

# QSG

QUEEN STREET GROUP

ANNUAL REPORT

2023 – 2024



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The Queen Street Group is grateful for the continued support of Bates Wells, a truly purpose and impact-driven law firm, and the firm of choice for charities and education providers.

**Cover photo:**

Daniel from Robert Fitzroy Academy, Croydon.  
REAch2 Academy Trust

# FOREWORD

## Welcome to the sixth Annual Report of the Queen Street Group of Multi-Academy Trusts

Our Annual Report is our reflections on our group and its endeavours against a landscape that remains in constant flux.

### **How do we judge whether we are being successful?**

A quantitative answer might point to our continued growth. This suggests that our partnership is one that member Trusts continue to find supportive of their work and ambitions. Seven new Trusts joined this year, increasing the number of schools we represent from 662 to 800. Between us we educate 365,000 pupils. One of our distinctive characteristics is that we have the scale to attract influential guests, and the intimacy to give members direct access to those people.

A qualitative answer requires us to measure our progress against our aims. Firstly,

***“To engage regularly with policy makers and regulators to ensure that the practical perspective – both of those responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the schools’ system and the views and experiences of our pupils – is understood and taken account of in their strategies and operations.”***

We have met with many significant leaders, including the DfE Permanent Secretary Susan Ackland-Hood, our new HMCI Sir Martyn Oliver, and Director Generals John Edwards and Juliet Chua. At QSG we do not espouse a fixed policy position. As a consequence, our guests have been able to provoke us and spark genuine debate on themes of mutual interest and importance. This creates nuance and an appreciation of complexity,

in the moment, in subsequent conversations with each other, within our Trusts and with partners in other networks.

Our second aim is:

***“To improve the quality of education and opportunity through mutual intellectual, moral and practical challenge and support, and the implementation of best practice in the ethical and effective leadership of Multi-Academy Trusts.”***

Our six Expert Groups are key to achieving this aim. The high and regular attendance from Trust leaders indicates the value placed on these meetings. Many of the ideas that are shared are adopted across QSG.

Our members run large organisations yet are still passionately connected with children; ours is a values-driven collaborative partnership. This has been strikingly evident in our discussions about inclusion.

As Tim Coulson, CEO of Unity Schools Trust, put it:

***“On curriculum, Ofsted reminded us of what we had forgotten; with inclusion, we are having to learn a whole new set of knowledge and skills.”***

We have created an Expert Group of both CEOs and Trust Inclusion Leaders to work together in this learning. Members have been open in sharing what they know, passionate in wanting better for their children, resolute in seeking solutions together. The ambition to tackle the needs of our most vulnerable pupils has seen QSG at its best this year. I have been proud to see how QSG has been meeting this challenge in a way that enacts our values. We enter a new period with optimism and hope, understanding that our partnership is increasingly a fundamental contributor to the prevailing resilience of our sector.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Taylor". The signature is stylized with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

**Steve Taylor**, Chair of QSG

## WHY WE EXIST

### Origins

A group of MAT CEOs began meeting informally in 2015 and then formed a network of Trusts which met regularly over the next three years. In 2018 this network became a formal, legal entity called the Queen Street Group, named after its first meeting location, the offices of charity law firm Bates Wells. There were 17 original member Trusts. Membership has since grown to 40 Trusts, with more joining during 2024–2025.

### Purpose

QSG's formal legal object is ***"To advance education for the public benefit"***. We subscribe to particular collective values, based on common ethical standards in the provision of high-quality school education.

QSG does not seek to take a particular standpoint on any issue, neither does it lobby for a particular policy. Rather, it seeks to articulate the range of viewpoints of its members who serve very different communities throughout England. Our voice is rooted in the practical experience of leading schools and working with pupils.

## OUR TWO KEY AIMS

### Schools and their Trusts

To **improve the quality of education and opportunity** for all pupils in our schools through mutual intellectual moral and practical challenge and support, and the implementation of best practice in the ethical and effective leadership of Multi-Academy Trusts.

### Wider engagement

To **engage regularly with policy makers and regulators** to ensure that the practical perspective – both of those responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the schools' system and the views and experiences of our pupils – is understood and taken account of in their strategies and operations.



## QSG VALUES & PRINCIPLES

### Ethical leadership and moral purpose

We seek to lead our Trusts in the best interests of all our pupils, especially the most disadvantaged, and so help to build a more just and equitable society.

### Thought grounded in practice

We are intellectually rigorous, positive, and constructive in how we seek to influence the development of education in Trusts and across the system. Our distinctive contribution is that our voice is rooted in the day-by-day practice of leading and managing successful groups of schools.

### Open and transparent

Through our website and publishing, both physical and virtual, we are open in the way we form and share our views.

### Eclectic and inclusive

All our members have a voice in how we operate. Our Expert Groups provide networks for leaders across all areas of Trust operation to share knowledge, develop professionally and influence policy.

### Multiple voices entwined in common purpose

Our Trusts are diverse in many ways, including geography, context and size. Each is accountable to its own Board and stakeholders. We seek to reflect and concentrate the impact of these multiple voices, not to condense them into a single viewpoint. We share a common conviction that all schools can benefit from being part of a Multi-Academy Trust.

### Proactive and focused

We have no ambition to grow into a mass-membership organisation, nor do we feel the need to react to every shifting change or event in the educational world. We are proactive in focusing on the issues that experience in leading successful groups of schools tells us are of importance.

We support one another, improve our practice and seek to influence policy through:

- **Regular meetings of CEOs**
- **Regular meetings of six Expert Groups involving executive leaders of Education, Inclusion, Finance, Human Resources, EdTech and Estates**
- **Discussions with influential policy-makers and regulators**
- **Publication of briefings and blogs**

# KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

## 2023 – 2024

### Focus Area 1: Trust Leadership Succession

Support women into leadership and promote the next generation of diverse and successful leaders

We are approaching the end of year two of our mission to widen leadership diversity in Trusts by focusing on one under-represented group, that of female leaders. We have challenged ourselves to listen to a multiplicity of voices in all our meetings, and to ensure those voices are heard. Over the coming year QSG will be using this lens to promote wider diversity in leadership.

### QSG Women into Leadership Conference, February 2024

#### Voice, community, equity

The leitmotif of the 2024 conference was personal identity, with a focus on leadership motivations and values, including:

- acknowledging the multiple barriers that leaders, particularly female leaders, face; how to use intrinsic abilities and strategies to overcome them
- building an authentic leadership identity based on personal values, narrative and story-telling

Whilst female leaders and aspiring leaders were in the majority, the conference attracted a number of male leaders keen to improve their own knowledge of barriers to diversity in leadership and champion professional pathways for all.

### In an opening Fireside Discussion, three QSG leaders told their stories:

- i) **Sally Apps**, Education Director, Cabot Learning Federation

Sally talked about navigating the challenges of being a mother alongside being an executive leader. She stressed the importance of leadership authenticity and embracing changes over time as each of these roles has evolved. She talked about how the need to 'do things differently' has enabled her to adopt a more adaptive leadership style.

- ii) **Jennese Alozie**, CEO, University of Chichester Academy Trust

Jennese gave us an insight into how as a black woman she has encountered and responded to obstacles as she has pursued her career in education leadership. She talked about the obstacles that people do not necessarily see, and how as leaders we can use our experience to teach children how to 'dance' around and chip away at these obstacles. We show them the possibilities of the road ahead, and give them the agency to create their own journey.

- iii) **Bryony Green**, COO, Aldridge Education

As an engineer who previously worked in the MOD, Bryony talked about her journey to senior leadership in a Trust and her ability to identify approaches and solve problems drawing on expertise from different sectors. She talked about developing the confidence to be open and seize opportunities.



## Keynote speaker:

**Mel Marshall**, Olympian and Olympic Swimming Coach

Mel gave an inspirational insight into her journey from humble beginnings as an only child from Skegness to professional swimmer and elite swimming coach. She talked about how she was told by her mother at the age of 10 that she had 'two arms and two legs, so go and be the best of yourself', instilling from an early age a work ethic underpinned by hope, belief and determination. Mel set out how she has achieved success and built success for those around her:

- develop a culture of winning by keeping the love in all you do, seeing challenge as an opportunity for growth, making sure that you 'offload to reload', and most importantly 'translating big strides into small steps, so that everyone can join the journey to excellence'
- choose the character you want to adopt: winner or whinger? Victim or victor? Upbeat or beat up?
- build relationships and surround yourself with a team of 'believers' who get the vision and will take all reasonable steps to get the whole team there
- develop a culture of honesty: 'see it, say it, but only when people are ready to receive it'

## Four workshops

### 1 Representation, **Hilary Spencer** and **Hannah Martin**, Ambition Institute

This session covered key questions for Trust leaders arising from current patterns of employment statistics:

- why is it that there is such a sustained pattern of women tending to work more with younger children and children with SEND, and men tending to work more with older children?
- why do so few men go into teaching, compared to women?
- what can we do to help parents, particularly – but not only – women, stay in the sector?
- why are there such different acceptance rates between different ethnic groups for entry to Initial Teacher Training?
- do we as leaders understand enough about the experience of non-white staff in our schools and Trusts to know what more we can do to support them in their careers?

### 2 Intersectionality, **Nadine Bernard**, Headteacher and founder of Aspiring Heads

This session shone a light on how the systems of power and privilege in our society operate much more widely than race, gender and class. Our access can be affected by whether we own property or are homeless, our different levels of education, whether we are neuro-typical or neuro-diverse.

### 3 Menopause, **Rebecca Manley**, writer and actor

Rebecca talked about how menopause affects everyone in the family and the workplace and proposed five actions for a Trust:

- awareness – have all staff received training?
- confidence – is this a place we encourage openness?
- support – is there an appointed person and information available?
- flexibility – working patterns, physical environment?
- communication – is there a menopause policy? Is it shared?

### 4 Developing your brand profile, **Cal Watson**, Denford Associates

Cal talked about the importance of personal branding for leaders and how this builds trust and credibility. She explained that it creates leader confidence (by showcasing strengths), credibility (by building trust), control (by influencing perceptions) and visibility (by ensuring that you are seen and heard).

In developing an authentic brand, Cal suggested creating a space that genuinely portrays who you are and your 'why' as a leader. This enables stakeholders to see your passion in your work and hear it in your story. In developing a personal brand, delegates explored the idea of personal story and its presentation. Cal set out how a personal brand demonstrates a leader's unique qualities and skills and connects them with their target audience.

# KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

## 2023 – 2024

### Focus Area 2: Promoting Inclusive Education

Working with communities to transform life chances for all children through exceptional provision for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP)

#### Expert witness

**Alison Ismail**, Director of SEND and AP, DfE

It has become clear that the promotion of inclusion is a passionately held priority for QSG Trusts. At the same time, it is problematic in a context of increasing need when local support is often decreasing. That is why Trusts are looking to develop in-house expertise grounded in the growth of knowledge and skills of all staff.

A new Expert Group has been launched this year with membership drawn from both CEOs and Trust SEND/AP leads. This is in recognition of the importance of this issue. SEND and Inclusion must be at the heart of a Trust's strategic priorities and areas for development. It is fundamental that this is not an area that is delegated down, but must sit with CEOs and Trust leaders themselves.

There are significant differences in how Trusts understand and operationalise inclusion. We have therefore made the sharing of best practice and experiences from across group members one of the key areas of our work.

#### Challenges that QSG Trusts are currently tackling:

- finding the right relationship between mainstream and special schools
- expediting change in the context of a perfect storm of increasing need from families and tightening funding
- the risk that change inadvertently makes things worse. Arguably, the last major reform raised parental expectations that the system could not deliver
- inconsistency of provision, so solutions must be found bottom-up not waiting for top-down initiatives
- 40% of children are currently categorised with SEND at some time. Such a high proportion of pupils cannot be treated as needing specialist intervention. We need to challenge the current definitions of SEND and how schools adapt for a greater range of milder or moderate need

#### Five principles for inclusion

**Tom Rees**, CEO of Ormiston Academy Trust and QSG member, launched the Expert Group with a discussion of his paper, written with Ben Newmark for CST and Ambition Institute.

##### 1 Dignity, not deficit

Difference and disability are normal aspects of humanity – the education of children with SEND should be characterised by dignity and high expectation, not deficit and medicalisation.

##### 2 Greater complexity merits greater expertise

All children deserve a high-quality education – where extra support is needed, it should be expert in nature.

##### 3 Different, but not apart

Encountering difference builds an inclusive society – children with different learning needs should be able to grow up together.

##### 4 Success in all its forms

Success takes many forms – we should value and celebrate a wide range of achievements, including different ways of participating in society.

##### 5 Action at all levels

Change happens from the bottom-up as well as top-down – everyone has the agency and a responsibility to act.





## The SEND and AP Improvement Plan

Alison Ismail explained the DfE's ambitious plans to improve outcomes and experiences, supported by QSG member Mark Vickers

### A national system with new national standards

- national standards for identification and provision
- Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) reform
- new three-tier Alternative Provision (AP) system

### Successful transitions and preparation for adulthood

- investment in supported internships
- support for Department for Work and Pensions adjustment passport
- improvement in disabled students' allowance

### A skilled workforce and excellent leadership

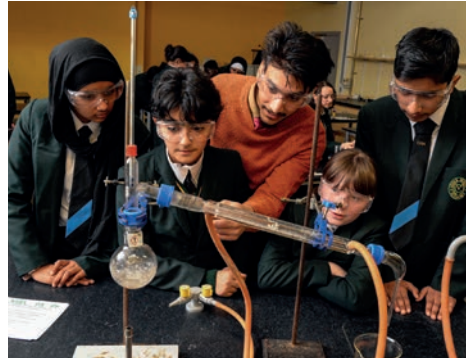
- improved Initial Teacher Education (ITE)
- SENDCO NPQ

### Strengthened and clear routes of redress

- transparent and effective options for pupil movement
- updated Ofsted, Care Quality Commission (CGC) Area SEND inspections
- clearer lines of accountability

### A financially sustainable system

- funding reform
- new AP funding arrangements



## Case study: Developing SEND leadership capacity across the Cabot Learning Federation (CLF)

**Susie Weaver**, Education Director

CLF has co-constructed an SEND strategy, refined to fit-on-a-page for ease of communication and adoption. Working across a strong, established and connected SEND network, which reflects the Trust approach at CLF, has given the opportunity to supercharge aspects of the SEND strategy at scale. It has been worth the investment of time.

We support leaders across the organisation to be informed, engaged and involved in the approach to inclusion within their settings, enabling all children to thrive.

Across our SEND network there is 175 years of expertise and wisdom. We wanted to pool that strength and knowledge to best effect through augmented SEND self-evaluation.

Within the SEND strategy we have a core focus to develop, establish and embed a cycle of SEND Peer Reviews. This has provided the platform for SENDCOs both to explore specific local SEND provision, and also identify patterns and broader areas of focus to strengthen the SEND strategy across the Trust.

Through a developmental approach and the expectation that all Trust SENDCOs would 'have one and do one', a model of peer self-improvement for sustainable change has been established and secured across the Trust.



# KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

## 2023–2024

### Focus Area 3: Regulation and Inspection of Trusts

Advocate effective and proportionate processes for schools and Trusts

#### The context

In the light of the known departure of HMCI Amanda Spielman during academic year 2023–24, it felt appropriate to consider the wider role of inspection and how QSG might support her successor by sharing our practical perspectives.

The previous academic year had also seen the emergence of the new Regions Group structure in the nine DfE regions. The first year of operations had raised questions with regard to clarity and consistency in the way Regional Directors were exercising their responsibilities. With the backdrop of CST's ongoing calls for greater clarity in the way in which regulation functions, QSG considered how we might seek to develop positive relationships with senior officials to share our views grounded in our experiences.

#### 1 What were the inspection challenges we felt needed to be addressed?

##### i) Inspection workforce

- **experience:** some inspectors/HMIs seemed to lack experience of senior leadership in schools
- **pay:** may not be sufficient to attract those holding senior positions to become Inspectors
- **quality of Team Leadership:** the ability of Lead Inspectors to set the tone and manage the team was variable
- **inconsistency in interpretation of the framework:** behaviours seemed heavily influenced by the latest training; a feeling that training had moved away from the why of the evidence base to the how of inspection, such as managing the Headteacher

##### ii) Other inspection challenges

- **link HMI:** this was proving very productive for the Trusts who had experienced this, but was not universal practice
- **inspection or improvement:** Ofsted inspects; long-term improvement is one consequence of its actions. Nevertheless, improved timing of inspections can support rather than sometimes undermine the effort of schools to improve
- **equity:** we need the same high standards for all communities, and also to acknowledge that some schools are harder to run than others
- **MATs:** much work remains to be done on developing appropriate inspection of Trusts

#### 2 Regulation: what were the challenges that we saw for Regional Directors?

Judging Trusts: as regulators, Regional Directors are making judgements on whether Trusts need to improve and whether they have the capacity to take on new schools. There needed to be greater consistency of approach amongst the different Regions, and greater transparency in how such processes work.

Complaints: Regional Directors, Ofsted, ESFA and LAs all seemed to be involved in dealing with complaints. This was duplicating requests for information, all in different formats. The system needed revision, especially with regard to anonymous complaints, where schools cannot comment in detail because they do not know the individual concerned.

#### 3 Some of the solutions advocated by QSG members

Unlike other organisations, QSG does not hold or seek to hold a single policy position. Rather, it respects the varied viewpoints of its members and seeks to influence through engagement with policy-makers. Through our constructive meetings with senior officers in Ofsted, DfE and Regional Directorates, we advanced the following suggestions:

## One-word judgements

Some see these as problematic, but accept it is a powerful lever for change. Others see the bluntness of a single-word as toxic, preferring a more nuanced series of judgements that stimulate sophisticated questions from trustees and governors.

## Governance

It is the opinion of many CEOs that the quality of governance across the system is not consistently strong enough to bear the demands placed upon it. Weak governance is often carried by leaders. This problem is masked by incorporating governance within the judgement on leadership, so these need to be separated.

## Inspection of Trusts

Those Trusts that have experienced a Multi-Academy Trust Summary Evaluation (MATSE) reported a mixed response. The identification of good practice was unsurprisingly found to be supportive. Some CEOs were concerned by the lack of understanding of how Trusts operate shown by some inspectors. Trust Finance Directors reported wide inconsistency of approach by different inspection teams.

Even where Trusts choose not to standardise curriculum and other approaches, the majority set clear benchmark standards and use them to monitor the performance of their schools. Ofsted currently inspects a school informed by deep dives into specific departments. Similarly, inspection could increasingly focus on the Trust (or relevant authority) informed by selective inspection of specific schools and themes.

## Safeguarding

Most members do not advocate separate annual safeguarding inspections. These would increase burdens on schools. The Trust sets the safeguarding policy and monitors its effectiveness. This is where inspection should focus.

## School Improvement Partners

One guest speaker advocated a system of School Improvement Partners (SIPs) employed by the Trust to ensure quality in schools. It is the SIPs who would be the focus of Ofsted. However, this idea was not generally supported. Trusts already have comprehensive quality assurance systems in place.

## Regional Directorates

QSG members value having named leads from Regional Directorates as a single point of contact, although appreciate that budgets constrain this. A small group from QSG has been meeting regularly with the Director General Regions Group to discuss these issues, and members are seeing much improvement in the interaction between regional directorates and the sector.

## Expert witnesses:

**Sir Martyn Oliver**, HMCI

**Sir David Carter**, former National Schools Commissioner

**Leora Cruddas**, CEO Confederation of School Trusts

**Lord Knight of Weymouth**

**Juliet Chua**, Director General Schools Group

**John Edwards**, Director General Regions Group

**Claire Burton**, Acting Director General Regions Group

**Christopher Mansell**, CEO Birmingham Diocese Multi-Academy Trust

**Helen Matthews**, Deputy Director Education, Ofsted

**Richard Kueh**, (then) Deputy Director Schools and Early Years, Ofsted

## The future: practice is already improving

QSG members have been seeing improvement in the areas in which they have expressed concerns. Both Sir Martyn Oliver, HMCI, and John Edwards, Director General Regions Group, together with their teams, have been open and receptive to constructive dialogue. We appreciate their willingness to meet with QSG to consider how all parts of the sector can work together on improvements. Following the very positive engagement with senior members of the new HMCI's team, and a similar reception from the Regions Team over the past year, QSG intends to make early engagement with senior officials and ministers to engage with them in the effective delivery of the new government's policy priorities.



# QSG ANNUAL RECEPTION

QSG once again held a Reception for leading figures in education. This event launches the QSG Annual Report which reviews the past year's activities, and sets priorities for the year ahead. It provides a forum for the CEOs and Chairs of QSG Trusts to share their thinking with policy makers and discuss issues with leaders of other prominent educational organisations.

In 2023, the event was held at the Royal Society of Arts thanks to the generous sponsorship of Bates Wells. A record 120 guests accepted invitations, including representatives from the Department for Education, the Education and Skills Funding Agency, Ofsted, policy institutes and charities.

Speaking on behalf of QSG, Steve Taylor (Chair of QSG) and Gail Brown (QSG Vice Chair) reflected on the continuing development of QSG over the past year, and priorities for 2023–2024.

## QSG development

- seven new Trusts have joined QSG
- a second well-attended conference focused on Women into Leadership
- continued maturing of an open, trusting and inclusive ethos
- Expert Groups now meet in person as well as online
- Expert Groups hold strategic day events in addition to shorter meetings
- increasingly rich discussions with guests and others

## Priorities for 2023 – 2024

### **Trust leadership succession**

Support women into leadership and promote the next generation of diverse and successful leaders

### **Promoting inclusive education**

Work with communities to transform life chances for all children through exceptional provision in SEND and AP

### **Regulation and inspection of Trusts**

Advocate effective and proportionate processes for schools and Trusts

### **QSG Expert Groups**

QSG exists in order to improve the quality of education for all our pupils through mutual challenge and support, the implementation of best practice, and engagement with policy makers. The Expert Groups are the vehicle for ensuring that all QSG senior leaders can participate in fulfilling these aims. This year we added a new group to reflect our priority of addressing inclusive education. Additional administrative support is now enabling each group to meet in-person as well as online.

## Guest speaker

**John Edwards**, Director General Regions Group

John emphasised that the best advocates for the system are leaders of Multi-Academy Trusts. He referenced the outstanding role played by MATs in leading schools and their communities through the recent pandemic. It is Trusts that lie at the heart of tackling current issues such as raising attendance, and sudden unexpected issues such as Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC).

He reflected on a number of key areas:

### Regions Groups

- focus and synergise all the services working for the benefit of the child: schools, LAs, Children's Services, Church organisations
- catalyse intervention and improvement
- create a sense of place using local knowledge of the strategic needs of schools and Trusts

### Policy and delivery

- policy inevitably lands in a context determined by unexpected events
- the aspiration is for a double-ended arrow between the two, so that policy is both informed and amended by the reality of delivery
- sequencing and layering means thinking about how policy lands. Government must consider the intended and unintended consequences of impact

### Partnership with schools

- openness and transparency are key
- bringing the lived experience of schools into the DfE
- having the humility to try to be a part of the people working in the system not apart from it

**Also in attendance** at the QSG Reception were senior figures from:

Action Tutoring; ASCL; Ambition Institute; Bates Wells; Brilliant Club; Charter School Capital; Chartered Institute of Teaching; Church of England Schools; Confederation of School Trusts; Department for Education; Education Endowment Foundation; Education Policy Institute; Education Support; Fair Education Alliance; Foundation for Educational Development; Gerard Kelly & Partners; National Governance Association; National Institute of Teaching; Ofsted; Pearson; Prince's Education Trust; Salata Family Foundation; Schools Week; Teacher Development Trust; Teacher Tapp; TES.



# SPECIAL FEATURE: SHARING PRACTICE

## Two CEOs help fulfil a key QSG aim

### People strategy

Ted Wragg Trust: CEO **Moira Marder**

#### 1 The catalyst

Schools joined the Trust serving disadvantaged communities in Plymouth. We wanted to turn it from somewhere no one wanted to work, to somewhere everyone wants to work.

#### 2 The levers for improvement

##### Recruitment

- attracting the best through social media as well as traditional advertising
- careful tracking of applicants
- Future Headteacher Programme. Recruit leaders with potential, give them a minimum of two years on placements in our schools, visits to the best schools in the country and a personalised development programme to ready them for Headship
- SW100. This programme was developed with Reach Academy and other SW Trusts. The aim is to train 100 top-class Headteachers over five years with a passion for transforming our most challenging schools. The programme includes seminars, placements, residentials, and visits to schools in this country and America

##### Retention

- what does it look like to be the best employer in our area? Rigorous self-analysis driving completion rates for the Edurio staff survey from 54% in 2021 to 78% in 2024
- induction event for new staff held three times a year
- coaching and supervision for all Heads
- Ted Wragg Institute to bring coherence and status to all ITT and CPD
- support staff CPD given high status, eg. School Business Professionals Apprenticeships

### Learning from a merger of two Trusts

Initio Learning Trust: CEO **Liz West**

#### 1 Why did we merge our Trust, Wimborne, with Minerva Trust?

We are ambitious on two flanks. Firstly, we know we can be even more ambitious for Wimborne's children: "They do well, but they can do even better." Secondly, we can be more ambitious for more children: "We do well for some, but we can do well for more."

#### 2 The journey

- check our values and vision are aligned
- invest time in relationships and collaborations before finalising decision
- open and transparent mutual due diligence
- invest time deciding new name and logo which embody values and purpose
- decide the "back-bone" (the Trust's core) and "big moves" (key strategic developments)
- decide the balance between standardisation/alignment/autonomy: be clear on the extent to which each applies in all areas of operation

#### 3 Lessons learned

- there is a need for sensitivity, but the need to align systems early means also avoiding being over-cautious
- create a culture of openness to change
- over-communicate to all stakeholders to take them with you
- avoid the word "autonomy"; talking of where there is room for "agency" or "innovation" is more helpful
- expect the unexpected

# KEY AREAS OF FOCUS 2024 – 2025

## 1 Trust leadership succession

Support women into leadership and promote the next generation of diverse and successful leaders.

## 2 Promote inclusive education

Work to transform the life chances of all children through exceptional provision in SEND and Alternative Provision.

## 3 The role of Trusts in their communities

Promote belonging and connection between schools and their communities.

## Continuation of work from 2023–2024

Advocate for the effective and proportionate inspection and regulation of Trusts.

In addition, QSG is asking for advice from its Expert Groups, in particular:

## 1 Education

### Early Years and Foundation Schooling

To provide advice to CEOs on how best to close gaps and ensure the best start for all children by improving the quality of EYFS in Trusts.

## 2 HR

### Retention and recruitment

To provide advice to CEOs on Trust leadership approaches that maximise the retention and recruitment of the best staff.

## 3 Edtech

### AI

To provide advice to CEOs on how AI can best enhance the work of Trusts.

# EXPERT GROUP (1)

## Education

**Chair: Dan Nicholls (Cabot Learning Federation)**

Education Directors have met six times this year. The group seeks to provide a level of connection and supervision, as well as considering contemporary issues and exploring longer term key strategic areas for Trusts.

### Areas of focus this year

#### Connection and supervision

A key aim of the Education group is to offer support and a version of supervision in a community of educationalists who hold similar roles in Trusts. The group is typically formed of Directors of Education or Deputy CEOs who often work in some isolation in growing and maturing Trusts across the country. There is an inclusive, collegiate and a positive approach to meetings that encourages colleagues to seek connection with others. There is evidence of growing collaboration between attendees beyond the meetings. The meetings enable the sharing and discussion of sector intelligence, which usefully offers a nation-wide perspective.

#### The focus of the QSG Education Group

This year the group has focused on key issues within the sector, discussed how Trusts best improve schools and offered wider updates on key areas. Topics have included school improvement models, wider societal influences on schools, national assessments and examinations, recruitment and retention, and shared information on inspection.

### Update on the key areas of focus for 2023–24

#### 1 How do we ensure that the growth and merger of Trusts leads to higher standards?

An exploration of school improvement models for Trusts has linked into and out of the CST inquiry. There has also been discussion on the growth and merger of Trusts and the implications for school improvement.

#### 2 How far can we take greater stewardship of the sector and seek to enable and support Trusts to work much more closely together?

The group actively shares thoughts, ideas and case studies that support Trusts to work more closely together. There has been input from Challenge Partners and discussion around peer review.

#### 3 How do we address the present challenges around attendance and the weakening social contract between families and education?

National and regional attendance is reported in each meeting. Colleagues have offered several case studies and strategies for tackling attendance over time. The work of Attendance Hubs has also been referenced. There have also been reflections on the role of Trusts as key civic partners.

#### 4 How do we encourage stronger recruitment and retention, partly through the golden thread of professional development?

Recruitment and retention has been a key focus, and we have particularly considered the support and development of Early Career Teachers.

#### 5 How do Trusts support disadvantaged learners and those identified with SEND?

There have been key pieces of reading related to the support of disadvantaged learners. This has focused on excellent provision, application of equity and the development of culture at school and Trust level.



## Expert witnesses

**Susannah Hardyman**, Action Tutoring CEO

Susannah presented to the group about Action Tutoring and the power of mentoring to support disadvantaged learners, particularly in this post-pandemic period. This considered the role of tutoring for closing the disadvantage gap and for offering young people greater opportunities in their future. There was an explanation of the growth of mentoring and the impact of the work.

**Dr Kate Chhatwal**, Challenge Partners CEO

Kate spoke to the group about peer review and the Challenge Partner Trust Peer Review process that is enabling Trusts to review each other. These reviews typically involve four Trusts that take it in turns to review and be reviewed over a period of around 18 months. This is focused on considering each Trust's school improvement model, but can be widened to consider other aspects of the organisation. QSG Trusts are exploring the model.

### Key emerging areas for focus, 2024–25

- **Trusts as school improvement organisations**  
exploration and discussion of the school improvement models of Trusts, particularly to add a dividend through growth and merger
- **Trusts leading and collaborating across the sector**  
exploring how Trusts can work more closely together to influence the sector, create capacity and add value during the next phase of academisation and as the sector matures
- **Understanding the new political and inspection landscape**  
with changes to the political landscape and the high likelihood of change in inspection, to understand implications for education and Trusts
- **Improving recruitment, retention, and professional learning**  
with increasingly challenging funding and a fracturing social contract, how do Trusts secure strong recruitment and retention? We explored the professional development offers within Trusts that enable colleagues to manage workload
- **Attendance: relationships with communities and families**  
on-going focus on improving attendance, especially by working closely with families and the wider community
- **Supporting SEND and disadvantaged learners**  
how do Trusts meet the needs of vulnerable learners? SEND is becoming the challenge of our time and post-pandemic it is essential that we do more to support those previously or presently disadvantaged



## EXPERT GROUP (2)

### EdTech

Chair: James Browning (Academies Enterprise Trust)

Deputy: Ash Mudaliar (Creative Education Trust)

### Guiding principles for our group

1

We exist as a group to serve the QSG CEO Group

2

A safe space where we can share openly

3

Explore a small number of topics in great depth

4

Share our views with the aim of making the system better

### Areas of focus

#### Use of AI

Not surprisingly there have been extensive discussions, ranging from how to form a set of principles to underpin the use of AI in education, to the impact on roles within an organisation.

#### Digital and technology standards

We have worked closely with DfE to understand and influence their now comprehensive set of digital standards.

#### Professional development

We explored the most effective ways of ensuring that all staff are confident in their use of EdTech.

#### Expertise, knowledge and systems database

A comprehensive database of all aspects of EdTech use in our Trusts has been compiled.

### Successes

#### Engagement with each other

This is evidenced by high levels of attendance (at both in-person and virtual events) and consistently positive feedback. Our knowledge database is a piece of QSG IP that gives us a strategic lens to support practice and innovation.

#### Engagement and influence with DfE

We have built a relationship with the DfE EdTech team that gives our members inside access to, and influence over, developing initiatives.

#### Real issues of relevance

Our topics of discussion have been democratically chosen at the start of each year, and we start every face-to-face session with a 'lightning round' of every individual's priorities.



## Case study: EdTech supporting sustainability Chiltern Learning Trust

Over the past ten years, Chiltern Learning Trust has evolved its digital strategy in line with its climate change and sustainability strategy. The rapid developments in AI have been incorporated into a holistic strategic approach. This enables students to use digital technology to address the issues of reducing the carbon footprint and sustainability in their work.

A highlight of this work was the Chiltern Learning Trust Climate Change and Digital Innovation Summit (#CCADIS) held in April in Luton. At the core of this initiative was the recognition that climate change stands as the most significant threat to our young people's future. Through their participation in the summit, these students shared their inventive solutions with a broader audience.

They staffed creative stalls to explain the climate change apps they had produced with the assistance of Apps for Good. Industry experts from organisations such as BNY Mellon, Ovo, Epam, Deepmind, GoCardless and TPXImpact listened to the presentations and gave feedback.

Innovative student app ideas included getting more traffic off roads, more people onto bikes and reducing plastic in the ocean.

*"Students leveraged the expertise of these professionals to devise innovative solutions... In doing so, they not only acquired crucial skills, but also harnessed the potential of collaboration and creativity in their pursuit of a sustainable tomorrow."*

**Emma Darcy**, Director of Technology and Learning, Chiltern Learning Trust

## Case study: iPads for all children Inspiring Futures through Learning (IFtL)

The Trust's vision to deploy iPads to all children from Year 2 reflects IFtL's commitment to unlock opportunities, increase equity, improve digital knowledge, strengthen engagement and streamline administration.

Deploying 5,500 iPads requires multidisciplinary knowledge. Collaboration between the IT and Digital Learning leaders is key. Neither can be successful without the other to develop and sustain the provision. Infrastructure which enables simultaneous device usage is essential.

Training for staff is through IFtLs "Future Ambassadors Community of Practice". These are school-based digital champions who inspire, challenge and support the enhancement of pedagogy through technology. This team uses videos and in-person training to develop school colleagues, distribute leadership and empower schools.

Feedback from schools tells the Trust that administration has decreased, working flexibility has increased, learner empowerment and accessibility have increased, and families are increasingly connected. They are Inspiring the Futures of us all through Learning together.

**Sarah Head**, Head of System Leadership, IFtL



# EXPERT GROUP (3)

## Estates

Chair: Jon Ward (Creative Education Trust)

The Estates Group has held four well-attended meetings, three on-line and one CPD session in-person. These have enabled members to:

- **create a forum for collaborative tackling of current issues**
- **undertake benchmarking, with Trusts measuring themselves against DfE's Good Estates Management Strategy (GEMS) and then the DfE Competency Framework. QSG Trusts continue to perform strongly against these benchmarks**
- **support each other through shared experiences, knowledge transfer and mentoring, so that all are benefiting from this form of CPD**

## Key discussions and learning this year

- 1 Tackling Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) and the impact on broader shortfalls in condition funding**
- 2 Models of management**
- 3 Good practice**
- 4 Safeguarding**
- 5 Going greener**

### 1 Tackling RAAC

RAAC first came on the radar a long time ago, but it exploded in a way that had major impact on some schools. It is a reminder of how we must always expect the unexpected.

One area of key learning is understanding where responsibility lies. Trusts were trying to get on the front foot, but were receiving inconsistent advice from DfE, for example, on whether to vacate buildings or not. Trusts felt the onus was put on them to prove that they did not have RAAC; there were conflicting messages about whether the Condition Data Collection (CDC) conducted by DfE looked for RAAC.

The diversity of our school system means that whilst some large Trusts can manage these major issues, smaller ones may lack the expertise or capacity. The group feels that asbestos may be the next issue to hit the headlines, so putting into action the learning from RAAC is urgent. The aim is that Trusts and relevant agencies can work more productively together to deal with major issues when they arise.



The overarching impact is that the RAAC issues exacerbate the shortfall in condition funding. In turn, the 'waiting-list' for the Schools Rebuilding Programme has grown. 119 RAAC schools have been added to the Schools Rebuilding Programme. With the current slow achievement rate for the programme, this means further delays for buildings that are in a state of decay.

## 2 Models of management

Given the variety of Trust size, context and history within QSG, it is unsurprising that there are so many models of managing the estate. QSG are using this as an opportunity to share the benefits and drawbacks of different models in action:

- central line-management of all site staff
- outsourcing site staff using Computer Aided Facility Management (CAFM)
- campus managers
- regional management of sites rather than a manager in each school
- on-site multi-skilled tradespeople
- ensuring procurement is cost-effective and within legal guidelines

## 3 Good practice

Good practice starts from an embracing by trustees of their responsibilities with respect to the estate. They need appropriate reporting and monitoring in place to enable them to discharge these duties. The Funding Agreement gives the framework by which to abide. The DfE's Good Estates Management Strategy and Competency Framework are key supporting documents. Defining responsibilities across the Trust minimises uncertainty.

Vision, strategy and asset plans give the Trust its direction. Trustees need to have the information to make judgements on effectiveness of budgeting, maintenance schedules, procurement, emergency planning, critical incident and business continuity arrangements.

Health and safety planning is crucial, as are arrangements for what level of incident is reported to trustees and how.

## 4 Safeguarding

Ensuring a site is secure is often an issue when taking over a school in challenging circumstances. Safeguarding and estates teams need to be aligned in their priorities. This sometimes means balancing the strategic objectives of making school an uplifting place and making schools safe. QSG members have benefited from the experience of operating Alternative Provision by new member Olive Academies. The learning that is being shared is immensely helpful. We must also recognise that the current Building Bulletin design standard for schools is now out-of-date as we are using schools and spaces differently following the pandemic.

## 5 Going greener

Whilst all Trusts wish to minimise their carbon footprint and energy consumption, recent rises in energy costs have given new impetus to this imperative. Trusts are also preparing for a time when School Capital Allocation might be linked to sustainable approaches. LED upgrades have long been a priority. Several Trusts are now also exploring heat pump technology and other renewable resources. However, some sharing of practice will help all Trusts review consumption next year, and may even enable us to look at new procurement framework opportunities. LocatED, the arm's-length body set up by the DfE has proved a useful source of advice.



# EXPERT GROUP (4)

## HR

Chair: Angela Bull (Unity Schools Partnership)

### Expert witnesses

**Lucy McLynn**, Partner at Bates Wells

**Gethin Nadin**, Chief Innovation Officer, Benefex

**Joel Maybrey**, Customer Success Manager,  
Socially Recruited

**Simon Thurston**, Strategic Media Director,  
Socially Recruited

The Group has met six times, including the first in-person meeting since the pandemic.



### Key areas of focus for 2023–24

#### 1 Recruitment and retention

- an executive pay survey and benchmarking provided valuable information for Trusts
- in-person event with social media and marketing experts speaking about how Trusts can best inform potential employees about the value offered by the Trust
- participation in a TES Magazine 'The Big Debate' on recruitment with a focus on flexible working opportunities

#### 2 AI preparedness: strategy and impact

- a challenge to employers to consider time efficiencies gained through AI to be given back to employees to improve their wellbeing, rather than utilised for additional workload

#### 3 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

- EDI strategies for Trusts: models were shared
- discussions about supporting more women into leadership

#### 4 Wellbeing

- an ongoing theme running through the other areas of discussions of recruitment and retention, AI and EDI, including relevant professional development for HR leads and teams

## Transforming HR with AI

The group worked with Gethin Nadin, Chief Innovation Officer at Benefex, a psychologist who has been helping some of the world's largest organizations improve their employee experience and wellbeing. These are some checkpoints for navigating this potentially overwhelming terrain.

### How can HR departments effectively integrate AI into existing practice?

Start by thinking of what you would stop doing if you could. It is the labour-intensive practices that are likely to benefit most from AI. Applications such as ChatGPT can give templates for most HR processes and policies. Once you have the framework, you can customise and review to ensure legal compliance.

### What are the benefits and challenges of AI in HR functions?

#### Benefits:

- reduction in workload, making workload less taxing; we are happy to have more efficient ways of taking notes and answering emails
- covering for absent colleagues, such as automatically rescheduling appointments
- the more specific the request, the more secure the AI response, for example specifying in your request UK law or relevance to specific regions

#### Challenges:

- although jobs will be phased out, this will take some time, which gives opportunity for re-skilling and training
- AI is based on the data that is put in; just like any data with a human fingerprint, it has a bias and may not be factually current
- ensuring that the data used is GDPR compliant

### How can we ensure the use of AI in managing a workforce is ethical and unbiased?

A good starting point is looking at how AI tools were built, where the data came from and the ethical safeguards used by the creating company. Ethical designers can supply FATE tests for their processes and data:

#### Fairness Accountability Transparency Explain

Having a diverse team helps you to challenge applications against these criteria. Whilst training is vital, AI is fast-moving so training needs to be ongoing not a single event.

### How can AI impact on recruiting talent?

There have been learning curves with AI screening-out certain groups through inadvertent bias. AI can answer initial applicant queries and screen letters/CVs to remove those lacking relevant experience, or to remember potential candidates in a talent pool.

79% of US employers now use AI in recruitment; Just Eat have cut recruitment time by 50%. Panasonic use AI to gather data and surveys to create a narrative around how to improve employee satisfaction. Engaging unions helps to reduce fear.

Trusts need to beware of applicants using AI to embellish their applications unreasonably or to tackle recruitment tasks.

## Improving workforce diversity

### What actions are QSG Trusts taking?

- formulate a five-year strategy
- attract a more diverse applicant pool and track the applicant journey
- collect the data to inform decisions
- focus on the gender pay gap
- train in the writing of inclusive adverts and job descriptions
- agree Trust charters, well-being champions and networks
- implement whole Trust change management programme
- engage with unions
- role-model desired behaviours at senior level
- consider flexible working, chunking PPA time, 9-day fortnights, job shares

# EXPERT GROUP (5)

## Finance

Chair: Sarah Lovell (Cabot Learning Federation)

The group met five times this year with one in-person event in March. The majority of the QSG Chief Finance Officers attend regularly. Some hold other titles and lead other areas, with finance a key part of their role.

Discussions this year have developed collaborative networking and have covered topical issues, legislative changes and meetings with key partners in the sector.

### Areas of focus this year

#### Regulation and inspection of Trusts

The group discussed their Ofsted MAT Summary Evaluation (MATSE) experiences. There was little consistency of approach to finances and other operational functions. Greater consistency with regard to Ofsted practice will need to be secured before the group can draw any significant conclusions or support others in preparing for a similar visit.

#### Financial planning (historic and future)

2023–24: the group drew strength from working collaboratively on the challenges of the late notification of pay awards for both teaching and support staff (unfunded), rising energy costs and inflation. There was huge impact on the end-of-year position and reduction in reserves.

2024–25: the group worked together on budget assumptions for 2024–25 onwards in an uncertain time with necessarily more assumptions and estimates than in previous years.

#### Managing risk

Whilst good risk management is an integral part of running a Trust, there is wide variation across Trusts in how it is considered and monitored. Whilst good levels of reserves mitigate risk, these are increasingly hard to maintain.

#### Preventing fraud

Instances of fraud were shared, some low level and others of higher value. Approaches around policies and testing were shared to support Trusts to improve fraud prevention.

### Expert witnesses:

**Gemma Peck**, ESFA Director of Funding;  
**Lindsey Henning**, ESFA Director Financial Support and Oversight

Both the group and ESFA valued the chance for each to understand each other's challenges and perspectives. Topics included:

- management of funding by Trusts: understanding allocations, meeting conditions, obtaining answers to queries. All parties reiterated their appreciation of honest feedback
- how the ESFA measure performance
- emerging risks from the data and trends across academies
- how the ESFA can support the sector, and steps we think they could take to improve their ways of working





## Spotlight on falling rolls in primary schools

The group shared strategies to mitigate the growing number of schools with declining numbers:

- share Heads across schools that are close together; increase the teaching time of the leadership teams
- generate income from empty on-site spaces, for example adding resource bases or nurseries; offer wrap-around care
- subsidise the primaries in the Trust, and consider sharing back office functions with other Trusts
- design school tours in a way that creates big impact in recruiting pupils; build the school's reputation in its community
- merge classes / year groups and achieve minimum staffing levels for the size of school
- work with LA on accurate pupil forecasts; consider reducing PAN; change secondary admissions policy to make primaries feeder schools



## An optimum model for centralised financial services

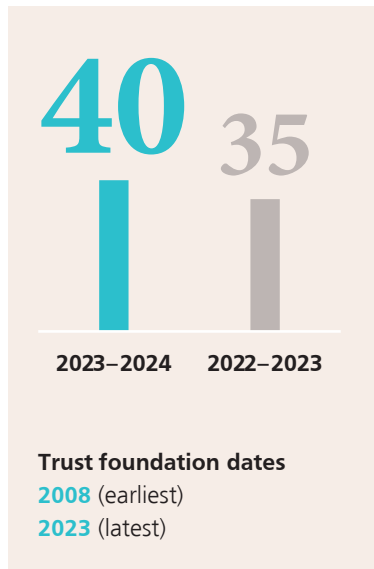
The group is working on a paper to include:

- key KPIs to measure an effective finance function
- elements of good practice
- what is centralised and what layered through academies
- the decision process for functions to be delivered in-house or outsourced
- the impact of scale

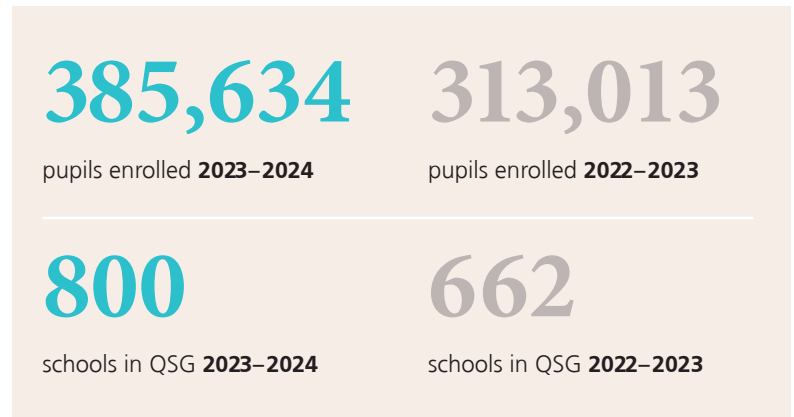
# QSG IN NUMBERS

In 2023 – 2024 the numerical profile of QSG was as follows:

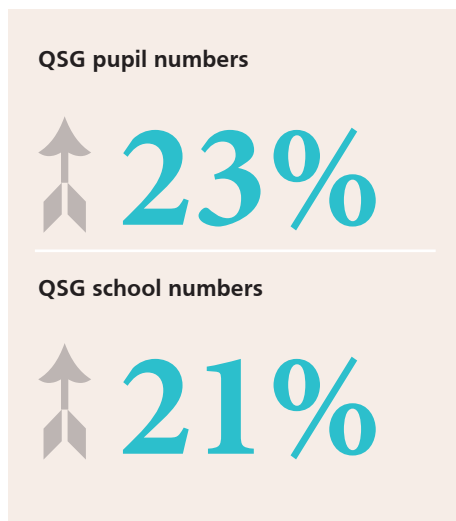
## QSG Trusts



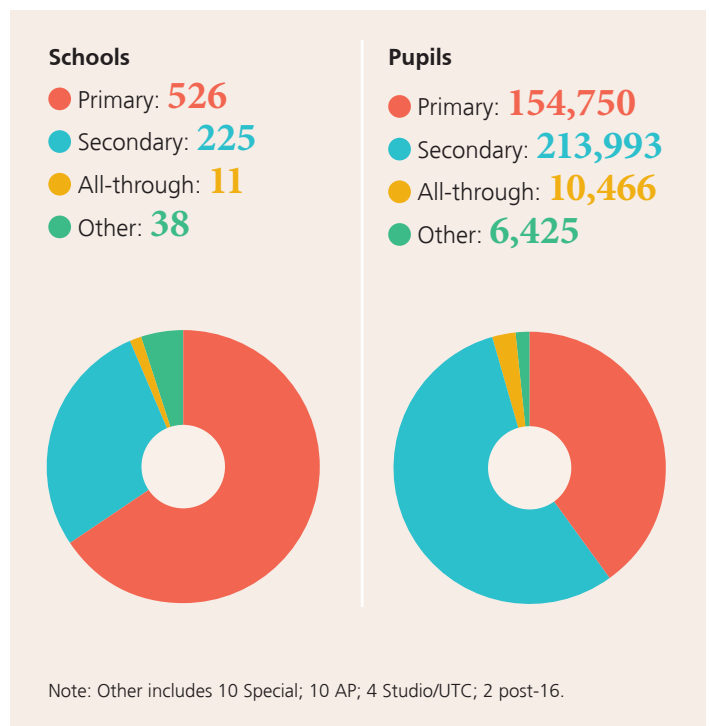
## Pupils and Schools



## Growth of QSG: 2022 – 2023 to 2023 – 2024



## QSG Schools and Pupils



## Trust Size: Spread

Smallest by number of pupils (Olive Academies Trust)

 **80** pupils

across **5** schools in **4** local authorities

Smallest by number of schools (Big Education Trust)

 **1,709** pupils

across **3** schools in **3** local authorities

Largest (Reach2 Academy Trust)

 **19,994** pupils

across **62** schools in **18** local authorities

## Trust Size: Pupils

1,000 – 5,000 pupils

**6** Trusts



5,000 – 12,000 pupils

**23** Trusts

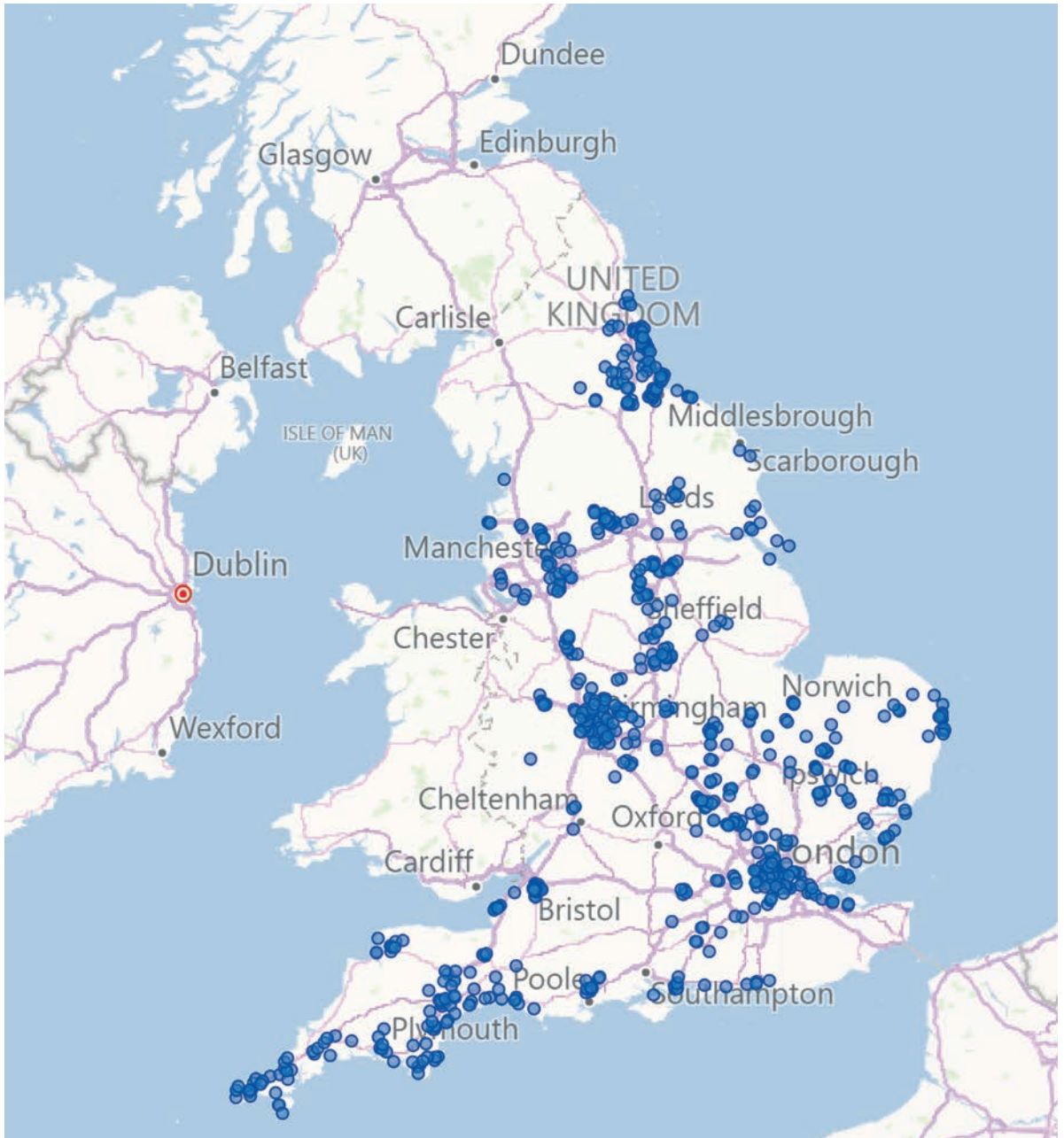


12,000 – 40,000 pupils

**11** Trusts



# GEOGRAPHY OF QSG SCHOOLS

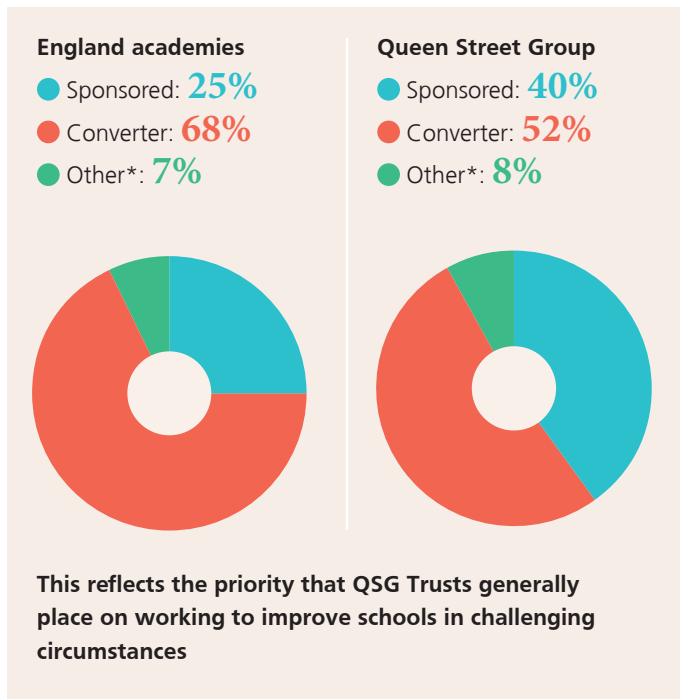


# QSG SCHOOLS, PUPILS AND INSPECTION OUTCOMES

## Schools

Compared to England as a whole, academies in QSG Trusts are **much** more likely to be sponsored academies than the average for academies in England

### Proportion of sponsored academies to converter academies



### School standards and inspection outcomes

Given the challenging circumstances of the schools which they operate, QSG is well above the national norm in strengthening educational quality

**Ofsted 'Good' or 'Outstanding'** school inspection judgements:

**QSG all schools**

**90%\***

where 40% of schools are a sponsored academy

**England all schools**

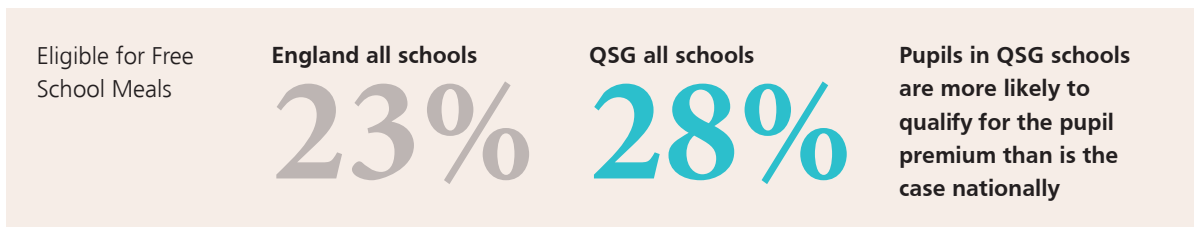
**90%**

where 25% of schools are a sponsored academy

\*inspected since joining a QSG trust

\*eg. Free/Studio School, UTC

## Disadvantage



# QSG BOARD 2023–2024



**Sarah Bennett**  
Inspiring Futures  
through Learning



**Sir Andrew Carter**  
South Farnham  
Educational Trust



**Professor  
Becky Francis CBE**  
CEO, Education  
Endowment Foundation



**Rowena  
Hackwood**  
Astrea Academy  
Trust



**Marc Jordan**  
Creative Education  
Trust

## OUR MEMBER TRUSTS



Academy  
Transformation Trust  
**Sir Nick Weller**



Aldridge Education  
**Jane Fletcher**



Arthur Terry Learning  
Partnership  
**Richard Gill CBE**



Astrea Academy Trust  
**Rowena Hackwood**



Beckfoot Trust  
**Shirley Watson**



Chiltern Learning Trust  
**Adrian Rogers**



Community  
Academies Trust  
**Philip Hamilton OBE**



Creative Education Trust  
**Marc Jordan**



Dixons Academies Trust  
**Luke Sparkes**



Ebor Academy Trust  
**Gail Brown**



Learning in  
Harmony  
Trust  
**Gary Wilkie**



Maritime  
Academy  
Trust  
**Nick Osborne**



Mulberry  
Schools Trust  
**Dr Vanessa Ogden CBE**



North East  
Learning Trust  
**Lesley Powell CBE**



Northern  
Education Trust  
**Rob Tarn**



Summit Learning Trust  
**Vince Green**



The Brooke Weston Trust  
**Dr Andrew Campbell**



The Elliot Foundation  
Academies Trust  
**Hugh Greenway**



The Two Counties Trust  
**Wesley Davies**



The Ted Wragg Trust  
**Moira Marder OBE**



**Cathie Paine**  
REAch2 Academy  
Trust



**Natalie Perera**  
CEO, Education  
Policy Institute



**Liz Robinson**  
Big Education



**Steve Taylor**  
**(Chair)**  
Cabot Learning  
Federation



**Paul Walker**  
First Federation  
Trust



Big Education  
**Liz Robinson**



Bishop Chadwick  
Catholic Education Trust  
**Brendan Tapping**



Bishop Hogarth  
Catholic Education Trust  
**Mike Shorten**



Bright Futures  
Educational Trust  
**Dr John Wm  
Stephens CBE**



Cabot Learning  
Federation  
**Steve Taylor**



Education South West  
**Matthew Shanks**



First Federation Trust  
**Paul Walker**



Inspiring Futures  
Through Learning  
**Sarah Bennett**



Ivy Learning Trust  
**Matthew Kleiner-  
Mann**



L.E.A.D Academy Trust  
**Diana Owen CBE**



Olive Academies Trust  
**Mark Vickers**



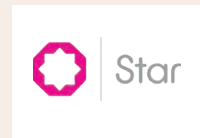
Ormiston  
Academies Trust  
**Tom Rees**



Reach2 Academy Trust  
**Cathie Paine**



South Farnham  
Educational Trust  
**Sir Andrew Carter**



Star Academies Trust  
**Sir Mufti Hamid Patel  
CBE**



Truro and Penwith  
Academy Trust  
**Dr Jennifer  
Blunden OBE**



Unity Schools  
Partnership  
**Dr Tim Coulson CBE**



University of Chichester  
Academy Trust  
**Jennese Alozie**



Ventrus  
Academies Trust  
**Gary Chown**



Initio Academy Trust  
**Liz West**

# QSG

QUEEN STREET GROUP

## Thanks to those who have met with us this year:

**Professor Becky Allen**

Co-founder Teacher Tapp,  
academic and author

**Nadine Bernard**

Headteacher and founder  
of Aspiring Heads

**Claire Burton**

Acting Director General  
Regions Group, DfE

**Sir David Carter**

Former National Schools  
Commissioner

**Dr Kate Chhatwal OBE**

CEO Challenge Partners

**Juliet Chua**

Director General Schools  
Group, DfE

**Pepe Di'lasio**

ASCL General Secretary

**John Edwards**

Director General Regions  
Group, DfE

**Kiran Gill**

Founder and CEO of  
"The Difference"

**Rory Gribbell**

(then) Senior Policy Advisor,  
DfE

**Susannah Hardyman**

CEO Action Tutoring

**Lindsey Henning**

Director Financial Support  
and Oversight, ESFA

**Lord Knight of Weymouth**

Former Minister for Schools

**Alison Ismail**

Director of SEND and  
AP, DfE

**Richard Kueh**

(then) Deputy Director Schools  
and Early Years, Ofsted

**Lucy McLynn**

Partner Bates Wells

**Rebecca Manley**

Writer and actor

**Christopher Mansell**

CEO Birmingham Diocese  
Multi-Academy Trust

**Mel Marshall**

Olympian and  
Olympic coach

**Hannah Martin**

Ambition Institute

**Helen Matthews**

Deputy Director Education,  
Ofsted

**Joel Maybrey**

Customer Success Manager,  
Socially Recruited

**Gethin Nadin**

Chief Innovation Officer,  
Benefex

**Sir Martyn Oliver**

HMCI

**Sir Mufti Hamid Patel**

CEO STAR Academies,  
Chair Ofsted, Chair CST

**Gemma Peck**

Director of Funding, ESFA

**Hilary Spencer**

CEO Ambition Institute

**Simon Thurston**

Strategic Media Director,  
Socially Recruited

**Cal Watson**

Denford Associates

Report design:

**Nick Vincent**

[vincentdesign.co.uk](http://vincentdesign.co.uk)

Report editor:

**Roger Pope CBE**

Thanks for continued support:

**Bates Wells**