



# GOVERNANCE WITHIN CASTLEMAN ACADEMY TRUST

## **Background**

The Castleman Academy Trust is named after Charles Castleman, a Wimborne solicitor who was responsible for the building of the railway line that operated between Southampton and Dorchester from June 1847. The line was nicknamed the “Castleman Corkscrew” due to its many twists and turns. Castleman was a great visionary and entrepreneur and was passionate about developing the local area.

## **Vision, Values and Ethos**

Created in September 2014, the Trust’s sole purpose is to “advance education for public benefit”. Castleman Academy Trust is passionate about developing the talent and potential of young people in the area and committed to ensuring all young people in its schools experience inspirational learning.

Castleman Academy Trust puts “Children First, Always”. In order to provide the highest quality education, all we do is underpinned by the learning values of Respect, Independence, Creativity and Inclusion.

The Castleman Academy Trust encourages and nurtures strong relationships between member schools, fostering the dissemination of good practice and a self-sustaining culture of aspiration for educational excellence across our schools, exemplifying our core values at all times.

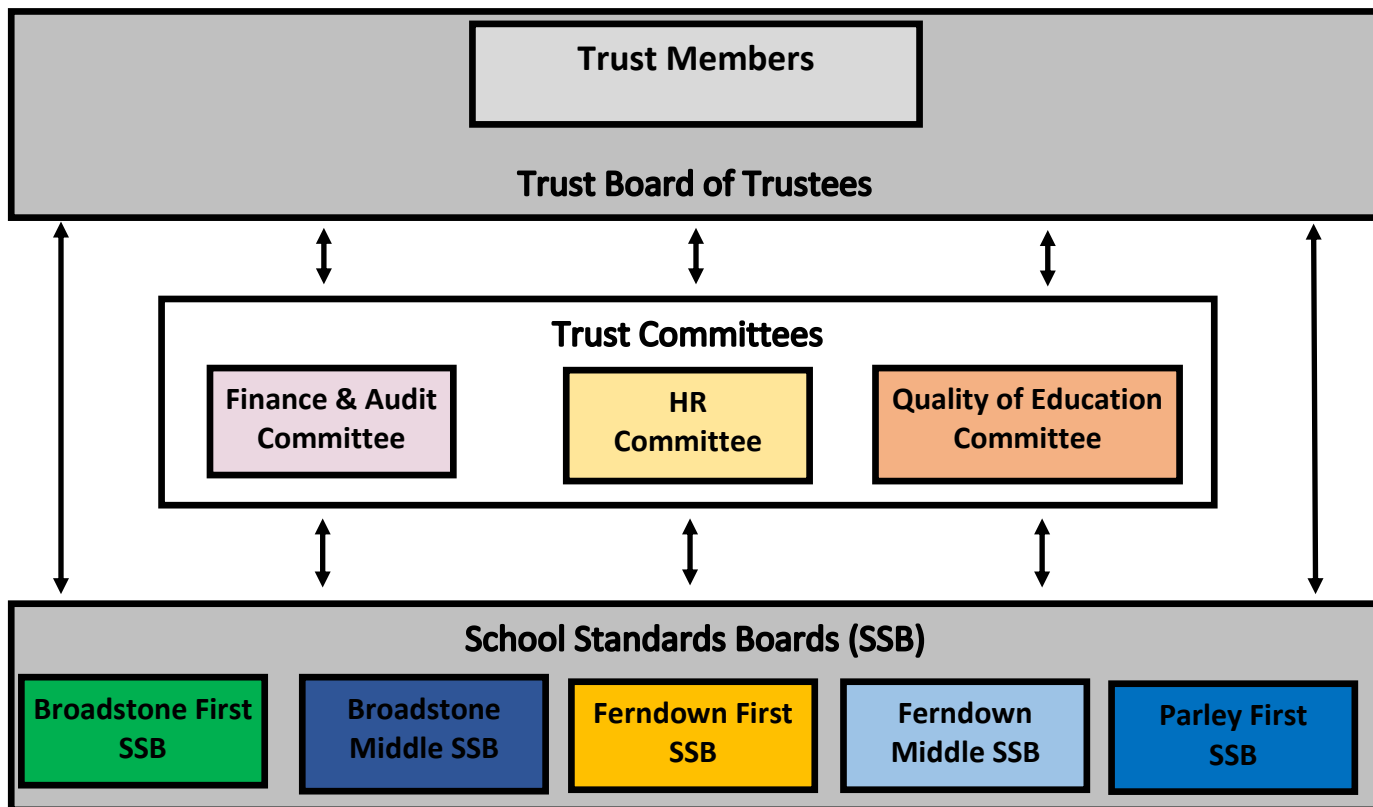
When you become part of our Castleman community, you agree to:

1. Put children first, always.
2. Care deeply about our families
3. Support and trust each other
4. Have high expectations and high performance.
5. Help our staff have great lives outside of school.
6. Support all adults to be learners too.
7. Support the autonomy and freedom of each school, but not tolerate self-interest and work to ensure we collaborate wherever possible.

## **Governance Structure**

The Trustees are extremely conscious that they require all the skills of a rounded, independent, educational and commercial organisation to succeed in their role to bring about the vision and deliver an inspirational education. They need to be independent of member schools as the decisions they may have to take in order to ensure the longevity of the Trust will sometimes be difficult. Trustees influence schools at a distance and are not involved in “running” member schools.

The Board is responsible for all the academies in the Trust. They do this by delegating functions to the School Standards Boards of each school and providing HR, Financial and Operational support across all our schools. At a school level, the School Standards Boards (Governing Bodies) monitor school standards and support the Senior Leaders to ensure the very highest quality provision for our children.



### The Trust Board

As a charitable trust, the Trust Board ensures that it complies with charity and company law requirements. The Board's core functions are:-

- To ensure academic excellence in member schools;
- To set the strategic direction for the organisation; and
- To ensure financial probity

The Trust Board sets policy for all member schools. They are not responsible for the day to day implementation of policy but employ a Chief Executive Officer to monitor and evaluate the impact of the policies set, quality assuring these in all member schools.

*Please note that employees of the Trust and its member schools are not eligible for the role of trustee.*

### The School Standards Boards

The Trust Board is responsible for the performance of all its schools. In order to do this effectively, governors on the School Standards Boards in member schools "champion the school experience for the child, the family and the staff". This is a vital role in ensuring that the school is doing all it can to provide excellent education to all children and ensure that they get the best possible start to life.

Governors are responsible for monitoring and evaluating school performance and reporting to the Board successes and achievements or issues for development. They do this in a variety of ways.

1. Contribute to the strategic discussions at School Standards Board (governing body) meetings which, with Senior Leaders, determine:
  - The vision and ethos of the school;
  - Clear and ambitious strategic priorities and targets for the school;
  - That all children, including those with special educational needs, have access to a broad and balanced curriculum;

2. Hold the senior leaders to account by monitoring the school's performance. This includes:-
  - Agreeing the outcomes from the school's self-evaluation and ensuring they are used to inform the priorities in the school development plan;
  - Considering all relevant data and feedback provided on request by school leaders and external sources on all aspects of school performance;
  - Asking challenging questions of school leaders;
  - Ensuring senior leaders have arranged for the required audits to be carried out and receiving the results of those audits;
  - Acting as a link governor on a specific issue, making relevant enquiries of the relevant staff, and reporting to the School Standards Board on the progress of the relevant school priority;
  - Listening to and reporting to the school's stakeholders: pupils, parents, staff and the wider community, including local employers;
  - Ensure that the school is operating effectively according to statutory and agreed policies.
3. Ensure the school staff have the resources and support they require to do their jobs well, including external advice about school performance where necessary, effective appraisal and continuing professional development.
4. Recommend the school's annual budget to the Trust Board and monitor monthly expenditure against budget.
5. When required, serve on panels of governors to:
  - Support the Trust to appoint senior leaders, teachers and support staff;
  - Support the appraisal process of staff;
  - Hear appeals about pupil exclusions;
  - Hear complaints appeals.

In order to perform this role well, a governor is expected to:

- Get to know the school, including by visiting the school occasionally during school hours, and gain a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses;
- Attend induction training and regular relevant training and development events;
- Attend meetings and read all the papers before the meeting;
- Act in the best interest of all the pupils of the school;
- Behave in a professional manner, as set down in the Trust's Code of Conduct for Trustees and Governors, including acting in strict confidence.

A governor does not:

- Write school policies – most are either set out by the DfE or the Trust. Some policies will have school specific sections for governors to ratify.
- Undertake audits of any sort – the school will complete any necessary audits and may be assisted by the governor with specific interest, e.g. the Safeguarding Governor may wish to contribute to the annual audit in collaboration with the Headteacher;
- Work with the pupils – visits to the school are encouraged but are limited. If you wish to work directly with the children, there are many other valuable voluntary roles within the school;
- Fundraise – that is the role of the PTA – the School Standards Board should consider income streams and the potential for income generation, but not carry out fundraising tasks;
- Undertake classroom observations to make judgements on the quality of teaching – the School Standards Board monitors the quality of teaching in the school by requiring data from the senior staff and external sources;

- Undertake work on a voluntary basis within the school – if there is not enough capacity within the paid staff team to carry out the necessary tasks, the School Standards Board needs to consider and send recommendations to the Trust for rectifying this.

## **The role of governor is largely a thinking and questioning role, to be a ‘critical friend’.**

As you become more experienced as a governor, there are other roles you could volunteer for which would increase your degree of involvement and level of responsibility.

**Time commitment:** Under usual circumstances, you should expect to spend between 10 and 20 days a year on your governing responsibilities, although this is the top end of this commitment. Initially, we would expect your commitment to be nearer 10 days a year. However, there may be periods when the time commitment may increase, for example when recruiting staff. Some longstanding governors may tell you that they spend far more time than this on school business; however, it is fairly common for governors to undertake additional volunteering roles over and above governance.

Under Section 50 of the *Employment Rights Act 1996*, if you are employed, then you are entitled to ‘reasonable time off’ to undertake public duties; this includes school governance. ‘Reasonable time off’ is not defined in law, and you will need to negotiate with your employer how much time you will be allowed.

**Expenses** Governors may receive out of pocket expenses incurred as a result of fulfilling their role as governor, in line with CAT policy. Payments can cover incidental expenses, such as travel and childcare, but not loss of earnings.

**Safeguarding** In line with statutory expectations, governors will be expected to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service check for safeguarding purposes.