The last four months of this year have been incredibly busy for all at Castleman Academy Trust.

Notably, four out of our five schools have been inspected by OfSTED and continue to be graded as “Good”. This means all schools in the Castleman Academy Trust are “Good” schools.

Whilst I understand the thinking around the one word grading system, it certainly doesn’t cover just how hard our schools work to make learning exciting for our children and offer far more than just academic learning.

As parents, we look for schools that will ensure our children learn knowledge we know they’ll need in later life, as well as they possibly can. All of our schools do that. So, what is it that makes us choose a particular school for our child . . . what truly makes a school “good” in our own eyes?

Parents tell me they want a school that offers more than just academic learning. They want a school that gives their children the opportunity to try new things, to help them discover what their passion is. That might be sport, or dance or public speaking or history. It might be interior design or forensic science. It might be astronomy or a sport they’d never get to do if it wasn’t for school - like frisbee! Parents want their children to learn outside of school through trips and residential. They want their children to learn from experts who visit the school to inspire their children to do great things.

Parents want their child’s school to help their children become great future citizens. The children of today will have to solve some big problems, so we need them to be thinkers and listeners so that they can work out the answers to issues that haven’t even been identified yet!

Our children will be the doctors, nurses and care home staff of the future. They will be looking after us when we are unable to look after ourselves. We want them to be kind and compassionate, looking after the most vulnerable so that we can all lead fulfilling lives.

Parents want teachers and learning support assistants who truly know their children. Staff who support them and their families when it’s tough, and celebrate with them when things are good. Parents want staff who are kind but challenge our children to be the best they can be.

What the parents of our community want from our schools, so does the Castleman Academy Trust. From our Central team to the staff who work with our most vulnerable learners; from the Trust Board to the Governors in our schools who constantly look for ways they can support schools to be better; 

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At Parley First School we are taking part in an exciting project to develop careers teaching for Primary age children. The project is called ‘Start Small, Dream Big’ and is in partnership with Bournemouth University, Dorset Council, The Careers and Enterprise Company and backed by the Department for Education.

We feel passionately that children have a purpose for their learning in School but do they know what jobs they would like to do? Research has shown that primary age children have very limited ideas of possible jobs as well as significant stereotypes. This is not just in the STEM subjects but across many different professions.

The project is research based and aims at engaging different professions in schools to broaden children’s understanding of the work they do and of course hopefully inspire them to work towards that goal.

Our aim is to get a range of professions to come into school to talk to the children about different jobs and give children an opportunity to ask questions to find out more.

We have already had a British Airways Pilot and members of the emergency services and we plan for more professions including digital media, environmental roles, and construction to name just a few.

John Bagwell
Head Teacher
Parley First School

Rhonda

CASTLEMAN ACADEMY TRUST  “Children First, Always”

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It has been a wonderful half term at Broadstone First School. The last few weeks have been full of exciting and fantastic opportunities. We have welcomed our new reception learners and families who have settled well into school life.

Sport remains a high priority for us at BFS, this half term so far, we have seen a number of learners, wear our school PE kit with pride. Eight Year 4 Sports Ambassadors took part in the School Games leadership training programme. Our learners completed a variety of workshops aimed at encouraging active playtimes being ambassadors and role models for advocating PE and school sport at BFS.

Our annual election day has taken place at BFS this half term. All learners headed to the hall to cast their vote to decide who would be the best candidate to represent their class in the BFS School Council. We were blown away by the number of children who put themselves forward and voiced their speeches. Ten successful candidates were announced as our new School Council representatives. They are extremely eager to begin their meetings and voice opinions to further support our school.

All-aboard our brand new library bus! We are really pleased to have opened our new library this term. The bus is permanently located in our main playground and has been transformed into a real reading treat. This exciting new addition supports in putting reading at the heart of our school, promoting a love of books and regular opportunities for our learners to share stories in a unique space.
King’s Park Care Home

We have been developing links with King’s Park Care Home. Our Reading Leaders have been visiting the residents every fortnight to read and share stories with them. Rebekah Goddard, Home Services Advisor at Kings Park, said: “The residents here really love any kind of intergenerational activities and get so much from meeting the children. They were really engaged with them and the residents shared some of their favourite stories from their childhoods too and were surprised when some of the same books had stood the test of time, still being read by today’s generation.” (Dorset Echo article)

Supporting our local community

We are incredibly lucky to have a school that sits right in the heart of Ferndown. Our local town offers many opportunities to support children’s learning whilst also providing opportunities for children to give something back to the community.

Over the years we have developed strong links with many organisations such as The Barrington Arts Centre, Ferndown Library, The British Legion, St Mary's Church, Ferndown Day Centre as well as many of our local care homes.

Our link with St Mary’s Church goes back many years. Each year we hold a Harvest, Christmas, Easter, and summer service. The children lead the services themselves with poems, songs, and prayers. They are a highlight of the school year and looked forward to by children and parents alike. Recently, staff from St Mary’s have supported the teaching of our RE curriculum.

The school choir rehearses throughout the school year, led by our music teacher Mrs Charters. Christmas is their busiest period. The choir sang to open the Ferndown Community Support Christmas Fayre, at Ferndown Day Care Centre, on Sunday 19th November. They are currently rehearsing for their ‘Choir on Tour’ which will see them sing at the library, The Beacon Cafe and 7 local care homes.

Each year, to commemorate Remembrance Day, our School Councillors attend a short service outside The British Legion in Ferndown and lay a poppy wreath which the children make in school.

The Barrington Arts Centre provides the fantastic opportunity for our Year 4 children to perform their annual production on a real stage with professional lighting and sound. Children audition for singing, acting and dancing parts. This year the children are performing the musical Peter Pan. Previous productions have included Robin Hood, Cinderella and Jack and The Beanstalk.
It is great to have the opportunity to promote the positive aspects of Food and Nutrition at Ferndown Middle. The teaching of Food and Nutrition has changed over the years in many aspects; from what we call the subject to what we teach and how we react to the current financial and environmental climate. Ultimately, though the subject at its core is the same, to teach pupils how to have fun with food, feed themselves and understand how the food we eat can benefit our bodies.

To keep the subject relevant, interesting and challenging for the children we like to keep an eye out for opportunities to work with people from outside of our school.

We are currently working with Jamie Oliver and his team this year to help pilot a programme to raise the profile of food and food education in schools. He is very passionate and really wants the children to enjoy making, tasting and engaging with food.

“My goal is that together we can raise the profile of good food and food education in schools, and prove to the government that it deserves a prominent place in their health and education policies.”

JAMIE OLIVER, 2023.

The team have provided year 7 with lots of tasty recipes and theory and the children have responded really well to them. The fajitas (below) were a particular hit.
The start of term has been really busy, but exciting, with a year 7 Trip to the Tank Museum, year 6 Beach Clean and a University of Broadstone Curriculum outcome day. The outcome days allow parents to come into school and see what the children have been doing within their UBCs. Students chose 4 UBC activities throughout the year and each Wednesday afternoon they are off their usual timetable to engage in these. This year, there have been many choices for the students including Blank Canvas (tattoo design), Spanish and Chess Masters. We have also started auditions, casting and rehearsals for our whole school performance of High School Musical which will be taking place in July at the Layard Theatre at Canford School. We have been really proud of our choir who have visited a local care home to sing to the residents and are also performing at our upcoming parent Book Look evening, as well as preparing for the Christmas Concert. We are further developing the House system this year, with every student in either Attenborough, Dyson, Rowling or Da Vinci. Each house has its own colour and we are having set house events throughout the year, as well as social time competitions for the children to gain points for their house. There has been a great level of friendly competition between the students! In addition, we have been working with the Steve Bernard Foundation who kindly funded some equipment to launch a new Bootcamp club to help children get into exercise. They have also provided funding towards our Broadstone Positive Action Volunteers programme which encourages the children to volunteer in their local area.

The whole school worked really hard in October to collaborate on a Remembrance project. This is on display at the front of the school in honour of the heroes who fought, and continued to fight, so courageously for our country. Children from every class created beautiful poppies making use of recyclable materials. These were strung together by a dedicated team of children to create a wave of Remembrance poppies on our school gates. Our student Eco-Warriors worked alongside this project to create a Remembrance garden on the entry way to the school building. Stewarts Garden Centre kindly donated some stunning red cyclamen to plant. The Broadstone British Legion also gifted us a Tommy silhouette to be part of the Remembrance Garden. It has been a poignant delight to see our children taking such care and dedication in this remembrance project and sharing their own stories about friends and family members that come to mind at this time of year in particular.
Mark Grigsby
Chair of the Trust

It’s hard to believe that it’s already the end of another busy term, and even harder to believe that we will shortly be celebrating the 10 year anniversary of Castleman Academy Trust!

The Trust began in 2014 with Broadstone First and Middle Schools, and in January 2021 we were proud to add Ferndown First, Ferndown Middle and Parley First to our Trust family.

Looking back just a few years, it is amazing at how much progress we have made in how we work together, learning and inspiring one another to achieve the best outcomes for our learners. The schools are supported by a lean but highly skilled and vastly experienced central team, who lead the strategies for Curriculum, Finance, Governance, HR, IT and SEND, flowing to support each school as needed. We are delighted that all five of our schools have now received ‘Good’ OFSTED ratings during their time as part of CAT, and we are extremely grateful to everyone associated with our schools for their ongoing support.

It just remains for me to wish you a very Happy Christmas and all the very best for 2024.

As always, you’re welcome to get in touch with me directly at mgrigsby@castlemanacademytrust.co.uk.

WE ARE SEEKING VOLUNTEERS

• Do you have a little time to give something back to our community?
• Are you a strategic thinker?
• Are you keen to support the vision of an inspirational education for all children?

If you can answer yes to one of these questions, why not consider volunteering as a governor in one of our schools.

What is a School Standards Board?

School Standards Boards are made up of elected parent governors and appointed community governors. Some boards also have an elected staff governor. The School Standards Boards monitor school standards and support the Senior Leaders to ensure the very highest quality provision for our children. In essence, local governors “champion the school experience for the child, the family and staff”.

What does a school governor do?

School governors will fulfil their functions in a variety of ways, including:-

• Contributing to strategic discussions at meetings, to ensure the very best opportunities for all learners.
• Reading reports prior to meetings and asking questions of challenge at the meeting.
• Challenging and supporting Senior Leaders to achieve ambitious strategic priorities and targets for the school.
• Taking on a link governor role with a particular focus, based on your skills and available time, and linking this into occasional school visits.

There is a short video clip on the website of the National Governance Association about the role of school governor www.nga.org.uk/Governance-Recruitment/Be-a-school-governor-or-trustee.aspx.

Our governors will normally attend six meetings a term and probably visit school once or twice during the year to fulfil their function.

A number of our schools are looking to recruit to community governor vacancies. You cannot volunteer to this role of your child’s school, but had you considered volunteering to this role in one of our other CAT schools? Do you have friends/neighbours/work colleagues who might be interested in supporting local education?

Further information about governance within our Trust can be found on the website - www.castlemanacademytrust.co.uk/about-us/governor-and-trustee-vacancies/

If you are interested in exploring one of these opportunities, please contact Gill McDonald, Director of Governance Operations, on gmcDonald@castlemanacademytrust.co.uk