



**The Castle Partnership Trust**  
ACHIEVE BELONG PARTICIPATE



# Governance Handbook

Our aim is for every child to achieve, participate and belong, and this is at the heart of everything we do at The Castle Partnership Trust



# Vision and Values

Our values are simple: that every child is entitled to the best education we can provide, that they are entitled to be valued for their own intrinsic value, to belong to a successful organisation that affirms their identity and celebrates difference and diversity, and to be given a rich and engaging curriculum that demands their participation in learning, enrichment and the community.

This leads to our mantra:

**Every Child Achieves, Every Child Belongs, Every Child Participates in learning, enrichment and the community.**

## Our mission

Our mission is to deliver exceptional education to every child in our local communities, that we support their families by supporting vulnerable families and children, making sure that every child is safe and nurtured. In order to achieve this, we are a local trust with strong partnerships with all schools in our communities so that we can work together to ensure this.

Our commitment is that every child will achieve exceptionally, have a strong sense of belonging and of their own intrinsic worth and value, and for every child to participate in learning, a wealth of enrichment and in the community, local, national and global. This is what drives us. An ambition for all children and to engineer social change for the better through powerfully addressing disadvantage in all its forms through education.

- To ensure that every child has a curriculum that is well sequenced so that knowledge is acquired progressively throughout the key stages and is well resourced and rich. In order to deliver this excellent curriculum, subject leaders and subject teams across the Trust work collaboratively and creatively to devise high quality schemes of learning to reduce staff workload and ensure equity. These are all on Teams so that every teacher in the Trust has instant access to excellent resources and schemes of learning, which reduces workload. Teachers are able to adapt the schemes of learning in the way that their professional judgment deems best for the pupils in their classes, planning the learning with good assessment practices and with regard to cognitive load for the children in their classes. We emphasise the importance of teachers' professional judgment and their knowledge of their pupils to decide the best activities and resources for the children in their class.
- To ensure that teaching is the best it can be through recruiting and retaining the very best teachers, and through excellent CPD, investing in our teachers so they are able to deliver lessons that are engaging and knowledge-rich, and lead to children enjoying learning, discovering new things, engaging in challenging ideas and expressing themselves fluently. We have an enviable reputation for supporting and developing staff, both teaching and business staff, and are an engine-room for talent. We invest in those who want to lead and give opportunities to experience leadership roles at every level in in all areas.
- To ensure that every child with SEND or SEMH achieves the same progress, experiences the same enriching opportunities and has the same sense of belonging and intrinsic value and worth as any other child in the Trust. Addressing this is one of the main motivations for the Trust. By working together, we have been able to resource our SEND team effectively, to deploy those resources where they are needed most and enhance support for families. This is where our work beyond the Trust can be most effective; working with our schools to ensure that need is identified as early as possible and that the right support is in place for that child to thrive.

- To ensure that we powerfully address disadvantage and achieve social change that benefits everyone through education. We identify the barriers to children from disadvantaged backgrounds and by concentrating our resources, effect bigger strategic changes. For example, research tells us that teachers make the biggest difference to children from disadvantaged backgrounds and our investment in our teachers is significant and has impact. All children in the Trust have an entitlement to exciting enrichment and cultural equity but we positively and consistently strive for equity, our strategy is to deliberately and systematically promote cultural enrichment to our disadvantaged children.

## Welcome from the Chair of The Castle Partnership Trust Board Mark Richmond



We think it's important that governance in our schools should be representative of the local community. To that end, each of our schools has a Local Governing Committee, with representatives from parents, and community members. We also have a Board of Trustees, who are accountable for all the schools in the Trust.

### Why become a Trustee or Governor?

#### **Make a difference**

Governors and Trustees provide critical challenge and support to the leadership team of a school/Trust with the ultimate aim of improving student progress and outcomes. Taking a governance role is a unique opportunity to positively influence children's lives.

#### **Get to know your community**

Governors and Trustees are part of the strategic leadership team. Our schools are at the heart of their communities, and it is part of the role of being a governor/trustee to ensure that we are accountable to the area we serve, representing the community as a whole.

#### **Develop your skills**

You can expect to develop a range of both new and existing skills. Training is provided and there is a wealth of independent training providers which offer opportunities for professional development.

You might want to develop your professional expertise in a specific capacity, or it could be softer skills like team working as the LGB or Board deliberate and reach a significant decision.

#### **Improve your knowledge about the education sector**

School staff attend governance meetings, so as a Trustee or Governor you are not expected to have a working knowledge of the education sector. What is more important to the role is a specific working skill set relevant to the operations of a governing body (HR, data analysis, finance, project management) and commitment to the position.

#### **It's a challenge**

There's no denying that being involved in governance is a challenge, but that's a good thing. The role should be a challenge (because it's important) and it can put you out of your comfort zone when you have to get to grips with new policies, procedures and challenges.

This challenge does not necessarily mean the role is time consuming – though of course it can be – but it will certainly, at least initially, challenge you to think in new ways and work with new people.

#### **It's rewarding**

Knowing that you are making a difference to children's lives is the best reward anyone could wish for. And you do. The support and challenge from Governors and Trustees ensures that no child is left behind and no child is invisible. Every child achieves, belongs and participates.

# Welcome from the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of The Castle Partnership Trust Sarah Watson



We are a local Trust with an absolute commitment to our local area and an ambition to serve all the children and families in our communities. To do this we have partnerships with our local schools regardless of whether they are in the Trust or not, seeking to ensure that every child achieves exceptionally, has a strong sense of belonging and of their own intrinsic worth and value, and for every child to participate in learning, a wealth of enrichment and in the community, local, national and global. This is what drives us. An ambition for all children and to engineer social change for the better through powerfully addressing disadvantage in all its forms through education.

We are currently four schools that work together in an atmosphere of cheerful and excited collaboration that support teachers to deliver exceptional education. Our schools have their own Headteacher who is also part of the Trust Strategic Leadership team, and their own Local Governing Body that scrutinises the work of the school and holds it to account on behalf of the Trust and its communities.

## **About this Handbook**

This Handbook is designed to give general advice on governance and information specific to the strategic operation and governance at The Castle Partnership Trust. It should be read in conjunction with the [DfE Governance Handbook 2019 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk), the Trust's Articles of Association and Scheme of Delegation.

As a Multi Academy Trust, The Castle Partnership Trust is accountable for all major decisions about our schools. This does not mean that the Trust Board will make every decision within the Trust; they will delegate some governance and decision-making responsibilities to:

- **Committees of the Trust Board**
- **Local Governing Bodies**
- **The CEO and Executive Team**
- **Headteachers within the schools.**

If you have any queries about this document or your governance role, please contact Julie Gregory, Governance Professional ([jgregory@castle.somerset.sch.uk](mailto:jgregory@castle.somerset.sch.uk)).

## **Members**

The Members are the guardians of governance of the Trust. Members hold the Trustees to account for the effective governance of the Trust, but have a minimal role in the actual running of the Trust. However, there are some critical decisions that sit with the Members, especially if the Trust is failing. Members must remain informed of Trust performance and be clear on how to appropriately interact with Trustees.

Academy Trusts are set up as charitable companies limited by guarantee. As such, it is the charity which is liable for its debts, not the people behind it, who are protected by limited liability. Members liability in Academy Trusts is limited to £10.

## **The role of Members is primarily to:**

- a) Ensure the success of the Trust
  - By ensuring governance by the Board of Trustees is strong.
  - By ensuring that pupils in the Trust are making expected progress and reaching the required levels of attainment.
  - By ensuring that the Board of Trustees has robust financial oversight.
- b) Sign the Memorandum and Articles of Association.
- c) Amend the Articles of Association, when needed.

- d) Change the Trust's constitution, when needed.
- e) Determine the name of the Trust.
- f) Appoint Members and some Trustees.
- g) Remove Trustees from the Board.
- h) Intervene if the Board of Trustees is not performing well.
- i) Appoint and remove the Trust's Auditors.
- j) Receive a copy of the annual report and accounts.
- k) Meet, usually once a year, at the Annual General Meeting.
- l) Dissolve the Trust.

## Trustees

The Board of Trustees is the decision-making body of the Trust and is accountable and responsible for all the schools within the Trust. The Board is responsible for the core governance functions and conducting the business of the Trust. The Trust Board must operate and make decisions to further the Trust's charitable object, which is 'to advance for the public benefit education in the United Kingdom'.

The Trust Board is the strategic leader for the Trust. The Board may delegate certain responsibilities to the Executive Leader (CEO) and, in accordance with the Trust's Scheme of Delegation, a Committee or individual, but the Board remains accountable and responsible for all decisions made.

### **The Trust Board has three core functions:**

- a) To ensure the clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.
- b) To hold the Executive Leaders to account for the educational performance of the schools and pupils and the effective and efficient performance management of staff.
- c) To oversee the financial performance of the schools and make sure money is well spent.

### **Local Governors**

The Trust Board can establish committees and delegate certain functions to them. At The Castle Partnership Trust, the Board has established committees, known as Local Governing Bodies (LGBs), for each school.

### **The LGB's role is to:**

- a) Support the effective operation of the Trust and its policies.
- b) Provide support and challenge to the school's Headteacher.
- c) Provide a vehicle for Trust Board engagement with the school, its parents and the local community.
- d) Bring issues and risks to the attention of the Trust Board.
- e) Provide constructive feedback to the Trust Board where a policy may not be effective in the local context, and suggest alternative approaches.
- f) Help to ensure the Trust works as one entity, in the interests of all its schools equally.

## Trust Board Committees

### **The Board has the following committees (as well as the LGBs):**

**Resources and Risk Committee.** Focus on the Academy Trust's financial, premises, HR, governance, risk management and internal control systems.

**Standards Committees.** Focus on data, benchmarking and good practice across the Trust.

**Pay Committee.** Makes decisions within the Trust's Pay Policy regarding staff pay progression and salary ranges/pay grades.

**Admissions Committee.** Makes decisions regarding admissions to the Trust, in line with the Trust's Admission Arrangements and the Admissions Code.

## Executive Team

The Trust has an operational management structure:

### **Chief Executive Officer (CEO).**

The Executive Leader and Accounting Officer is the CEO at The Castle Partnership Trust. The CEO's role is to implement the strategic framework established by the Board of Trustees. The CEO is responsible for the operational and day-to-day running of the Trust. The CEO provides information to the Trust Board so that the Board can meet its three core functions.

### **Trust Business Manager (TBM).**

The Trust Business Manager plays both a technical and leadership role and operates as the Chief Financial Officer for the Trust. The Trust's detailed financial procedures are delegated to the TBM.

### **Trust Finance Manager.**

The Trust Finance Manager provides leadership across the Trust in financial management.

### **Trust HR Manager.**

The Trust HR Manager advises on and implements the effective use of HR across the Trust.

### **Trust Premises Manager.**

The Trust's Premises Manager supports the premises staff across all the schools to ensure facilities are safe and secure for our students.

### **Trust SENDCo.**

The Trust SENDCo is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Trust's SEND policy, ensuring that any barrier that may exist for a student is removed and all students are given the best opportunity to succeed and reach their goals.

### **Trust SEMHCo.**

The Trust SEMHCo supports staff across the Trust to understand and meet the social, emotional and mental health needs of all students.

### **Trust Strategic Network Manager.**

The Trust Strategic Network Manager works across the Trust to quality assure IT in relation to strategy, service and systems and is accountable for defining the Trust's IT strategic priorities.

## Governance Professional

The Governance Professional helps the Trust Board understand its role, functions and legal duties and provides clear, impartial advice to the Board. The role is variable depending on the Board's requirements, but includes organising meetings, circulating papers, taking a note of meetings and advising the Board on compliance with the Articles of Association, funding agreement and relevant legislation and regulations. Committees of the Trust Board (including the LGBs) will also be clerked, but not necessarily by the Governance Professional.

## Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC)

The eight Regional Schools Commissioners act on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education and are accountable to the National Schools Commissioner (NSC). Each RCS is supported by a Headteacher Board (HTB) made up of academy headteachers and other local sector leaders. HTBs advise and challenge RSCs on the decisions they make.

One of the RSC's core functions is to intervene with under-performing academies and free schools to commission high quality support to improve them quickly. This includes acting where governance is inadequate. Governance of academy trusts will be of concern where the academy trust lacks the capacity to deliver any of its three core functions.

## Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

The ESFA is accountable for £58 billion and provides assurance that public funds are properly spent and achieve value for money in the delivery of the Government's policies and priorities. The ESFA also regulates academies, intervening where there is a risk of financial failure or mismanagement of public funds. There is a clear framework for academy trusts to operate within and the ESFA provides oversight and scrutiny of academy trusts' performance, supports the sector in improving its capabilities and takes action where academy trusts fall short of these expectations.

## About The Castle Partnership Trust

The Castle Partnership Trust has been established since 2014 with the purpose of achieving academic excellence across the Trust. Our aim for every child to achieve, belong and participate is at the heart of everything we do. The Trust comprises of two secondary schools (The Castle School, Taunton and Court Fields School, Wellington) and two primary schools (Wellesley Park Primary and IKB Primary, Wellington), with a third new primary school due to open in Taunton in 2023.

We are a local Trust with an absolute commitment to our local area and an ambition to serve all the children and families in our communities. To do this we have partnerships with all our local schools regardless of whether they are in the Trust or not, seeking to ensure that every child achieves exceptionally, has a strong sense of belonging and of their own intrinsic worth and value, and for every child to participate in learning, a wealth of enrichment and in the community, local, national and global. This is what drives us. An ambition for all children and to engineer social change for the better through powerfully addressing disadvantage in all its forms through education.

## Code of Conduct

Our Trust's Code of Conduct is anchored in the Seven Nolan Principles of Public Life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. It applies to all Members, Trustees and Governors.

## Governance Membership

**Members:** 5 Members. Meet at least once per annum at the AGM. Additional meetings to be convened as and when necessary.

**Trust Board:** No less than 3 Trustees. Current membership is 8 Trustees, including the CEO. Meets at least 6 times per annum. Trust Business Manager in attendance.

**Standards Committee:** A minimum of three Trustees, Chairs of Governors, Headteachers, CEO. Lead SLT Members and Governance Professional in attendance. Meets once per term, per phase.

**Resources & Risk Committee:** A minimum of three Trustees. Accounting Officer, Chief Financial Officer and Governance Professional in attendance. Meets 5 times per annum.



**Pay Committee:** Four Trustees. Trust Business Manager, CEO and Headteachers in attendance. Meets once per annum.

**LGBs:** Each LGB includes at least two Parent Governors. There is a minimum of 7 and a maximum of 12 Governors in each LGB. The LGBs meet 6 times per annum.

**CEO Performance Review Panel:** Two Trustees plus one Member. Meets twice per annum.

**Headteachers' Performance Review Panel:** One Trustee, the CEO, the Chair of Governors. Meets twice per annum.

**Admissions:** At least one Trustee and two Governors. Meets weekly if necessary. Headteachers in attendance.

**Chairs' Forum:** Chair of the Trust Board and the Chairs of Governors from the LGBs. Meets termly.

**Governance Conference:** Annual event for all Governors and Trustees.

**Safeguarding, SEND and Disadvantaged Reviews:** Trust reviews and school reviews are held regularly throughout the year.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Chair of the Trust Board

The Chair is a strategic leadership role that provides clear direction to the Board of Trustees to focus on the Board's core functions. The Chair is supported by the Vice-Chair and Governance Professional, and plays an important role which goes behind chairing meetings. The Chair must encourage the Board to work together as an effective team, building skills, knowledge and experience. A Chair must ensure that everyone is actively contributing relevant skills and experience, participating constructively in meetings and is actively involved in the work of the Board's Committees.

### Safeguarding Trustee/Governor

It is a statutory responsibility to have a Trustee and Governors who are designated as the Safeguarding Trustee/Governors. The Safeguarding Trustee/Governors support the schools' Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) as well as taking a key role in the twice-yearly safeguarding review for each school. These reviews are led by a DSL from another school in the Trust, on a rota basis.

Safeguarding Trustee/Governors should retain a strategic role and be careful not to stray into the operational aspects of safeguarding – this remains the responsibility of the headteachers and designated safeguarding leads. Generally, the Safeguarding Trustee/Governors' responsibility is to review the effectiveness of policies and procedures that are in place to secure the wellbeing of students. During Safeguarding reviews Trustee/Governors will monitor the Single Central Registers to ensure safer recruitment practices are being properly followed, look at general security, how bullying is tackled, the arrangements made for educational trips, how the schools identify and support vulnerable students (including those with medical needs) and First Aid training and provision. Trustee/Governors will also gather feedback from the Headteachers, The Safeguarding Team, staff and students and, with the other Review Team members, consider where change is required. The Safeguarding Governors will present the report from the Review to the Local Governing Body (LGB). The Safeguarding Trustee reports to the Board of Trustees.





The Safeguarding Trustee is responsible for ensuring that the general responsibilities of the Board of Trustees are fulfilled, although the Board will remain the accountable body.

### **SEND Trustee/Governor**

Trustees need to know that students with SEND are getting the best possible opportunities and that outcomes reflect this. The LGB also needs to ensure that money is well spent.

The SEND Governor is responsible for liaising with the SENDCo, obtaining information about and reporting the progress of SEND pupils at the school to Governors. The SEND Governor's role is about doing their best to make sure students with SEND get the help they need to access the curriculum and to participate fully in the life of the school.

It is the SEND Governor's role to help raise awareness of SEND issues at LGB meetings and give up to date information on SEND provision within the school.

Basic information the SEND Governor should know:

1. How the school identifies children with SEND.
2. How SEND money is allocated and spent.
3. The school's SEND policy.

The SEND Governor should not intervene in the teaching of individual students or try to assess the quality of the SEND provision in the school. If parents approach the SEND Governor with a complaint or problem, encourage them to talk to the Headteacher first.

### **Careers Governor**

Governors bring a range of skills and knowledge that can help to improve the quality of careers provision including:

- Awareness of the needs and expectations of students, their families and the wider community
- Understanding of the local labour market and its opportunities
- Useful contacts in other education and training provision and in the community that can be harnessed to create opportunities for students
- Personal experience of career planning and development in employment and adult life

All secondary schools have a statutory duty to "secure access to independent careers guidance" for students aged 13-18. Governing Bodies ensure that the IAG (Impartial Information, Advice Guidance) policies are up to date and monitor the effectiveness of provision against the careers plans. The LGBs regularly receive reports on the school's progress against the Gatsby benchmarks. The Careers Governor is a link between the careers staff and Governors. They support and challenge careers staff and can arrange with the school to speak to groups of students about their experience of careers provision.

At primary schools, Governors may wish to ask the SLT questions about how all children learn about the world of work and what is being done to challenge stereotypes and broaden horizons, especially for students from disadvantaged backgrounds or children with SEND. Primary schools should seek to inspire students and challenge preconceptions about certain careers or pathways, such as women in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) or men in teaching or caring professions. This can be done in a number of ways, through visits, talks and assemblies from individuals or organisations.

### **Health and Safety Governor**

The Health & Safety Governor meets with the Premises Manager/Business Manager at the school, usually on a termly basis, and provides the LGB with a report of their visit.

**The main areas to look at when visiting are:**

- Compliance and implementation of the Trust's Health and Safety Policy.
- Review of any external H&S visits commissioned by the school.
- Review/spot check the risk assessment process.
- Physically review (with the Premises Manager/Business Manager) the high-risk areas on the school site.

## **Disadvantaged Trustee/Governor**

Pupil Premium funding is provided to schools to raise the attainment of Disadvantaged pupils and close the gap between them and their peers from Reception to Year 11.

While the SLT and LGB will collectively agree how to spend this money, it is ultimately the Board which is responsible for ensuring that it is spent in the most effective way and targeted at eligible students. Half termly Disadvantaged Review meetings are held with the Disadvantaged SLT Lead, the Disadvantaged Governor and the Disadvantaged Trustee. Reports are given to the LGB and Board from the Governor and Trustee.

The Disadvantaged Governor acts as a champion for these students. The Disadvantaged Governor will have a good working knowledge of the barriers faced by Disadvantaged students, the actions that The Trust is taking to address these issues and the impact of those actions.

# Preparing for Governance Meetings

## **Trust Board Meetings**

There are 6 Board meetings per academic year. We aim for each meeting to last no longer than 2 hours. The main part of the meeting is dedicated to Trust strategy. A typical Trust Board meeting agenda will include:

- Strategic planning, growth and development
- Reading and questions (eg, management accounts, reports from Committees and individual Trustees)
- Administration (governance, policy reviews, etc).

The agenda and papers for the Board meeting is circulated to Trustees a week in advance of the meeting. Trustees are expected to have read all the papers in preparation for the meeting.

## **Resources & Risk Committee**

The Resources & Risk Committee meets 5 time per year, in accordance with its Terms of Reference.

## **Pay Committee**

The Pay Committee meets annually in November to consider the recommended pay awards for staff, under the Terms of Reference for the Pay Committee.

## **Admissions Committee**

The Admissions Committee comprises at least 2 Governors and 1 Trustee. This Committee meets weekly, if necessary, to consider in-year admission applications for the Trust.

## **Standards Committee**

The Standards Committee meets once each term for each phase, in accordance with its terms of reference.

## **Local Governing Body Meetings**

Each school has a Local Governing Body. There are 6 meetings per academic year, with each meeting lasting no longer than 2 hours. The main focus of the meetings is the Self Evaluation (SEF) and School Improvement Plan (SIP).

The agenda and papers are circulated a week in advance of the meeting. Governors are expected to have read all the papers in preparation for the meeting.

## **Confidentiality and Data Protection**

Copies of agendas and papers relating to governance of the Trust or school must not be retained by any Trustee/Governor outside of the Trust's OneDrive. Ideally, all documents should be viewed from Trust Governor. Please refer to the Trust's Acceptable Use Policy and Data Protection Policy for further information.

When a Trustee/Governor's term of office ends, the Governance Professional will contact them to ensure all documents and information have been shredded or returned to the school/Trust for secure disposal.

# Training and Resources

The Trust subscribes to the National Governance Association (NGA) and the NGA's Learning Link. Trustees and Governors are encouraged to use this online platform for training and information purposes.

New Trustees/Governors will be given an induction, including safeguarding training and, in most cases, an experienced Trustee/Governor as a mentor.

The Trust holds an annual training day for Trustees/Governors and regular updates throughout the year, as appropriate.

## Governance Visits

Visits to the schools are part of delivering the governance role. The Trust's protocol for governance visits is:

### Process

1. Governors decide (with the Headteacher's support) how/which areas to focus on.
2. The lead Governor to meet with the lead SLT to devise a programme (to guide and support Governors with questions and the programme).
3. Governors to produce a report after their visit.

### When Observing Meetings:

1. Governors attend meetings as observers and should not interrupt the flow of work.
2. Once the meeting is finished, Governors can meet with the Chair of the meeting for a 15- minute de-brief/question session.
3. Discussions held within the meetings are confidential.
4. Governors appreciate that staff are the educational professionals.
5. The purpose of observing meetings is to inform and give Governors a greater understanding of the school to enable Governors to appropriately challenge the school and to monitor the effectiveness of school actions.

### When Meeting with Students:

1. Observe safeguarding protocols (copy of information given to visitors, meeting students with a member of staff).
2. Don't ask students leading questions.
3. Understand that a student's perspective is not always a full representation of a situation.

### Feedback

1. To the Headteacher/School so that the Headteacher/School can give a context and take action.
2. To Governors to inform the Local Governing Body by way of a brief report. To enable a review of the LGB's strategy and to direct the Headteacher/School\* to take appropriate action.

# Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees and Governors

The appointment process for Trustees and Governors differs depending on whether the vacancy is for a Trustee, Governor or Parent Governor. Parent Governors are nominated and elected by parents and only appointed when there are fewer nominations than vacancies.

The first consideration when recruiting new Trustees and Governors is the current mix of skills and experience within the Board or LGB and what sort of skills would be beneficial to add to the existing team.

## Contact

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