

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

# PARENT CONSULTATION MEETINGS 4<sup>th</sup> AND 5<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY, 2020 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ARISING AT MEETINGS

February 2020



Ferndown  
Middle School



Please read this document in conjunction with the power-point presentation used at the consultation meetings and the consultation document giving full details behind the proposal.

## **Notes**

CAT = Castleman Academy Trust

DfE = Department for Education

LGB = Local Governing Body (within each school)

MAT = Multi-Academy Trust

Trust Board = Board of Trustees responsible for oversight of the CAT

Leadership Group consists of all head teachers in the CAT, chaired by the CEO

Rhonda Moore – CEO of Castleman Academy Trust

Philip Cranwell – Cranwell Consultancy – project manager employed by CAT to manage the proposal plans

## School performance/day-to-day running of schools

### ***How will the independence and great achievements across our schools not be diminished as part of the MAT?***

The autonomy of each school will continue, but there will be greater opportunities to share ideas. The Trust will also ensure that schools are scrutinised by external partners as well as from within the trust so that standards are maintained. The application to the DfE required a detailed plan for future development and strategies of the trust, which has been put together by the head teachers.

### ***Is there a plan to change the curriculum to a Trust-wide curriculum?***

No, all schools will follow the national curriculum but decisions in how that is delivered will be school based. Being part of a MAT will give greater opportunity to collaborate and share ideas.

### ***What guarantees can you give that the young people won't be unsettled by this change?***

The role of the trust is to support its schools to be the very best for its young people. The head teacher, staff and day to day running of the school will not change, therefore the young people should not be unsettled. The schools have deliberately chosen a trust that shares their vision and ethos.

### ***How is performance reported as an academy? Can we be sure that this proposal will improve outcomes?***

Outcomes will still be reported to the DfE as individual schools and schools will still receive individual Ofsted inspections. Each school will report to the CEO, for onward reporting to the Board. The CEO will report overall performance of the trust to the Trust Board and to the schools. Research shows that voluntarily converted academies would appear to perform better than LA schools or sponsored academies. This link may provide further information on the performance of academies - <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/impact-academies-educational-outcomes/>

### ***What are key success measures of an academy trust versus an individual school?***

CAT has a number of Key Performance Indicators, at the heart of which is the performance of the schools. Whilst we measure academic outcomes, we also measure personal development of young people and ensure that our workforce feels valued and supported. We will always look for best value for money to keep our back-office costs as low as possible so that we can feed as much financial support as possible into the education of our young people.

### ***Would schools still be responsible for their lunch provisions?***

Yes, although they could look at economies of scale by tendering together.

### ***Will each school still run its own PTA?***

Yes, unless they wanted to run together.

## Information about CAT

### ***We are told that CAT is a strong organisation for two schools, what experience has it of running a larger trust?***

Most MATs started with 2-3 schools. The Trust Board members have a wealth of knowledge and experience, including primary and secondary education, accountancy, safeguarding, HR and IT. All trustees are volunteers, the CEO is the only paid trustee. The CAT had an external review of governance in 2019 by a National Leader of Governance recommended by the Regional Schools Commissioner's Office. He reported that our ways of working are seen to be scalable to this level.

Rhonda has a background of working across the South West Region as a National Leader of Education, working to draw people to work together on a regional scale. Philip Cranwell has completed 152 previous academy conversions and has put us in touch with other trusts who have followed a similar path. We have had to submit an extremely detailed application to the DfE, which has been approved.

## Proposed growth of CAT

### ***What is the consequence if one school decides to opt out, particularly with regard to the children's journey through the pyramid?***

Existing collaboration between schools would continue for transition, however it would not be within the context of a single organisation. All Governing Bodies believe this is the right move for their school and are currently in agreement to move forward, subject to the outcome of the consultation, therefore would be unlikely to pull out unless the consultation is very strongly against the proposal.

### ***Why are some schools within the pyramids not involved? Why can't Ferndown form its own trust?***

Some schools in both pyramids have become part of other MATs, however we will continue to work closely with all local schools to share best practice and ensure smooth transition. West Moors have been involved in the process and their application has also been approved by the DfE. However, they have chosen to pause their application temporarily whilst they address other issues.

As Hampreston First School pupils are likely to attend Ferndown Pyramid schools, we will continue to work with them to ensure good continuity and excellent transition between schools. As such, they have been involved in developing the plans we presented to the DfE. As a Church of England school, they have additional Diocesan requirements and therefore are not looking to join the Trust at this time.

The DfE is reluctant to start new Trusts and is encouraging those schools not part of a Trust, to join an existing one.

### ***Will academisation preserve the 3 tier system?***

Yes, the school funding agreement from the DfE will lock the structure of the pyramid for the future. It could only change if the Secretary of State were to dictate the removal of the 3-tier system. The governors are mindful of ensuring security for future generations coming through their schools and believe this to be the best option for securing the future of the Ferndown pyramid of schools

### ***Corfe Hills School is already an academy. Why are they joining a MAT?***

The school is a stand-alone academy that converted in 2012 but the DfE are encouraging single academies to join MATs. We will then be working on a 4-19 journey for pupils in both pyramids.

## Potential further growth in the future

### ***You say that the government are encouraging schools to convert to academies, therefore many schools are looking to join a trust. What happens if other schools wish to join Castleman? What is your upper limit?***

We have a commitment to remain a small community trust with no more than 10 schools. Evidence suggests that a MAT larger than 10 schools becomes more difficult to manage. The head teachers are all passionate about improving SEND provision across the schools and if a special school were to seek to join the MAT, we would give that serious consideration because of the skills such a collaboration would bring.

***Can CAT decline schools that won't fit with their ethos and vision?***

Yes, the existing Broadstone Schools have been involved in the processes to date and their school communities have been informed about the schools looking to join the trust.

***Some newly formed MATS get swallowed into chains, when all the benefit of a local MAT would be lost. Do you have any concerns about that happening in the future?***

As a MAT of 7 schools we would be in the top 20% largest MATs, therefore the likelihood is quite small. The DfE rates the size of MATs by pupil numbers, alongside the number of schools involved.

Changes/Risks

***We have heard about lots of potential benefits with the risks being minimal, but what are the risks?***

There is a risk that if schools do nothing, they may face a "gentle decline". Once schools leave LA control, they cannot go back. Joining the wrong trust is a significant risk therefore governors and head teachers have considered a number of trusts, in consultation with the Regional Schools Commissioner's office, but all feel that CAT is the best fit for their schools. Governors were concerned that their schools may lose their identities if aligned with other MATs they looked at as potential partners. Governors and head teachers from all schools are involved in shaping the structure of the larger CAT to something that will meet their requirements. Ferndown governors believe that with this proposal, they are securing their schools for future generations coming through the pyramid.

***We've heard a lot about what will remain the same, but what will change either now or in the future?***

As a larger organisation we can save money through economies of scale or by sharing resources, and staff will have greater CPD and career development opportunities within the organisation. Over time, you may see small incremental changes through schools working more closely together with direct support from the trust. Teachers will work together to share best practice and ideas across key phases.

***If schools decided not to proceed now and at some point in the future the government dictates that they have to convert, what would happen?***

The pyramid would continue its existing collaboration, but governors may have to make a decision in the future that would be under very different circumstances and may not have such a favourable outcome.

Financial implications

***We hear that schools are financially better off as academies. Where does the money for academies come from?***

It is a myth that academies are financially better off. All schools are funded by the same funding formula, but whilst the LA will take a slice from maintained schools, academies will receive all their funding to deploy as they feel appropriate. The advantage of joining a trust is the ability to make efficiencies across a larger organisation, enabling more funding to be available for the education of the children.

The enlarged CAT would receive automatic capital funding from DfE of £0.5-£0.75M to deploy amongst its schools as needs require. Maintained schools have to bid for capital funding from the LA and Single Academy Trusts have bid to the DfE. A trust can also apply to the DfE for extra grants as they become available.

***What will the cost be of any extra management structure?***

The trust is committed to a low cost, simple organisation. We employ a Finance Director and an HR Director and buy in additional expertise as required. However, as a larger organisation it may be more cost effective to employ rather than buy in additional expertise. The MAT central charge will be driven by Head Teachers who will plan the additional services they'd like the trust to provide, whilst keeping central costs to the minimum.

***What provisions will be in place to prevent financial difficulties and therefore the need to expand again? Will greater resources go to schools in need, to the detriment of schools doing well?***

CAT would be in the top 20% of largest MATs in the country, therefore if funding became a major concern, it would be a national problem. Governing Bodies have agreed that schools will retain management of their

funding including their reserves, but with a responsibility for each school to set a balanced budget. If a school is unable to do so, trustees have the power to intervene to prevent the trust getting into financial difficulty. The leadership group and governing bodies could agree to provide a short-term loan to another school in difficulty. The DfE hold the trustees to account financially.

### School Admissions

#### ***Will the admission process change?***

Admissions will not change and will continue to be managed by the Local authorities.

#### ***Will appeals follow the same process?***

Yes, any variations in admissions across the trust will be due to schools sitting within two different local authorities (Dorset and BCP).

### Involvement of outside agencies (including the Local Authority)

#### ***How will EHCP funding from the LA be affected?***

Funding will remain the same, as will the processes around reviews and the involvement of the LA. However, we will be able to develop our expertise throughout the trust to better support the children.

#### ***Would there be any changes to safeguarding, exam boards?***

Schools will have the same responsibilities and will still be working with the LA with regards to safeguarding issues. Head teachers will continue to make decisions with their staff around exam boards.

### Land and Buildings

#### ***Where are the trust offices based?***

Currently at Broadstone Middle School, but we may be able to use accommodation at other schools if central services expanded. Headteachers would be involved in those discussions.

#### ***What guarantee is there that you won't sell school land, or close the leisure centre?***

The land and buildings will continue to be owned by Dorset Council and leased to the trust for a term of 125 years. The trust will still have to get permission from the LA for major changes to school premises. The leisure centre is owned and managed by Dorset Council but the trust are in negotiation with the LA over the terms of school use.

#### ***Will this proposal affect the planned expansion of Parley First and Ferndown First Schools? How will Ferndown Middle School cope with any increased places as a result of first school expansion?***

The responsibility for place planning remains with the LA, so the intention is for proposed expansion plans to continue. Dorset Council will continue to pay for building work to accommodate additional school places, even if the schools join CAT. Place planning conversations with the LA have already been taking place and will continue regardless of the outcome of this proposal.

### Collaboration between schools

#### ***Will the strong relationships with feeder schools be maintained, to ensure a positive journey for the children? Would joining Castleman negatively impact on how our schools work with other schools outside the MAT?***

Schools in both pyramids are already working closely together to ensure excellent transition for the children. By joining CAT, there will be more formal structures in place to ensure even closer collaboration between member schools. However, we are committed to continuing to work with all schools in the area, for the very best outcomes for our children, and existing collaborations and relationships will continue for all schools, whether part of Castleman or not.

***Can you give us reassurance that the strong relationship Corfe Hills has with Lockyers Middle School, a main feeder school, will be maintained?***

There is a commitment to work with colleagues across all feeder and counterpart schools both within and outside the trust, because that is what is best for our young people. Corfe Hills governors have already made changes to their Admissions Policy from September 2020 to give pupils from Lockyers, Allenbourn and Broadstone Middle Schools priority over other feeders. This admissions policy will remain unchanged. All the feeder schools work closely together to ensure that the children arrive at Corfe Hills are the same point educationally. Part of the DfE application process was to state how we will work with other schools outside the Trust.

***As a result of sharing resources, will there be more support for SEND children?***

As a larger group of schools, we could put in place more trust-wide support, if that is what the leadership group wanted. In Philip Cranwell's experience, SEND is an area where schools can work together most effectively to meet the needs of those children.

***West Parley has expertise in SEND – will you share that amongst other schools? If so, how will you ensure that this provision is not spread too thinly?***

The school already shares that expertise and will continue to do so. The school has provision for 10 places with 5 currently filled and it would be down to the school to ensure that quality remains high. The school currently buys in specialist part-time support but the Head Teachers could decide to employ a full-time member of staff to work across all schools in the trust.

## Staffing

***What are the implications for existing staff?***

- Staff no longer employed by Dorset Council or Corfe Hills Academy Trust after conversion, all staff will work for Castleman Academy Trust.
- Transfer of employment under TUPE regulations with protection of employment terms & conditions of employment at point of transfer.
- The Trust has developed principles of employment, which are applicable after the point of transfer, subject to the final TUPE consultation.
  - Terms, conditions and pay at least equal to that agreed nationally/locally
  - Contract of employment to work in your named school
  - Work towards a single tier workforce: transferred, new and promoted staff on same T&Cs
  - Full protection of pension rights for either Teachers Pension Scheme or Local Government Pension Scheme
  - Recognition of Continuity of Service

***Will the staffing levels at the trust be expanded because of increased admin requirements?***

The DfE dictate that the trust must have a Financial Director and a CEO, but beyond that the leadership group will devise where they would like most support from the trust and what the structure of that support might look like. However, CAT are committed to a simple, low-cost structure.

***Corfe Hills is to have a change of headship. Are there plans to second excellent teachers away from Ferndown Upper to support Corfe Hills? Will that affect Ferndown pupils?***

The headship vacancy at Corfe Hills, which governors hope will be filled by September 2020, will not affect staffing at Ferndown Upper unless staff choose to apply for the vacancy when it is advertised. However, the two schools are already working together to identify strengths that they can share. The approach of CAT is to help facilitate ideas that come from within the schools, not dictate from the trust down. There could be opportunities to share specialist teachers across the secondary schools for small subject areas which may not be feasible to staff for a single school.

***Will our children start seeing different teachers in front of their class?***

Teachers will continue to teach in their current school and Head Teachers will be responsible for staffing and deployment in their schools. But there will be an opportunity for staff to meet together, to collaborate and share ideas/resources. However, staff would have the opportunity to apply for vacancies at other schools in the trust.

***We hear that trusts can employ unqualified teachers – is there an intention to do that?***

There is no such intention, but LA schools can also employ unqualified teachers if they wish.

Governance

***What difference will this make to current governance procedures? Particularly with regards to involvement in appointing senior staff?***

In practice, very little will change. Governors will continue to be involved in the appointment of senior staff including head teachers. Governors' priorities for their schools and students are unlikely to change, and will remain as important as ever. The trust will be an additional 'stakeholder', who will provide the task of overseeing school outcomes, whilst each Local Governing Body will focus more closely on the running of their school.

Term Dates

***Would there be any planned amendments to term dates?***

CAT will follow term dates as set by the local councils, although schools within the trust will look for some common Insed days.

Consultation Process

***1<sup>st</sup> September is quoted as a target date – is this realistic?***

Yes, that is achievable if the consultation is positive.

***Will the on-line survey be per household or per parent?***

Each parent can complete but will be asked to supply an email address to ensure no duplication. All parents are encouraged to complete the survey to get as big a picture as possible.

***If we've children at more than one school, can we complete one survey for each school?***

Yes – one of the questions will be to ask which school you represent for each form you complete.

***It is government policy for schools to convert to academy and the head teachers and governors have clearly done a lot of work already. Has the decision already been made? If so how do we know that you will listen to the consultation?***

Whilst academisation is the government policy, there is no legislation to make it compulsory. The governing bodies have considered a number of academy options, and feel that this is the best MAT for their schools. They have a strategic responsibility to do what is in the best interest of their school, therefore it is a genuine consultation. Philip Cranwell will write a report after the consultation has closed and the governors have a duty to consider objections and seek mitigations as appropriate.