

# Advocate, connect, support

CST impact report 2024-2025

June 2025



**Confederation**  
of School Trusts

**The voice of school trusts**





CST exists for one reason: to improve our education system. We believe the best way to do that is for schools to come together in organisations dedicated to education, with the power to provide for pupils of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.



We are proud to represent school trusts of all settings and sizes right across England. Together, trusts now run the majority of the country's schools – a growth that has seen a rising tide of standards and achievement.

Our role as the sector body and membership organisation for trusts is to **advocate** for the work they do daily for our children, to **connect** them with each other and education thinkers from around the globe, and **support** them in their work.

This report gives a taster of the work of CST over the 2024/25 academic year. I am so grateful for our dedicated team of staff, backed by the guiding hand of our trustees, and the generosity of so many colleagues across the sector who share their expertise at our events, meetings, and in our professional communities.

Together, and in concert with the staff and governance volunteers of our wonderful member school trusts, we strive and will keep striving to create an education system in which children and the adults that serve them can flourish.

**Leora Cruddas CBE**  
Chief Executive, Confederation of School Trusts

## Advocate

The July 2024 election saw the arrival of a new government. As an apolitical organisation, CST works with **all the main political parties** to share the views and important issues for school trusts.

Our work with Labour in opposition enabled us to build on existing relationships with the incoming ministerial team, reflected in **Education Secretary Rt Hon Bridget Philipson MP** making her first major speech to the education sector at our **Annual Conference**, and minister **Stephen Morgan MP** attending our Early Years Summit.

CST is a founding signatory of the

Government's **Improving Education Together** framework, which brings together key players in English education.



The proposed **Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill** includes several changes for academies, and our work with government has secured beneficial amendments.



We continue to work with legislators in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords on the bill, alongside work on the changes affecting education in the **Employment**

**Rights Bill**. CST has been recognised as a proposed employers' representative for the new **School Support Staff Negotiating Body**.

We meet regularly with **ministers and senior civil servants**, including Ofsted, and have represented the views of members on key issues including **accountability, inspection reform, special educational needs, and funding**. In both the **Budget and Spending Review** we subsequently saw higher than expected settlements for education.

We have published sector-leading discussion papers,



*The CST SEND and Inclusion Conference was a great day and inspiring to be together with people who all have children and young people at the centre of everything they do – Karen Stevenson, Nene Education Trust*

including **Ten principles for a new SEND system**, our joint paper with the Church of England and Catholic Education Service **Flourishing together**, and the forward-looking **Next gen governance**.

Our **Funding Futures** work continues to set out the case for new approaches to school funding, including a **schools' cost index** that properly reflects today's financial pressures.

We have contributed to **National Audit Office** work on funding and SEND.

Our **national school trust survey**, in conjunction with **EduRio**, is now well established, alongside our **survey of executive pay**. This year we have introduced new **research into trust finance** in partnership with IMP Software.

We regularly work with **sector and national media** representing the voice of school trusts.

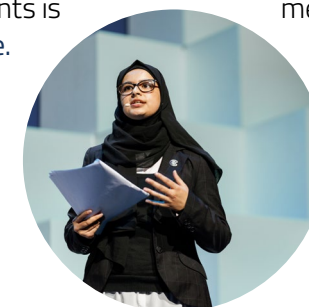
Our work on governance and leadership has been recognised at the heart of Whitehall, leading to a partnership with the **Cabinet Office's Leadership College for Government**, advocating for trusts beyond education.

## Connect

Our work to bring trust professionals together has accelerated with the launch of our eleventh **professional community**, focused on people and culture. We have now had more than 19,000 individual sign ups to our communities. These have **termly online meetings**, and each has its own **annual in-person event**, helping share best practice and build networks.

*I have over 40 years' experience in school governance and this programme was by far the most useful, engaging and participative I have experienced. It was exceptional – Diane Fairfax, Beckfoot Trust*

The biggest of our events is the **Annual Conference**. This year's was our largest ever, with 1,600 attendees, 48 workshops, and dozens of exhibitors, and a varied main stage programme.



– including **Sir Mo Farah CBE**. We were particularly pleased to feature performances by **pupils from member trusts**, and a panel of **young people** in conjunction with the **Children's Commissioner**.

We continue to bring trusts together every fortnight through our **online member engagement calls**, and have introduced **dedicated termly meetings** for specialist providers, and for small trusts.

These meetings help members connect and share their experiences, as well as providing vital contributions to our policy development. This is now further bolstered by our new **policy advisory group**. Elected by our members, the group draws from every region of the country, from mainstream and specialist provision, and includes both executive leaders and trustees.

## Support

We have sent more than 130 **briefing emails** to

members: updating three-times a week during term, plus additional briefings for major funding and policy announcements.

This year we have introduced a targeted **governance briefing email**, providing a digest of highlights and unique content tailored to trustees and governance professionals.

Our publications cover a wide range of topics. Building on our conceptual model for school improvement at scale, the **School Improvement Hub** has highlighted case studies of good practice across the sector.

We have developed new guidance in areas including **safeguarding peer reviews, communications**, and updated our advice to



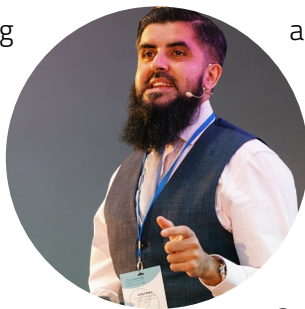


trusts on topics including [setting executive pay](#), [succession planning](#), and [risk handling](#).

Our first book - *New Domains of Educational Leadership* - was published, authored by our chief executive Leora Cruddas CBE.

Topical webinars for members and our professional communities have covered topics as diverse as [staff restructuring](#), artificial intelligence, [nursery provision](#), and [smartphones](#).

Members have continued to benefit from discounted access to our [training courses](#), with



an updated range of governance courses for members, trustees, and local governance, and masterclasses for trust executives.

Our [trust development services](#) team has supported dozens of [governance reviews](#), as well as providing broader support for trusts including [strategic development](#) and [executive performance review](#).

We have extended our bespoke mentoring opportunities for chief executives to the chairs of trust boards, including new individual and group options.

*Our trust board strategy day was led and facilitated superbly... this was a highly successful and enjoyable event which moved the thinking of the board on significantly – Jon Culpin, Anglian Learning*

We work hard to keep trust membership fees as low as possible, using funding from our courses, events, and consultancy. We are also extremely grateful to all our community supporters and sponsors, and especially our 2024/5 Platinum Partners:

- Access Education
- Arbor Education
- Barker
- BlueSky
- Browne Jacobson
- CJK
- Education Mutual
- Edurio
- FFT
- Ginger Energy
- Hachette Learning
- IRIS Education
- Lloyds
- Lyfta
- PLMR
- Pearson
- RM
- RSM
- Renaissance
- Stone King
- Talent Architects
- Teaching Personnel
- Value Match

## CST in numbers

104  
governance  
support  
projects

2,609  
event delegates

8,895  
academies in  
membership

2,226  
member enquiries  
answered

3,676  
pupils per  
member on  
average

3.9m  
pupils educated by  
CST member  
trusts

6  
schools per  
member trust on  
average

11  
professional  
communities

25  
CEOs  
mentored

19,596  
professional  
community sign  
ups

1,056  
training course  
attendees

