

Impact report 2023

December
2023



**Confederation
of School Trusts**

The voice of school trusts

Advocate, connect, support – a year at CST

Our work in support of school trusts runs right through the year, guiding strategic improvements for the sector and helping it navigating change.

Speaking up for school trusts

CST speaks up for trusts at the heart of Westminster. We are routinely consulted by government on education policy, and CST representatives have sat on several ministerial advisory groups including:

- [Academies Regulatory and Commissioning Review](#), leading to new, more transparent guidance on how the Department for Education will make decisions affecting school trusts
- [SEND Review Steering Group](#) and [National SEND and AP Implementation Board](#) which informed the SEND Review and a planned overhaul of support for children with special educational needs



- [Trust leadership expert advisory group](#) to create a new framework for a development programme for trust leaders
- [Advisory panel](#) for Ofsted's new Chief Inspector

We are consulted with across the political spectrum, running policy round tables for opposition parties.

Guidance and publications that make a difference

Over the last year we have published a number of landmark pieces of thought leadership, practical guidance for trusts, and research pieces.

These include papers on support for people with [learning disabilities](#), [safeguarding](#), [professional development](#), and [community anchoring](#).

We have jointly developed a new [Academy Trust Governance Code](#) with sector partners, helping promote best practice.

Our unique [annual surveys](#) of trust CEOs and of [senior salaries](#) continue to help build a national picture of how trusts operate.

Setting the pace on policy

Our policy work is increasingly influential and was heavily reflected in the Government's education white paper.

Our [Building Strong Trusts assurance framework](#) has been adopted by key sector organisations including the National Institute of Teaching, Ambition Institute, Evidence Based Education, and Challenge Partners, and is at the heart of the DfE's work on establishing trust development networks.

Our work on the [core responsibilities of a trust CEO](#) and [building strong trusts](#) formed the basis of the DfE's CEO development programme content framework.

We have launched a [inquiry on trust-led school improvement](#) to inform this crucial policy area.

Our thinking has reach beyond education too, with the Cabinet Office inviting us to present to public sector organisations on the thinking behind our [new domains of educational leadership](#).

12,052
trust people
connecting with
CST

72%
of the sector are
CST members

3.1m+
pupils in CST
member schools

131
expert member
email briefings

Growing and deepening our membership

CST is very proud of our role as the sector body for school trusts. Our membership continues to grow, and we currently represent more than **72% of the school trust sector**. Member trusts span the whole country, and include single academy trusts up to the very largest trusts. We are also pleased to support several diocesan and local authority support teams, and maintained schools looking to join the sector.

We are delighted that so many trust leaders interact with CST on a regular basis, and we have sought in recent years to deepen our relationships with trusts to cover a broader range of staff and governance members.

We now have **10 professional communities**, that offer colleagues from across trusts the chance to come together in **online forums, regular virtual meetings**, and a growing number of successful **in person conferences**.

Our communities now cover:



[Communications leaders](#)



[Finance](#)



[Chief executives](#)



[Operations and HR](#)



[Data leaders](#)



[Trustees and governance leaders](#)



[Directors of early years](#)



[Safeguarding](#)



[Directors of improvement](#)



[SEND and inclusion](#)

Learning and listening to members

We are regularly in conversation with our members - through our **email helpdesk**, feedback and questions arising from our **email briefings** sent three times a week, and every fortnight our online **member engagement meetings** bring us all face to face - or at least camera to camera.

It's important that we listen carefully to our membership and earlier this year we carried out research with Public First to help us better understand how members view CST and what we can do to better serve them.

The results of that work will feed into our new strategic plan, to ensure we continue to be responsive and represent our members, and the sector as a whole, as fully as possible.

4,270
professional
community
members

2,573

training and events
delegates

52

thought leadership
blogs



GEMS

Data-

Mana

Eng



Our biggest ever annual conference

In October we brought together the CST community for our biggest ever [annual conference](#). Taking over the ICC Birmingham for two days, we shared a packed programme of keynote speakers, workshops, and networking opportunities with more than 1300 delegates, representing more than 40% of our member trusts.

Our speakers included leading educational thinker and author Doug Lemov, outgoing Ofsted HMCI Amanda Spielman in one of her last public appearances, and the Secretary of State for Education Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP and Shadow Schools Minister Catherine McKinnell MP.

We also heard more personal stories of working with Nelson Mandela from Chris Lubbe, the realities of raising a child with learning difficulties from theatre and opera director Stephen Unwin, and the extraordinary life of Baroness Floella Benjamin OBE.

Our 40 workshops covered the full range of school trust life, from the use of artificial intelligence to nurturing school business managers to regulatory and commissioning decisions. These informative sessions featured contributions from our member trusts, government decision makers, policy experts, and sector-leading partner organisations.

Delegates also had multiple opportunities to network and meet with colleagues from other trusts around the country, including our annual dinner and exhibition, which showcase 80 leading education charities, organisations, and suppliers.



About us

Our governance and accountability

CST is the sector body and membership organisation that brings together and speaks on behalf of school trusts.

We are a charitable company, registered with the Charity Commission. Our charitable purpose, set out in our articles of association, is "the advancement of education for public benefit."

We are governed by a board of trustees and accountable to our members

We are strictly apolitical. We work with the government of the day, political parties and parliamentarians across the political spectrum to advance education for public benefit and represent you, our members.

Our board

- Sir Hamid Patel OBE (chair)
- Roy Blackwell (vice chair)
- Susan Douglas
- Lorraine Hughes
- Jacqueline Russell
- Steve Snelson
- Luke Sparkes
- Pam Tuckett
- Ed Vainker OBE
- Pamela Wright OBE

How we are funded

Like other sector bodies, income is generated via several different activities – through membership fees, but also from commercial income through training, events, and consultancy, and our partnership scheme with commercial organisations that work with the sector and support our vision.

Trading income keeps membership fees as low as possible and is re-invested in the delivery of the CST's charitable objectives.

Making the most of CST membership

Membership of CST offers a unique range of benefits, available to school trusts' staff, trustees, and local governance.



Briefing emails with policy intelligence and practical tips



Sector-leading thinking, research, and policy development



Expert guidance and support focused solely on school trusts



Preferential rates for training, events, and trust support services



Professional communities to network and share knowledge



Topical webinars from partners and sector experts



Fortnightly online engagement meetings with expert guests



Email helpdesk, with access to free initial legal consultations



Access to government and regulators as the sector body for trusts



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