



Thinking of joining the Castleman Academy Trust (CAT)?

Why join?

We want every school in our Trust to be able to shape its own character, frame its own ethos and develop its own specialism, free of either central or local bureaucratic constraint. Anyone joining the CAT “family” at this exciting time will be instrumental in determining the future direction of the Trust.

The Trust’s values and principles have been developed to enable that to happen making the benefits of joining unique to each school. However, there are three generic advantages to working with the Trust.

Outstanding Teaching and Learning

Everyone knows that the quality of a school system cannot exceed the quality of its individual teachers and that effective leadership is the key to excellent teaching. For that reason, leadership and teaching are our focus. The CAT offers support from outstanding head teachers from the primary, secondary and special school contexts with a proven track record of success. Additional capacity is provided by leaders from our Teaching School Alliance, including a pool of Leading Teachers and Specialist Leaders in Education. Outstanding teachers from within our family of schools also support teachers in neighbouring schools. All this is underpinned by a relentless pursuit of ensuring Leaders and all staff are able to focus on delivering excellent teaching and learning.

Shared Autonomy

The CAT is a values driven organisation, transparent and one that is committed to sustainable improvement. The pupils, teachers and leaders joining the CAT help shape its development and just as they are challenged and supported by their peers so too is the Trust by them. That is why Headteachers formally review each other’s schools once a year (using the “Schools Partnership Programme from CfBT) and the Trust is subject to external review from specific partners. We want to ensure that all parts of our organisation are self-sustaining and self-regulating including the Trust itself and that is why honesty, openness and clarity are so important. The Leadership Group, made up of the Headteachers of schools in the Trust meet regularly to discuss issues and agree recommendations for strategic elements of the Board’s work.

We believe that sustainable school improvement can only happen if schools are supported and challenged by other schools or partners. Partnership within a range of networks, and autonomy at a local level is what we offer so that individual schools and the network as a whole develops and grows. That is why our school leaders take responsibility for each other and celebrate their success. That is why teachers across the Trust schools meet on a regular basis to help one another develop effective improvement strategies. That is why training happens across schools and subjects on a regular basis.

Schools in the Trust support and partner each other, share resources and offer genuine challenge. We believe that the primary phase has a vested interest in supporting the early years as does the secondary the primary phase, but equally the early years will want to see its young people continue to succeed at primary school just as the primary schools will want its learners to flourish at secondary.

Financial Benefits

Working together enables resources to be shared and savings made. Procuring services together can lead to significant savings that can be reinvested into teaching and learning. Resources can be deployed more flexibly, for example staff can be shared which improves quality at reduced cost. Some teachers and support staff have also 'swapped' their schools which supports their development and improves the schools. The costs of back office functions such as HR and Finance support can be shared, leading to savings and working together also significantly improves our purchasing power.

The Trust believes that by keeping the number of schools within its remit to a level that is manageable, it is able to work closely with all of its schools, staff and children. Trust Directors are fully aware that through schools working closely together, successes are easier to achieve. Therefore the trust is committed to keeping the number of schools to a manageable limit.

Schools who are currently with the Trust feel that this approach has enabled success to arrive quickly and has meant that the Trust is fully aware of each of its school's needs. School improvement is carried out with schools and not done to schools. School leaders are very much part of the school improvement planning process and value this approach.

Who can apply?

- Any school that shares our vision and wishes to become an academy status school.
- Any school that wants to have greater autonomy and also benefit from membership in a stable group of top academies that support each other for the common good of their children.
- Any school that wants to be part of a family where actively shared best and next practice helps all to succeed and excel.

In summary, the Castleman Academy Trust offers:

- School to school support with an emphasis on teachers teaching teachers
- Experienced school leaders with broad and diverse school experiences
- Small, school centred multi-academy trust
- Trustees and Directors committed to improving the quality of education provided within its schools
- Continuing professional development opportunities through effective school improvement work
- Leadership training provided for staff at all levels
- Support through the conversion process
- Policies and procedures in place that cover the key areas of personnel, finance and health and safety
- Staff and governors at the end of the phone or available for school visits to support pre and post conversion
- The possibility of joining the Board of Directors once your school is good or better
- A maximum of 5% of delegated budget retained by the trust to provide services centrally
- Being part of a community which share the same ethos and values

Three routes to joining the Castleman Academy Trust

- 1) Supporting** - the best route for those schools who want to share risk across a group of schools rather than go it alone. You may already be a converter academy or want us to manage the conversion process for you. As a supporting school you will want to play a key role in supporting other academies in the Trust.

- 2) Sponsored** – This is the best route for schools identified by the Department for Education as requiring a sponsor. The trust will oversee the academy conversion process and ensure that you receive all the necessary intensive support to improve rapidly. As soon as the school is out of special measures, we aim for all sponsor schools to be self-supporting as quickly as possible. Broadstone Middle School – our trust sponsor school – has shown rapid improvement in just over a year.

Special considerations when sponsoring

Castleman Academy Trust believes that sponsoring academies is a rewarding experience which can lead to multiple benefits for both the sponsor and the sponsored school but the Trust should be mindful of the following key considerations in order to maximise the likelihood of being a successful sponsor:

- The CAT should consult with the local community to discuss its intention to act as a sponsor and ensure it addresses any specific concerns raised responses prior to conversion
- Liaison with the school regarding its vision and plans for the school's conversion and future as an academy is key
- The CAT will need to take expert advice from the outset to ensure it has appropriate legal, financial and technical experts to undertake appropriate due diligence and assist with creating an accurate and appropriate business plan
- Sponsorship is not just a commitment during the conversion process, but a long term commitment to a school and education provision in an area. A sponsor's role is integral to the governance and operation of an academy following conversion.

- 3) Supported** – This is for schools that require a partner to convert to an academy and are likely to be requiring improvement. By joining the Trust you will enjoy all of the benefits of membership including a high level of school improvement support both at school and governance level. We aim for all our supported schools to become self-supporting as quickly as possible.

When schools consider becoming part of the Castleman Academy Trust, via the supported or sponsored route, a group of Directors with proven track records of raising education standards in several schools, will work with the Headteacher and governors to determine the level of support required. This may take several forms including, observing lessons, work scrutiny, discussions with staff and data analysis. Schools will then receive a tailored support package from the Trust and details of how teaching and learning will be monitored.

The schools within the Trust will undoubtedly employ staff who are good or outstanding and it is these teachers and support staff who will support colleagues through their journeys to securing good or better. The Trust is determined to ensure that all staff reach good or outstanding level of teaching and learning and will support staff through this process.

Deciding to Convert

Each school receives support throughout the conversion process. This can include:

- A series of visits to assist the Local Governing Body with the decision making prior to conversion
- Due diligence health checks on the following areas:
 - Teaching and Learning – to identify existing strengths and school improvement requirements. This also includes a desktop analysis.
 - Review of Leadership and Governance
 - Financial – to determine the school's current financial position and identify support and training required by Business Managers/Bursars

- Buildings – to assess the condition of the buildings and to determine whether they are safe and fit for purpose
- IT review – to assess the capacity of the systems to utilise the financial software and to evaluate the age and utility of the current education systems
- Full project management support with:
 - Administration of the conversion process
 - Legal transfers of lands and assets to Castleman Academy Trust
 - HR and the TUPE process
 - Liaison with the DfE and parent consultation

Deciding to convert – Flow Chart

