

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

to join as part of the

CASTLEMAN ACADEMY TRUST

STAFF CONSULTATION MEETING
3RD FEBRUARY, 2020
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ARISING AT MEETINGS

February 2020



Ferndown
Middle School



PRESENT

120 staff from the following schools:-

Parley First
Ferndown First
Ferndown Middle
Ferndown Upper
Corfe Hills

Head Teachers
Rhonda Moore, CEO, Castleman Academy Trust
Philip Cranwell, Cranwell Consultancy, employed by CAT to manage the project

Welcome and introductions were given by Philip Jones, Head Teacher of Ferndown Upper School

Background

Philip Cranwell, Rhonda Moore and the Head Teachers explained the proposal for five schools to join Castleman Academy Trust (CAT), together with the advantages to staff, schools and pupils. Additionally, they outlined the work that has taken place to date. Detail can be found in the powerpoint presentation. Head teachers stressed the move towards academisation from the government, and their desire to choose the right trust for their schools.

Next steps

The questions and answers from all consultation meetings will be published next week, together with a report on the proposal. All stakeholders are urged to take part in a consultation survey which will be launched on 6 February. After closure of the consultation, Philip Cranwell will prepare a report for governors to consider before they make a decision whether to proceed on 10th March.

The following questions were raised:-

Castleman Academy Trust (CAT) and its Expansion

If the trust were to have a new CEO who had a different outlook, how vulnerable are we to become an academy chain?

The trust will always interview prospective trustees to ensure that they are aligned with our vision and values and many come from schools within the trust. The Trust Board would always look for a CEO with the same values and vision and the Leadership Group would be involved in the appointment. Trustees will be asked to sign up to a Memorandum of Principles.

What would happen if the CEO did go off on a tangent?

The Trustees would have the ability to intervene, but both the leadership group and governing bodies would be able to flag any concerns with the Board.

What is the composition of the trust board and will that change significantly to ensure appropriate expertise is represented on the board?

Governors from all schools were invited to become board members. Broad areas of expertise include HR, finance, small business owners, primary and secondary educational experience.

When will you be able to share details of the trust board members?

The details are on the trust website governance page and there are no proposals to change this, although the Board currently has one vacancy. The trust is a charitable organisation bound by charity law and trustees are

volunteers. Trustees cannot be paid and there are strict rules about finance and conflict of interest. The trust's accounts are available on the trust website.

Is there a trustee on the board to represent the creative arts, in these times of funding squeeze?

Not currently, but we are committed to ensuring a broad curriculum across all schools. Additionally, the governing bodies of each school will be looking to support a broad and balanced curriculum in their school and governors have been extremely impressed with the collaboration that has already taken place between heads.

What are the disadvantages of joining a MAT?

A document will be circulated which will include all risks to the plan, alongside the risks of remaining maintained schools. Head teachers feel that there is little advantage in remaining with the LA due to the dwindling support available. It was recommended that staff look at the research completed by Leora Cruddas and the Confederation of School Trusts to find out more about the benefits of joining a MAT.

Governors and heads have been discussing academisation for a number of years and have been looking at the options. Discussions with the Regional School Commissioner's team led to a number of recommended options which they have carefully considered and discussed. They are attracted to CAT because they like their ethos and approach, and their support of our ethos of working together as a pyramid. This can be seen as an exciting opportunity

Will the trust aim to make all the schools similar?

No, the USP of CAT is that we encourage schools to retain their individuality. Head teachers and governors will continue to work together with staff to ensure that their structure is right for their school. Head teachers confirmed that currently, staff and governors review the staffing structure each year to ensure that it continues to meet the requirements of their pupils and that process will not change.

Governors have been keen to understand those decisions that will remain with the governing body/school and those decisions that will be made by the Trust. Trustees are ultimately responsible for outcomes across the trust, but the staffing structure, planning and curriculum delivery to ensure great outcomes remains the responsibility of the school.

Financial Implications

How is money shared out between schools?

Each school will receive the same funding formula from the DfE. The Head Teachers will work out the central services they would like from the trust which will dictate the trust central budget, which will be allocated on a percentage basis for each school. Each school will be responsible for allocating its spending and each school will retain its reserves.

Is there any estimate as to the percentage top-slice the Trust will be likely to take?

We will look at the detail of this once the governing bodies have finally committed to go ahead with the expanded trust. The CAT commits to being simple and low-cost and that commitment will continue. Schools are already paying for back-office services, we are looking to make that cheaper with economies of scale.

Will schools in deficit get financial support from the trust?

The trust would help support a school to recover from the deficit, which may involve a short-term loan. But it is a really important principle for head teachers and governors that schools will retain their surpluses, although they could agree a short-term loan to another school. Schools, as now, will be required to set balanced budgets.

Land and Buildings

What is the system for large building projects?

Maintained schools bid to the LA for capital funding, however the proposed size of CAT would mean that the DfE directly pay £0.5-075M per annum for capital works across all buildings. Therefore, the trust would need an asset management plan and can deliver project funding for schools in the trust.

Can the trust sell off assets?

No, the land is owned by the LA and the trust will have a 125 year lease. The Trust would have to seek permission from the LA to make any material changes to the buildings.

Collaboration Between Schools

Where you mention more centralised working together for extra-curricular activities, how is that achievable geographically?

That refers to working together on organisation and support to enable schools to provide more extra-curricular activities at achievable costs.

With two upper schools, is there scope for combining classes for marginal subjects?

Yes, there could be scope for appointing one member of staff to work across both sites.

With the opportunity for more centralised resources, would you support music specialist bid to become their own independent music hub?

If that's what schools wanted to do and head teachers can recommend such a course, then the trust would seek to support.

Staffing

Will there be any redundancies?

Not as a result of joining the Trust.

Will there be a pay date change?

We've not yet done the pay analysis, but we will avoid that if we can. If there were a change in pay date, there would be an appropriate consultation.

Will pay still be negotiated under the Green Book and NJC guidelines?

Yes, there will be no detriment to working for CAT, scales will be at least as good as the national and local guidelines.

With a proposed date of 1st September, will there be enough time to put HR and financial resources in place? How will that take place?

Head teachers and governors have started planning for HR and business transition. This plan will be implemented once the governing bodies have agreed to move forward following consultation. At that point, finance staff will come together to plan financial resources.

Will there be a requirement for new personnel?

Not at the moment. We have an HR SLA as a 2-school trust, but will do a procurement exercise as a larger trust. Where we currently have six SLA contracts, we would plan to move to single contracts across all schools.

If you are centralising services, can you confirm that there will be no redundancies?

There are no plans for redundancies – structures would be reviewed when staff leave post. Restructuring will be focussed on processes and systems rather than personnel. However, whilst CAT will operate a structure based on

autonomy, that comes with the responsibility of head teachers and governors to set a balanced budget. That might require difficult decisions for them in the future, but that would not come as a result of joining CAT.

What reassurance can you give that the needs of secondary pupils will be reflected in the leadership structure of the MAT?

The two secondary head teachers have already looked at the strengths and weaknesses of each school to identify where they can support each other. Rhonda brings a host of contacts who can support CAT across all phases. It will be the role of the two secondary heads to ensure that key stages 3-5 are supported appropriately. We have expertise from the secondary phase on the trust board. The trust improvement plan that was submitted to the DfE as part of the application reflects all phases within the trust and was put together by the leadership group.

Does the trust commit to STPCD?

Yes, the trust commits to providing at least as good as STPCD. The Trust also adheres to the Burgundy Book and the Green Book.

Will the trust remove TLRs from schools?

No, all employment T&Cs will continue on transfer and TLRs will continue to form part of the Trust Pay Policy. The Head teacher and governors will continue to make decisions on TLR appointments. The Trust will need to ensure that it is treating all staff fairly and will deal with any variances in liaison with governing bodies and head teachers.

If one school chose to make redundancies to balance the budget but there was an opening for staff elsewhere, would in-house transfers have preferential treatment to outside candidates?

Through the 'suitable alternative employment' rules, in that scenario staff can be offered an alternative post in another school.

Therefore, from the receiving school's perspective, would the head teacher not be in full control of recruitment in this instance?

This is employment law that the trust has to comply with, but it would only be if there was the ability to offer an equivalent job.

Who is responsible for recruitment?

Head teachers remain responsible for recruitment in their schools, with the staffing structure agreed by the head and governors.

Ferndown Middle School has subject curriculum leads, which we have found to be a beneficial system. We know that Broadstone Middle operate differently, would we be expected to move to the Broadstone model?

No, it will remain the responsibility of the head teacher and governors to decide the staffing structure in their school.

Term Dates

Would there be a confirmation of term dates?

The Trust will follow the term dates set by the local authorities, but there may be some joint INSED days.