

CST National Survey 2024

Deep Dive

Quality of Education

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November 2024

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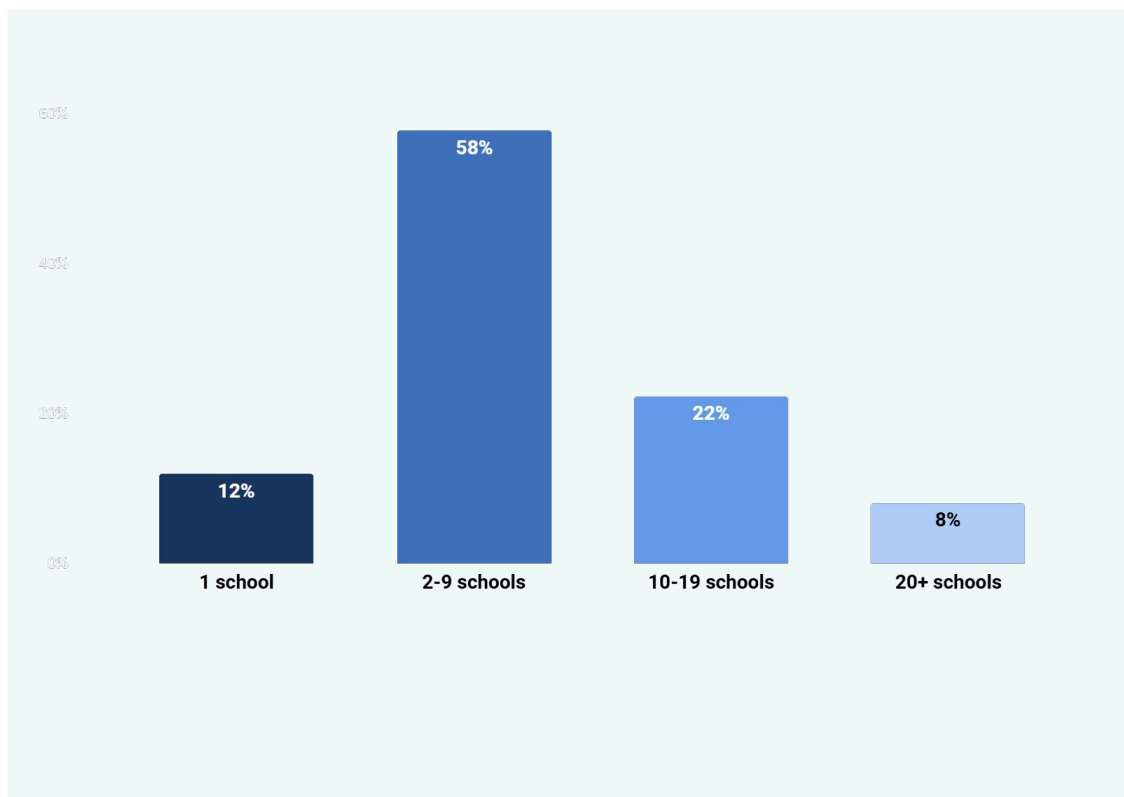
Research Methodology

Feedback from 417 Trusts

In June-July of 2024, the survey was answered by 417 trust accounting officers (the senior leaders directly responsible to Parliament for their trust, usually the CEOs) across England.

The survey covered trusts of all sizes, from trusts with single academies to running dozens of schools, making it a representative sample of school trusts across the sector.

Feedback was focused on trust experience and priorities for the 2024/25 academic year.



Survey designed around the CST's Strong trusts framework

The design of the survey is informed by CST's Building Strong Trusts framework and explores accounting officers' priorities and challenges across the various elements of trust leadership.



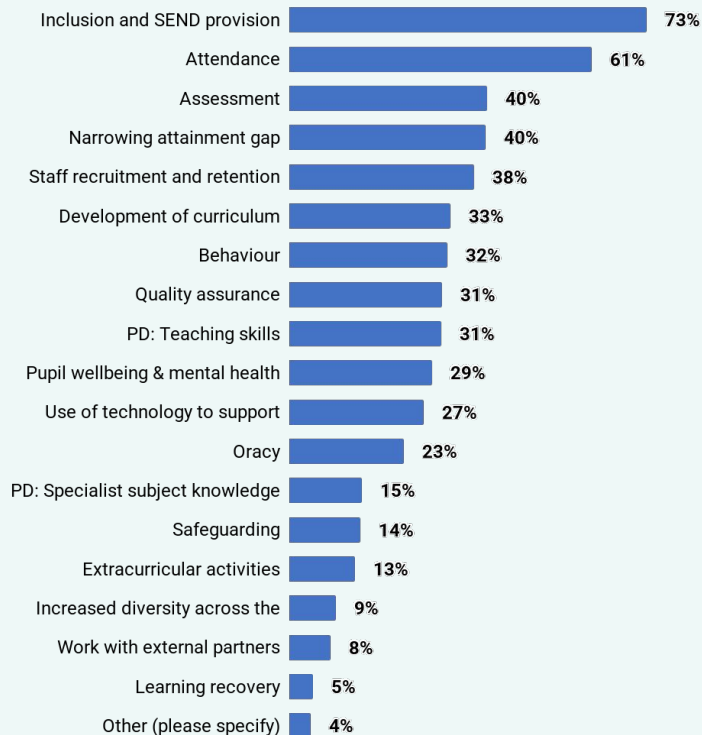
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Priorities and challenges

In which areas does your trust intend to focus its efforts on quality of education in the next academic year?



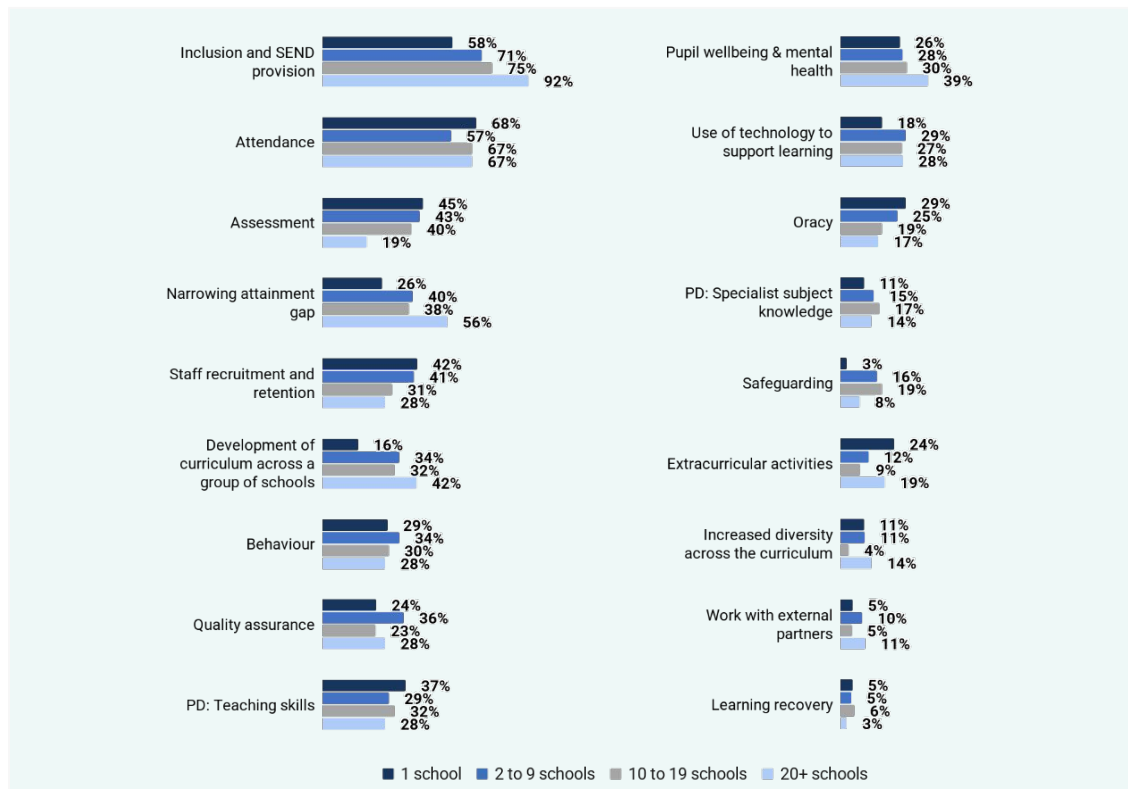
73% of trust leaders highlighted inclusion and SEND provision as a main focus, up from 56% last year.

Attendance is also strongly identified as crucial to the quality of education, with 61% of trusts focusing on it as a priority.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, learning recovery following the pandemic is identified by only 5% of trusts, down from 15% in 2023 and 30% in 2022.

In which areas does your trust intend to focus its efforts on quality of education in the next academic year?

By trust size



The larger trusts are more likely to focus on inclusion and SEND provision, narrowing the attainment gap and pupil wellbeing and mental health as well as developing curriculum across a group of schools.

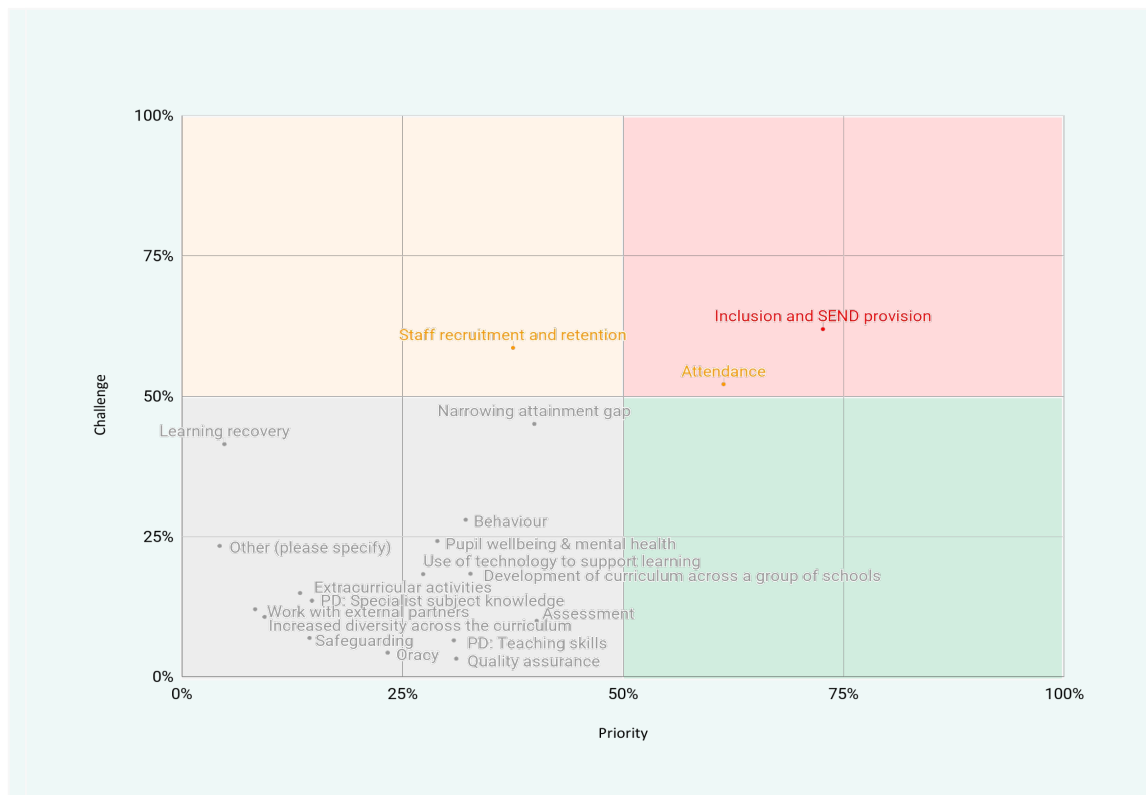


Attendance is as much of a priority for smaller trusts as it is for larger trusts.



Larger trusts were considerably less likely to report that they intend to focus their efforts on assessment in the next academic year compared to smaller trusts.

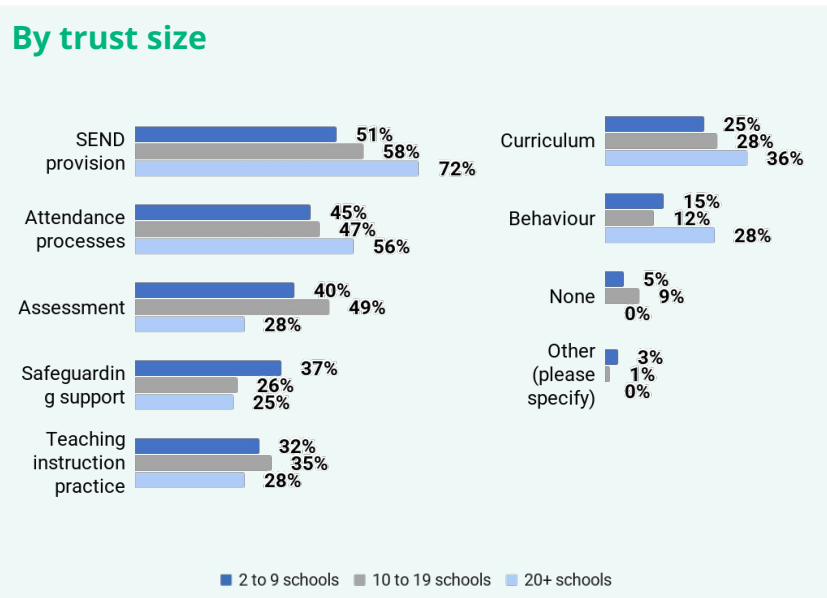
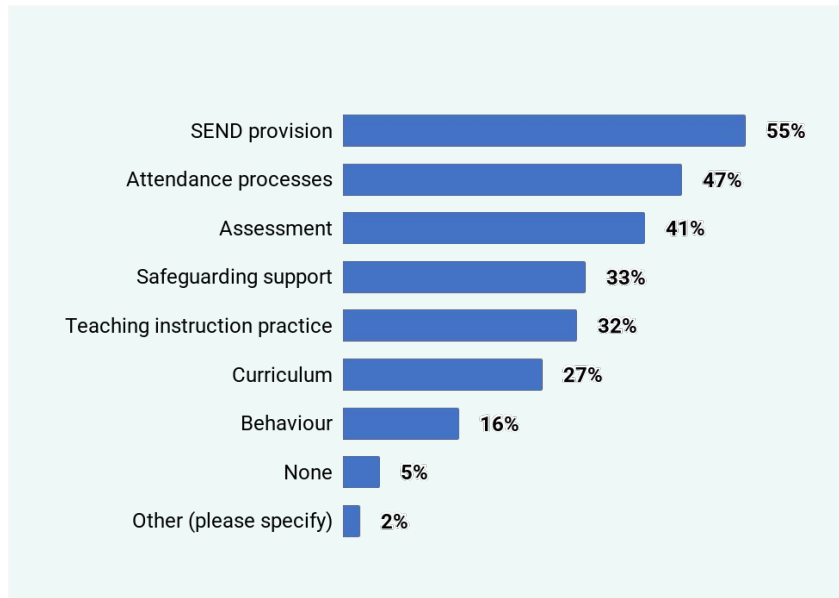
Most demanding priorities for Quality of Education in 2024/25




When looking at where CEOs feel their biggest challenges are; inclusion, SEND provision and attendance are highlighted as a priority that will be a major challenge for the trusts focusing on it.

While recruitment and retention are less frequently mentioned as an education quality priority for CEOs, it is a considerable challenge for those who have selected it as a priority.

In which areas of education provision will your trust prioritise achieving more trust-wide alignment across the trust next year?



 We asked trusts with multiple schools where they expect to seek more trust-wide alignment over the next year. In general, this corresponds with the priority areas highlighted by the trusts, with SEND and attendance being most likely to be a focus of increased alignment.

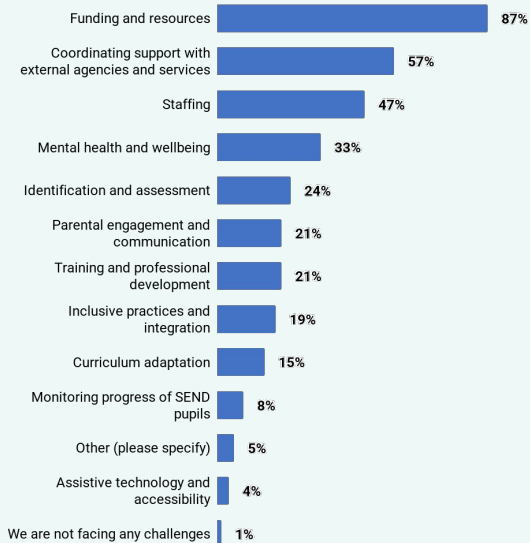
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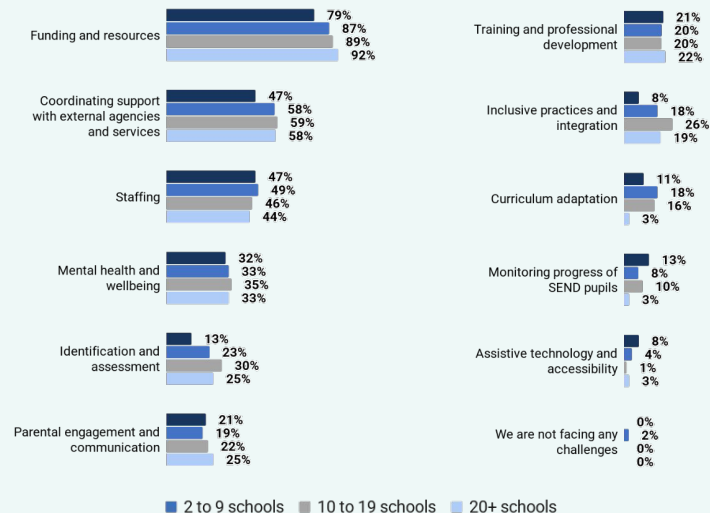
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SEND Provision

What are the main challenges your trust faces in managing SEND provision?



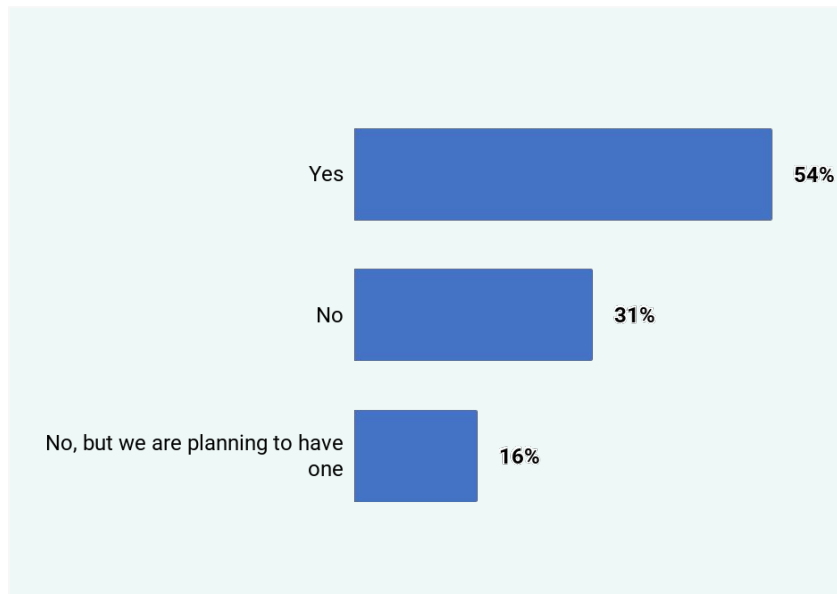
By trust size



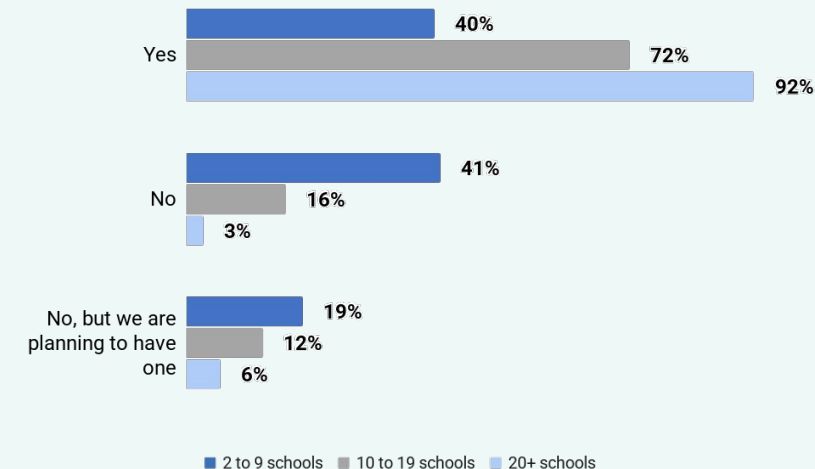
When we asked trust leaders what they felt were the main challenges their trust faces in managing SEND provision, the most reported challenge was funding and resources with 87% trust leaders identifying it as a major challenge. This was followed by coordinating support with external agencies and services as well as staffing, which were both selected by about half of the respondents.

Funding and resources was more likely to be a reported challenge by larger trusts.

Does your trust have a trust-wide Director of SEND or equivalent?



By trust size



- When asked about whether the trusts have a trust-wide director of SEND or equivalent, over half of the respondents said they do with a further 16% planning to introduce this role.
- Notably, this proportion is directly related to trust size with over 90% of the largest trusts (20 schools or more) having a SEND director vs only 40% of the trusts with fewer than nine schools.

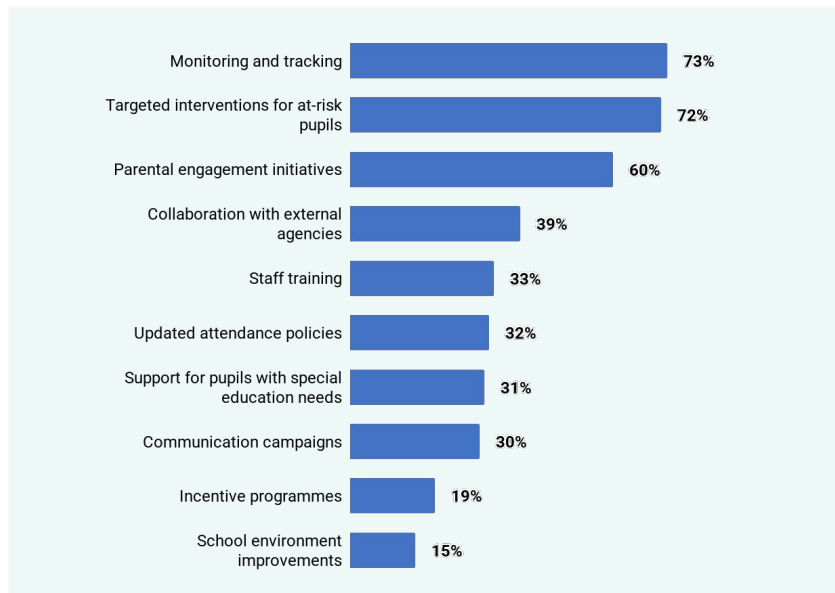
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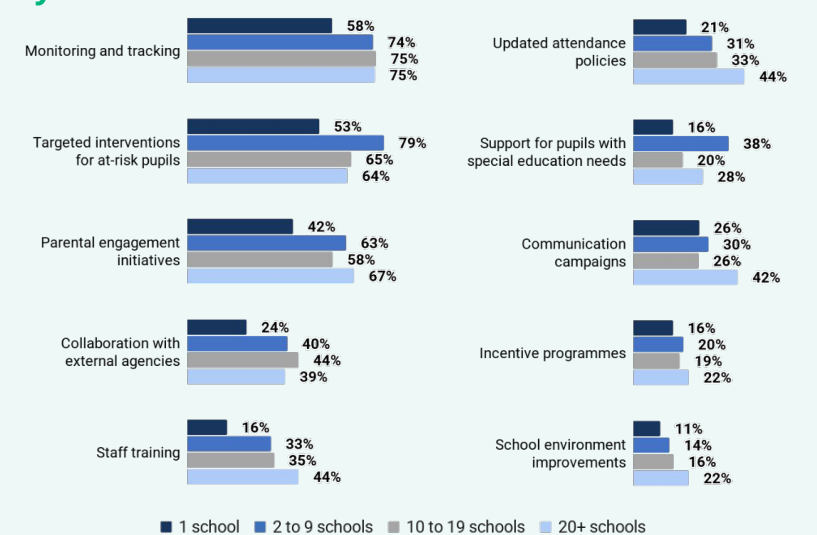
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Attendance


What activities have had a positive impact on attendance in your trust?



By trust size



 We asked trusts to share what activities have had a positive impact on attendance for their trust. It appears that careful monitoring combined with targeted interventions for at-risk pupils is the strategy viewed most favourably by trust CEOs. Parental engagement initiatives are also frequently mentioned as a valuable lever to improve attendance.

 Notably larger trusts (20+ Schools) were more likely to report that communication campaigns and staff training had a positive impact on attendance in their trust.

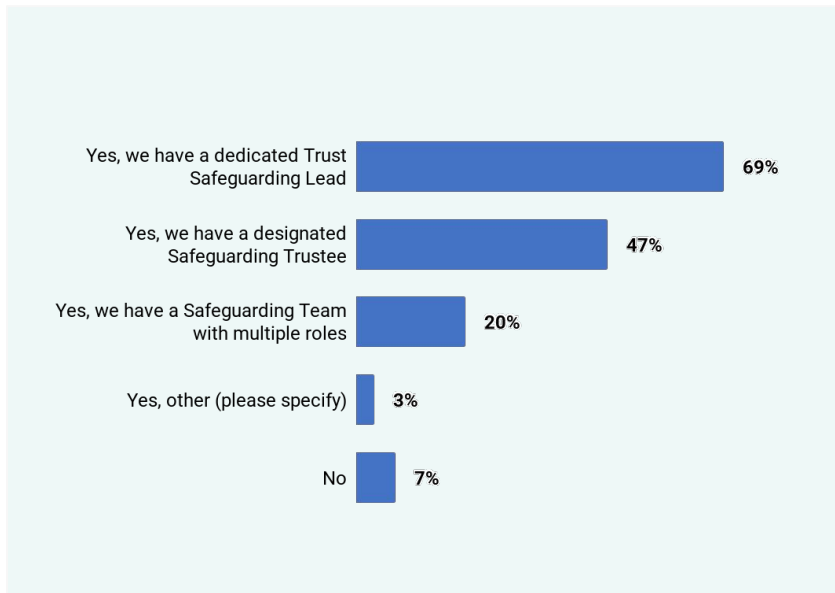
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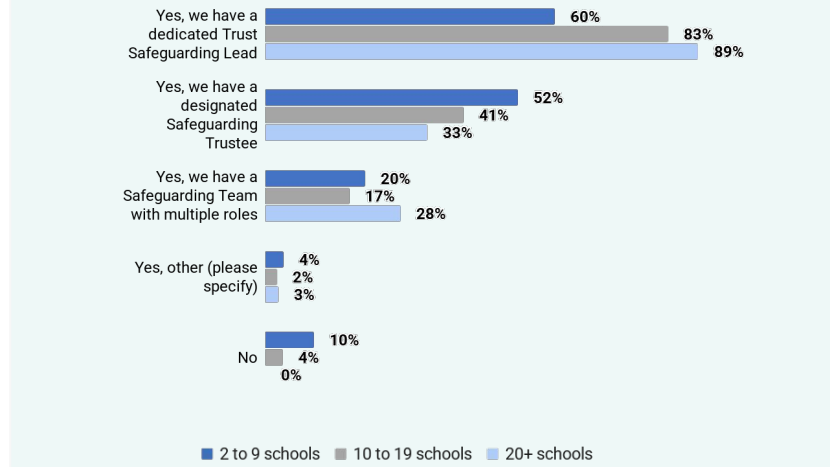
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Safeguarding

Does your trust have trust-wide safeguarding role(s)?



By trust size



69% of CEOs reported that they have a dedicated trust safeguarding lead, and a further 47% reported that they have a safeguarding trustee. Only 20% of CEOs reported having a safeguarding team with multiple roles. 7% of CEOs reported not having a trust-wide safeguarding role.

Smaller trusts were less likely to report having trust-wide safeguarding roles.

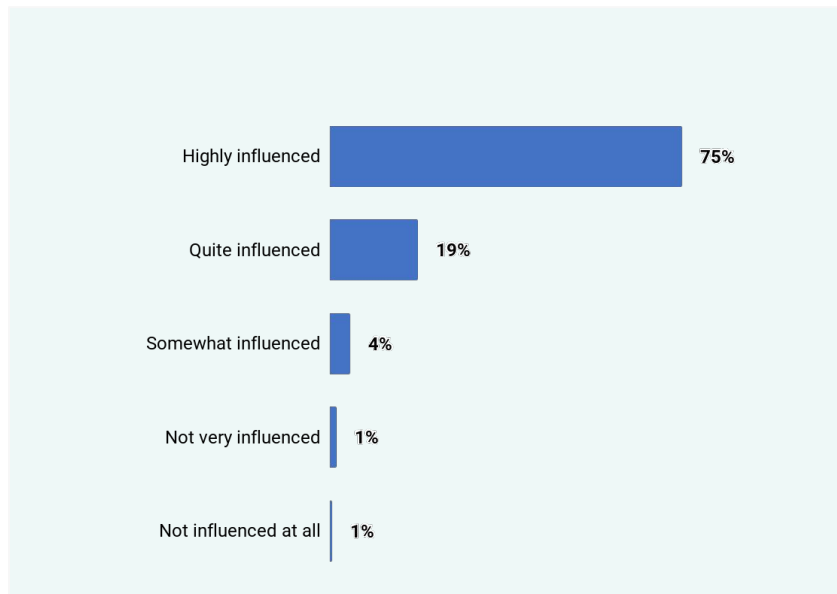
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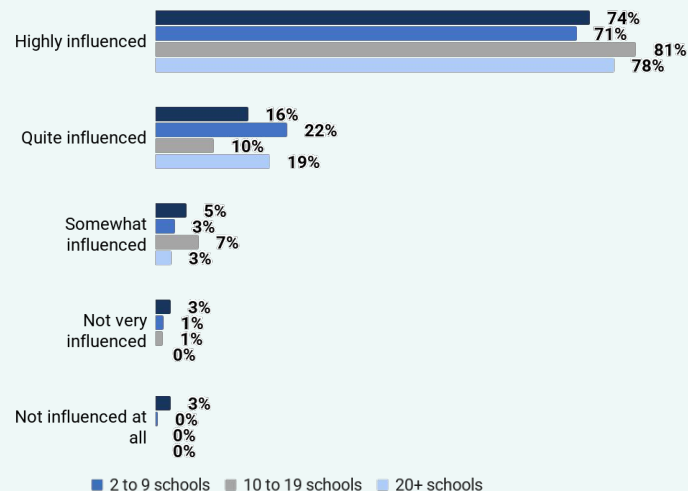
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Curriculum

Academies are not required to follow the National Curriculum but may choose to do so. How influenced by the National Curriculum is education in your trust?



By trust size



Three-quarters of trusts said their curriculum is already highly influenced by the current National Curriculum, with a further 23% saying they are quite or somewhat influenced, despite it not being a statutory requirement for academies for more than two decades.

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Conclusion

Steve Rollett, Deputy Chief Executive, CST



The clear focus on inclusive education, particularly long-term structural issues with SEND provision, is very welcome. We have a clear duty to ensure everyone benefits from a good education, and minimise the barriers to this - much depends on central and local government.

Still, trusts are increasingly finding innovative ways to make a difference.

CST has highlighted and shared the work many trusts are undertaking to tackle attendance levels, and it is reassuring to see trusts grasping the nettle.

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