bases for the Local Authority. This expertise will be utilised to ensure enhanced provision across all the schools in the Trust. English as an Additional Language levels vary from 2% of the school at Parley to nearly 10% at the Corfe Hills Secondary and Broadstone First. Again, working more closely together on this will enhance and strengthen provision.

5. How will our schools be governed, led and managed in the future?

5.1 Governance

Castleman Academy Trust has a governance structure based on the DfE model for multi academy trusts. There is a Board of Trustees, which is accountable to the Department for Education (DfE) for;

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding executive leaders to account for the educational and wider performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff; and
- Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.

Trustees are chosen for their individual and combined skills and expertise across education, school standards, pupil support and safeguarding, finance, HR, strategy, compliance and asset management. A list of current trustees can be found on the CAT website at <http://www.castlemanacademytrust.co.uk/castleman-trust>. It is expected that further Trustees will be appointed from the wider communities of the five schools joining CAT.

The detailed day-to-day running of each school would be delegated to the Local Governing Body (LGB). The LGB deals with the everyday management and organisation of the school in line with the CAT vision and values and encapsulated in the scheme of delegation. Each individual school would remain subject to individual Ofsted inspection. Each LGB would continue to have representation for parents, staff and the wider school community.

5.2 Leadership

Each Head teacher would continue in their role and responsibilities with delegated authority as is currently expected. They would each be part of a Trust leadership group, led by the CEO.

CAT CEO, Rhonda Moore, will be accountable to the trustees for the Trust's effective, efficient management and operation which ensures value for money and probity with public finances.

5.3 Finance

CAT school funding will still be calculated and allocated on a per school basis with each school contributing to the costs of central services provided by the Trust. The Trust's finances are subject to close scrutiny by the DfE's Education & Skills Funding Agency and independently audited accounts are published. As part of its delegated authority, each school is expected to manage its budget within its allocated pupil funding.

5.4 School name, identity and admissions

Each school's name, identity and uniform will remain the same and each school retains control over the admissions policies and processes, which must be compliant with the national admissions code.

6. How will pupils and students be affected?

In many ways, children will not notice any immediate change should their school join CAT. Pupils will continue to be taught by the same teachers in the same classrooms. Over time, pupils may notice some changes in the way they learn and be able to access a wider range of opportunities, as they benefit from trust-wide initiatives to enhance teaching, learning, the curriculum and their school environments.

7. How will staff be affected?

If the plan goes ahead, staff would go through a transfer of employment under TUPE Regulations. These regulations protect the terms and conditions of staff at the point of transfer.

All staff would continue to work in their current school with the same responsibilities as now. There may be opportunities for some staff to take on wider responsibilities across schools to enable the Trust to function effectively and efficiently. Staff members would also have access to enhanced professional development opportunities. There are no plans to make any posts redundant as a direct result of joining CAT.

8. What are the risks of the plan?

There are different risks for the two parties to the plan, Governors of the five joining schools and CAT Trustees.

8.1 Risks for the Governing Bodies

For the schools proposing to join CAT, the first risk is associated with not proceeding with the plan. As described in section 2.1, schools are dealing with an increasingly challenging educational landscape with limited resources to be able to sustain standards effectively. The second risk is that of joining the wrong multi academy trust. Governing Bodies have carried out a very thorough investigation to identify the most appropriate Trust in CAT and a robust due diligence process to understand the implications and potential risks of Trust membership.

On balance, each Governing Body believes that the risks of the status quo are too high for not to join a multi academy trust and that the risk that CAT is the wrong multi academy trust is very low.

8.2 Risks and benefits for CAT Trustees

For CAT the benefits of five schools joining are clear. Each of the schools has much to offer in terms of expertise, best practice and resource. CAT will also be able to secure greater efficiencies in procurement and resource management. The main risk to CAT is ensuring capacity to support seven schools. Careful plans have been put in place to ensure the Trust has adequate resources to meet this challenge.

9. Consulting with stakeholders

The Governing Bodies and Headteachers agreed to run a coordinated consultation across the five schools. The consultation is running for four academic weeks from Monday, January 20th until Friday, February 28th, 2020.

9.1 Parent consultation

A programme of parent consultation meetings has been held, as below. Parents were welcome to attend any of the meetings regardless of the school their child attends.

School	Parent Meeting dates & times
Ferndown First School	9.00am Tuesday, February 4 th
Ferndown Middle School	2.00pm Tuesday, February 4 th
Ferndown Upper School	6.00pm Tuesday, February 4 th
Corfe Hills School	6.00pm Wednesday, February 5 th

The format of each was identical with brief presentations explaining the proposal and then parents/carers had the opportunity to ask questions. The questions and answers (Q&A) from those meetings are to be published on school websites by Tuesday, February 11th 2020.

9.2 Staff consultation

There was a joint meeting for staff of the five schools at 4.30pm on Monday, February 3rd at Ferndown Upper School. The format of the meetings was the same as the parent meetings with a brief presentation explaining the proposal and then staff had the opportunity to ask questions. The questions and answers (Q&A) from those meetings will be distributed to staff on (or before) Tuesday, February 11th.

9.3 Consultation survey

The Governing Bodies will be conducting an online survey to assess and understand stakeholder views. This will open on Thursday, February 6th after the last consultation meeting and close at midnight on Thursday, February 27th.

9.4 Report on consultation

An external advisor will prepare a report on the outcome of the consultation, which will be considered by Governing Bodies as part of their final decision-making at a joint meeting on Tuesday, March 10th, 2020.

The report will be published soon after that joint meeting along with the decision of each Governing Body.

10. Next Steps

If all five Governing bodies and CAT Trustees agree to proceed with the proposal at their meeting on March 10th, 2020, then the five schools will join the expanded Castleman Academy Trust on September 1st, 2020 (subject to completion of legal and regulatory tasks).

Should you have any further questions regarding the proposal, please contact us at school (Tel. 01202 873747 or email office@fernfirst.dorset.sch.uk)