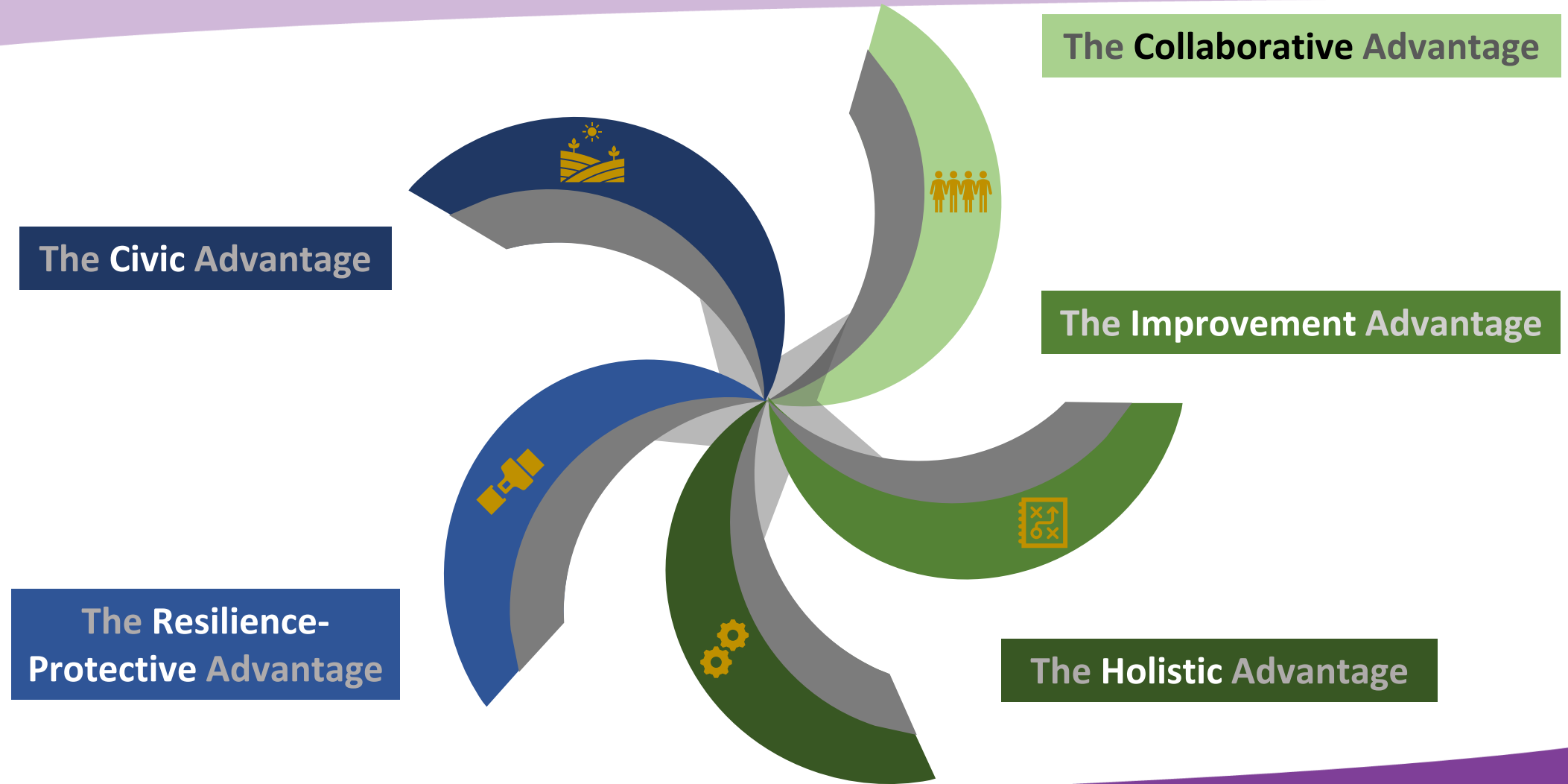




# The Five Advantages

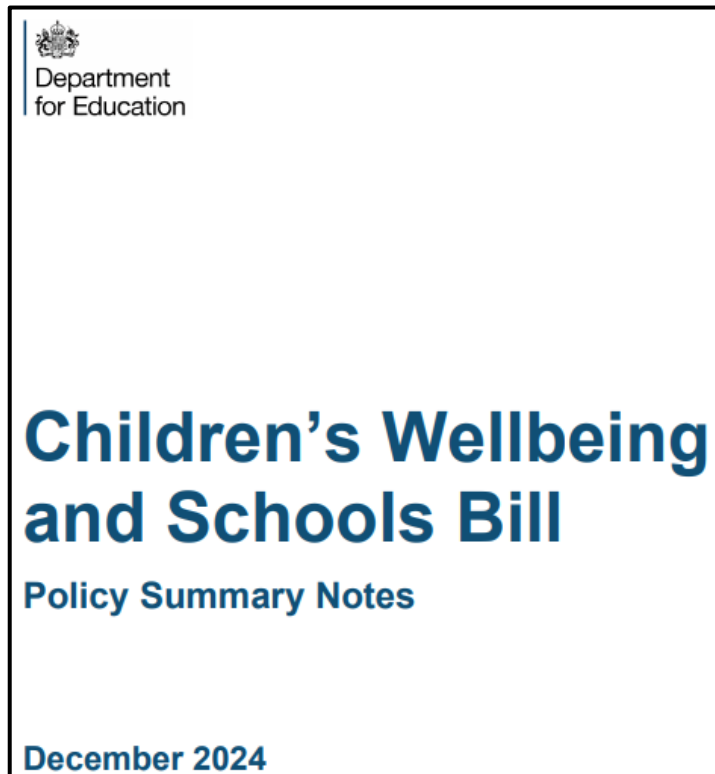
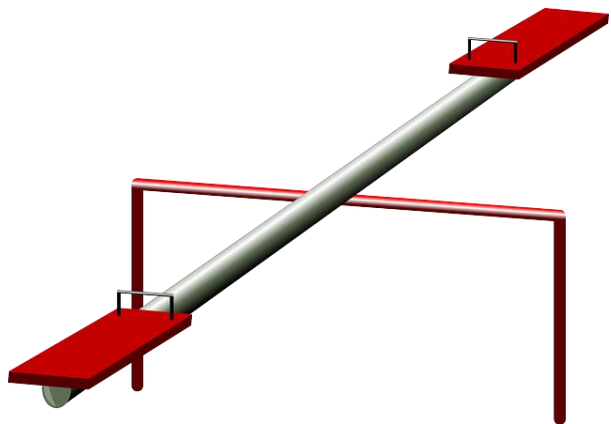


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# How do multi academy Trusts fit within the Government's 'Opportunity Mission'?



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Some preliminary conclusions and predictions following the arrival phase of our new government...

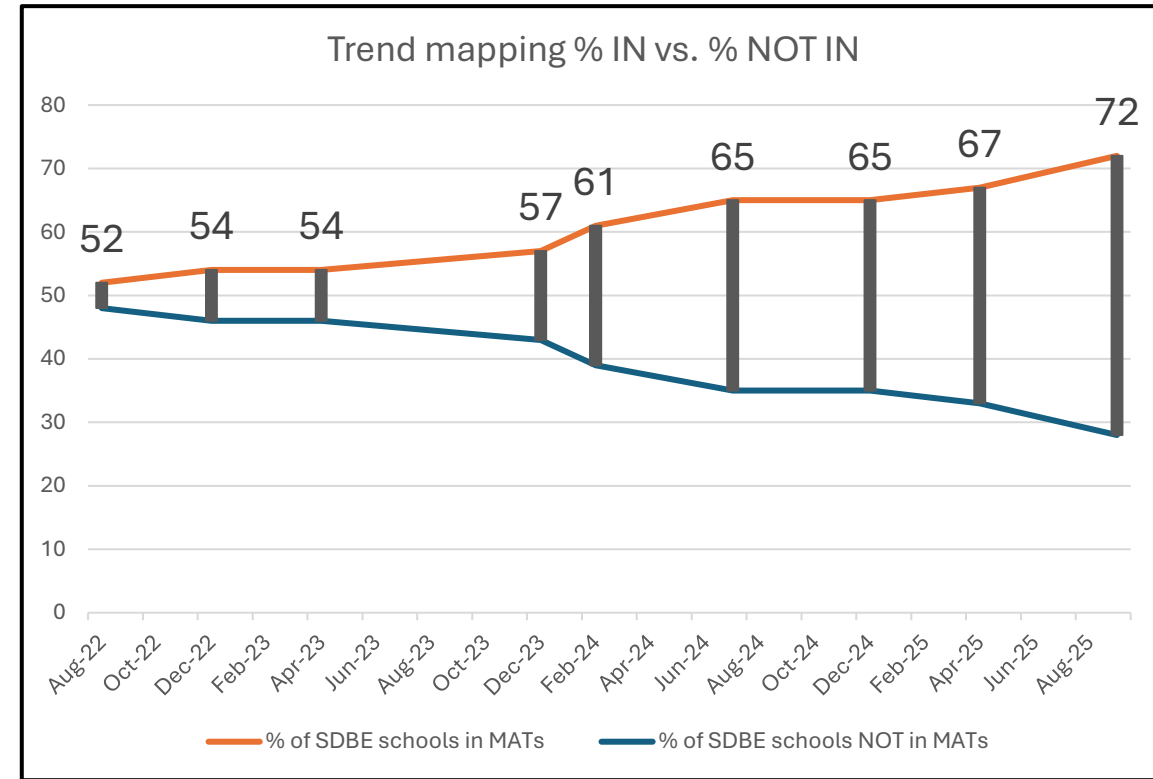
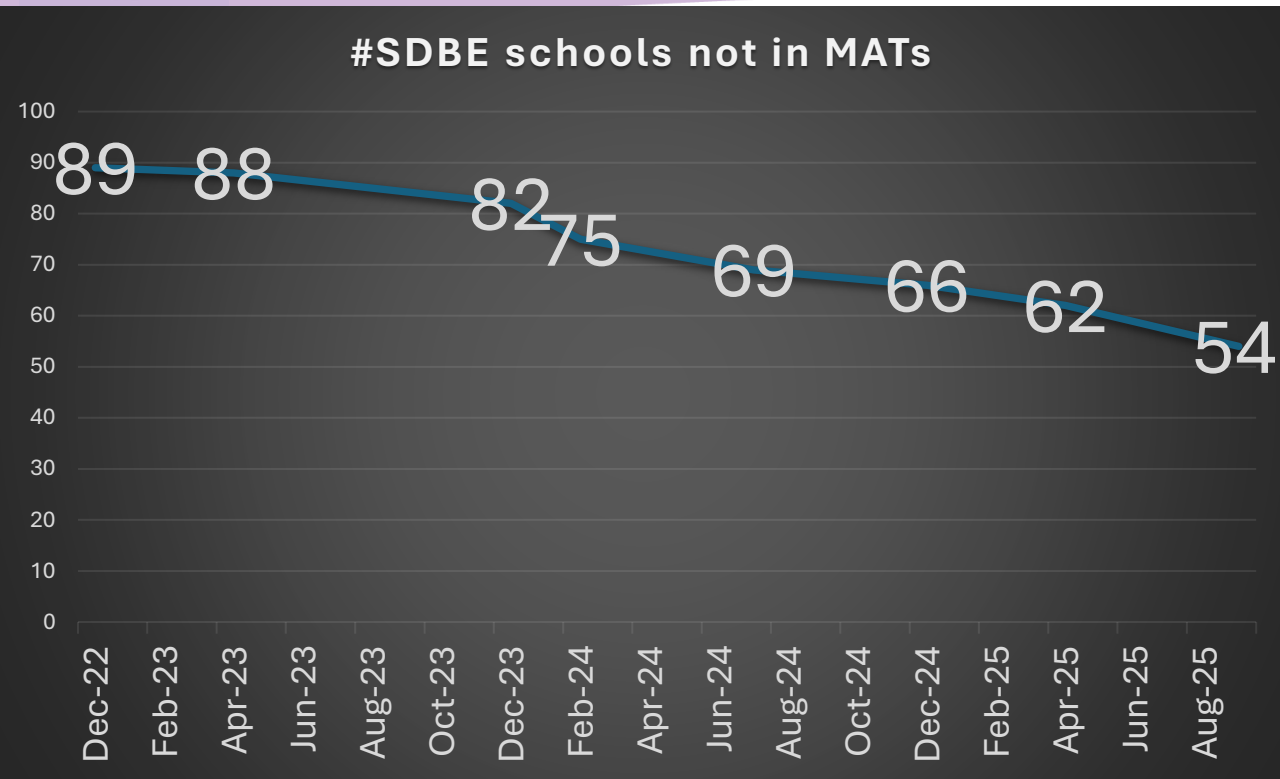
1. We appear to have moved out of the era of inevitability in terms of academisation, into the era of 'opportunity'
2. MAT growth over the coming years will likely be slower but potentially built on more solid foundations
3. The South West Region will continue to lead the national conversation around the benefits to schools of finding their place of belonging within a MAT
4. Small and rural schools face particular threats that policy approaches so far have not sought to mitigate against

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# Looking at the last 2 years across SDBE



As of 1<sup>st</sup> May 2025, there are 53 SDBE schools (+ 5 SATs) NOT in MATs = this represents 31% of total. Of the 53 schools (not SATs);

- Wilts = 37 (17 x V.A. + 20 x V.C.)
- Dorset = 14 (9 x V.A. + 5 x V.C.)
- Hampshire = 1 x V.A. and BCP = 1 x V.A.

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# What reasons are given for not becoming part of a MAT?

## The Top 3 'why we wouldn't' reasons;

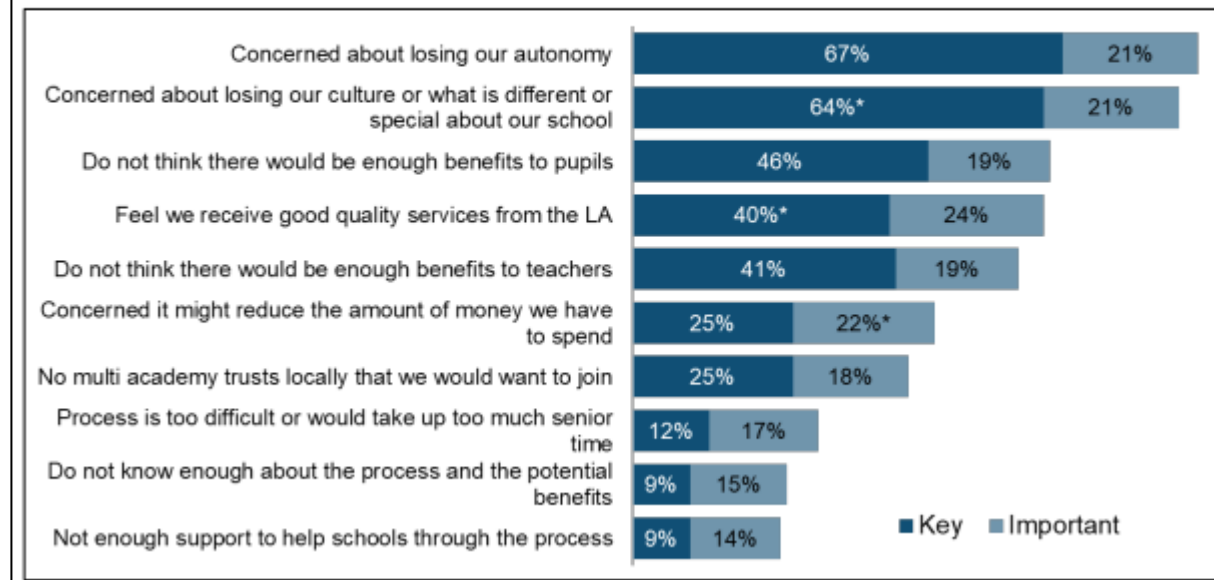
1) Loss of autonomy

2) Loss of special character

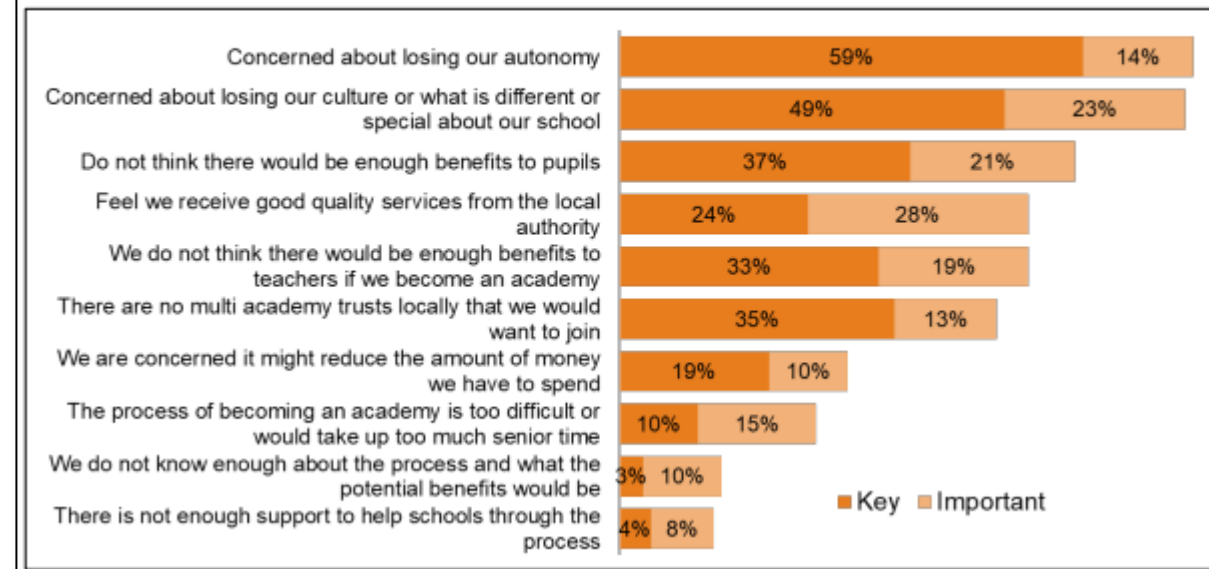
3) Insufficient pupil benefit

The view of 'non-convertors'\* (data from [Schools' views on the perceived benefits and obstacles to joining a multi-academy trust \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk))

**Figure 23: Key and important reasons for not being an academy amongst primary non-converters (prompted)**



**Figure 24: Key and important reasons for not being an academy amongst secondary non-converters (prompted)**



\*This is based on sample of schools in 2021 that were not currently considering becoming an academy

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## The view of 'non-convertors'\*

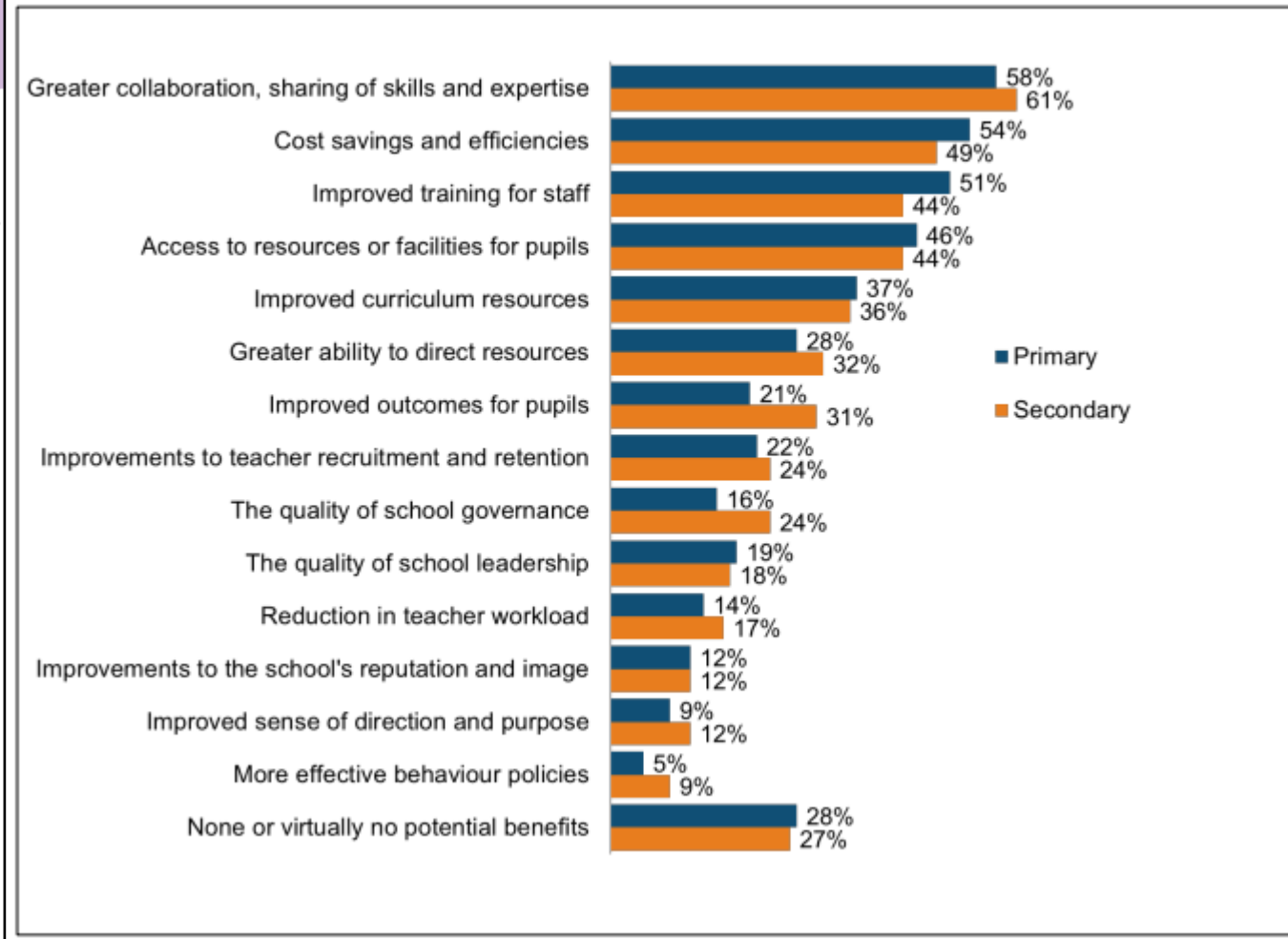
(Schools' views on the perceived benefits and obstacles to joining a multi-academy trust ([publishing.service.gov.uk](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)))

# What are the perceived benefits of becoming part of a MAT?

## The top 3 perceived benefits;

1. Sharing of skills and expertise
2. Cost savings and efficiencies
3. Improved training for staff

Figure 26: Main potential benefits of becoming an academy (prompted)



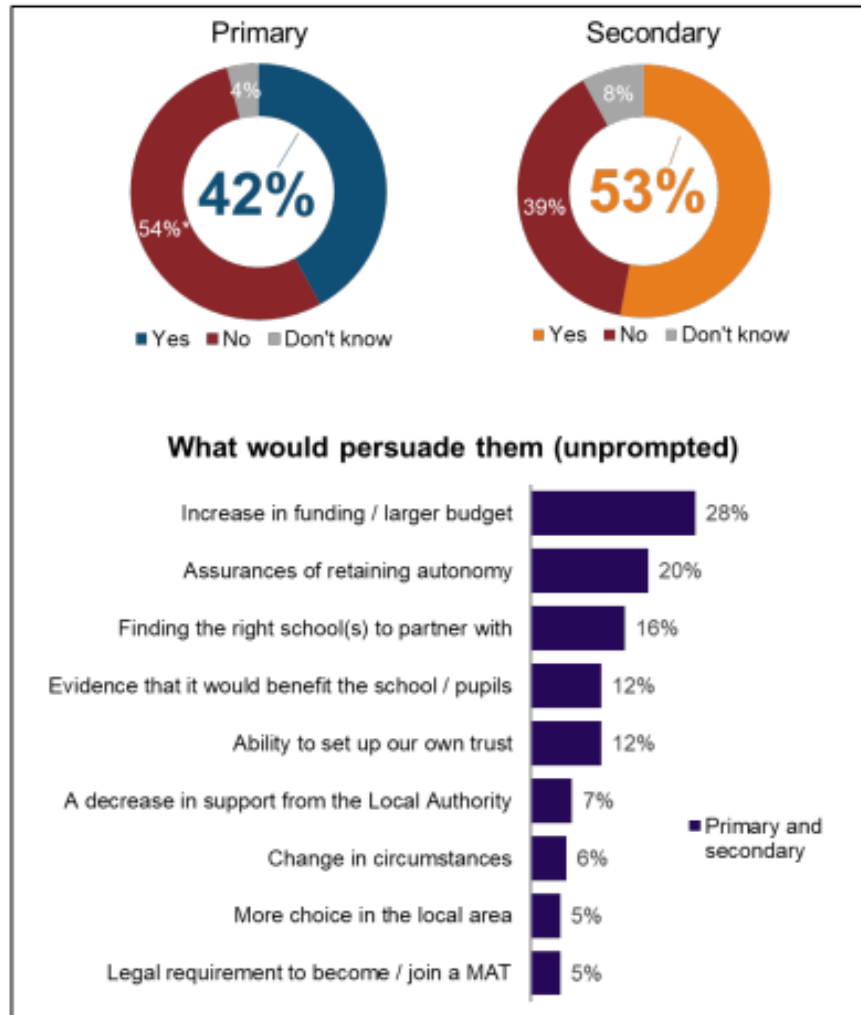
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# What are the perceived benefits that could persuade a non-converter?

Figure 27: Whether there was anything that would make non-converters want to be an academy



## The top 3 most persuasive benefits;

1. Increase in funding
2. Assurances of retaining autonomy
3. Finding the right school(s) to partner with

(data from [Schools' views on the perceived benefits and obstacles to joining a multi-academy trust](https://publishing.service.gov.uk) ([publishing.service.gov.uk](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)))

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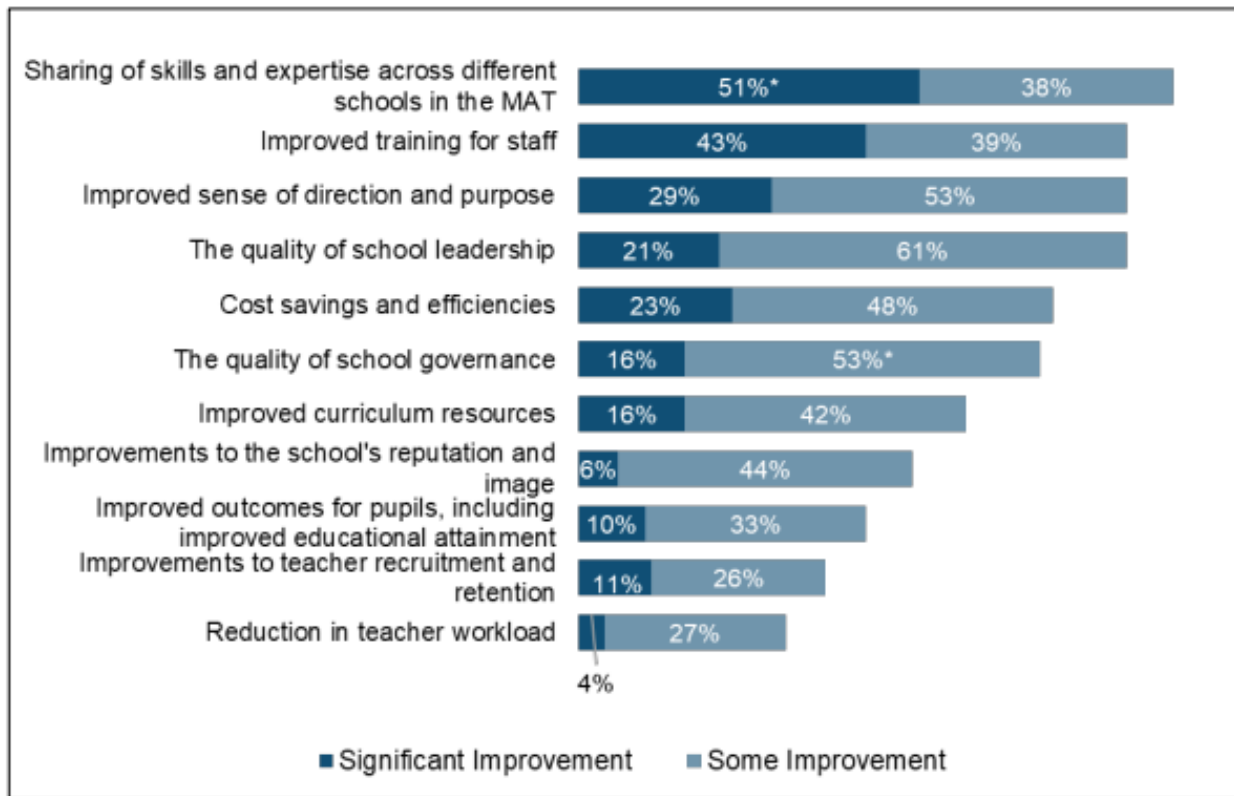


# Experienced improvements among convertors (2021 data)

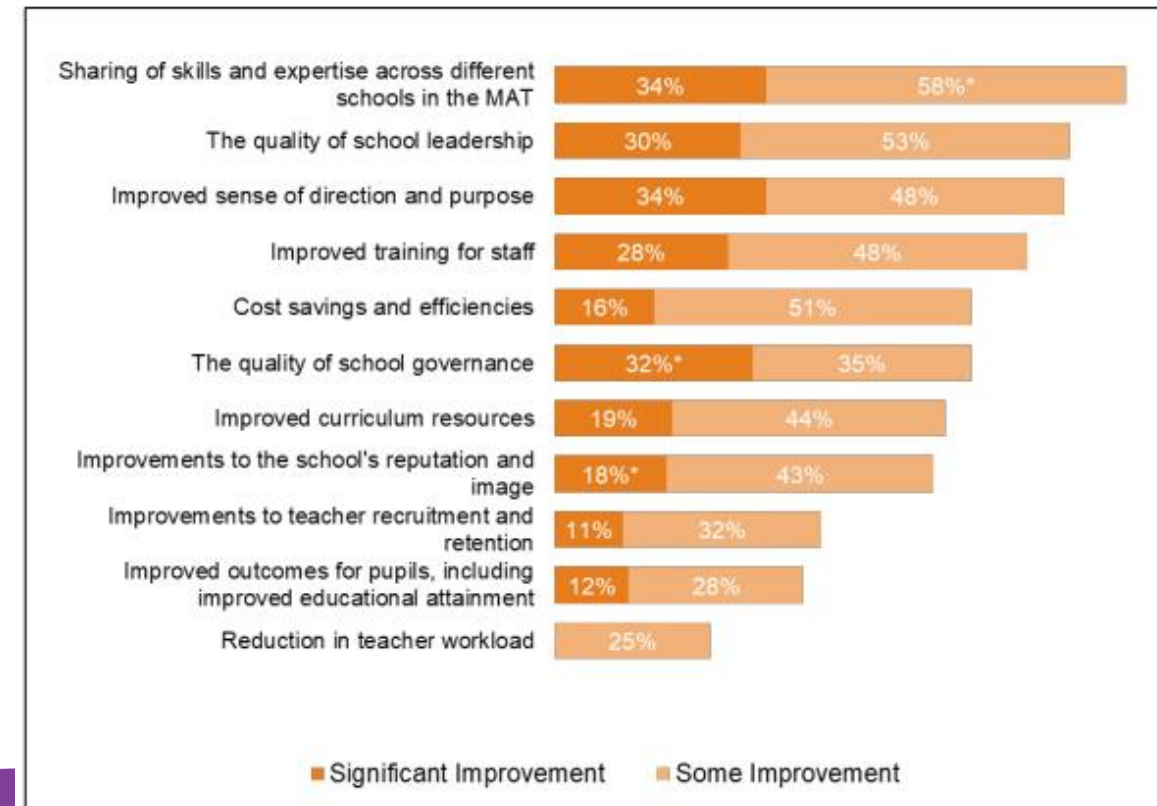
## The top 3 'what we found' responses:

**1) Sharing of skills    2) Improved staff training    3) Improved sense of direction / purpose**

**Figure 9: Improvements experienced among primary schools joining a MAT - prompted**



**Figure 10: Improvements experienced among secondary schools joining a MAT - prompted**



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# From the survey data...

Why not?	Imagined why?	Most compelling why?	Received wisdom
Loss of autonomy	<b>Sharing of skills and expertise</b>	Increase in funding / bigger budget	<b>Sharing of skills and expertise</b>
Loss of special character	<b>Cost savings and efficiencies</b>	Assurances over retaining autonomy	<b>Improved training for staff</b>
Insufficient benefit to pupils	<b>Improved training for staff</b>	Finding the right partner schools	Improved sense of direction / purpose
Happy with LA provision	Pupils access to resources	Evidence of benefit to pupils	The (improved) quality of school leadership
Insufficient benefit to teachers	Improved curriculum resources	Allowed to set up own (new) Trust	<b>Cost saving and efficiencies</b>

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# Comparing two views – the NEU and CST

“Academisation is driving down staff pay, terms and conditions, alienating communities and has caused the fragmentation of the education system.”

Quotation from an NEU website article first published on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2022

## NEU proposed ‘6 facts’ about academisation

“Academies undermine staff terms and conditions”

“Teacher pay is worse in academies but MAT CEO pay is soaring”

“Becoming an academy risks losing vital support”

“Pupils in academies are more likely to be taught by an unqualified teacher”

“MATs are less accountable to parents and the community”

“Joining a MAT is irreversible and offers no protection from a future transfer”

NEU = National Education Union, [The NEU case against academisation](#) | [National Education Union](#)

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# Comparing two views – the NEU and CST

“A group of schools working together in a single entity can do lots of things that are harder for stand-alone schools to do:

- Teachers work and learn together to improve the way they teach;
- Schools share practices that make a difference to the quality of teaching;
- Teachers and leaders can work together on the things that matter – like curriculum and assessment;
- Failing schools can improve – only one in 10 schools that were required to join a trust were judged good or outstanding before they converted, compared with almost seven in 10 after they joined a trust (of those that had been inspected);
- It is more possible for teachers and leaders to move to another school to help improve the quality of education where that school is struggling – and these moves are more likely to be to schools with more disadvantaged pupils
- It is more possible to be efficient – and thereby to invest money in supporting pupils to have wider opportunities.”

CST = Confederation of School Trusts, [What are school trusts? \(cstuk.org.uk\)](http://cstuk.org.uk)

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# Articulating the case: *theoretically*

Summarising the view from across the range of MAT advocates...

(fully accepting that those non-convertors may not be listening, or be especially interested?)

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# The 10 characteristics of an effective multi academy Trust<sup>1</sup>

**The Trust defines and articulates the values and beliefs of the organisation and these are embedded in the schools and the local academy committees**

**The Trust's strongest leaders and teachers play a role in the education of more children across the Trust than they could have done in a single school; they are deployed to develop curriculum, assessment and pedagogy models underpinned by evidence that [they] work and founded on the most successful practice at the Trust's disposal**

**There is a Trust-wide school improvement plan that meets the needs of every school, reflects where they are on their improvement trajectory and also reflects the culture of continuous improvement across the Trust**

**Parent understand that the Trust is accountable for the school their child attends. They know what the Trust's values are, who the key people are and who to talk to**

**The Trust has a workforce talent management strategy that facilitates staff development models for every individual who is a member of the Trust's 'faculty of education'**

# The 10 characteristics of an effective multi academy Trust<sup>1</sup>

**The Trust sets the vision and strategy, the Board hold the executive to account to deliver it and delegate the correct things to the local academy committee**

**The Trust is financially stable and allocates resources appropriately to enable necessary improvement to be rapid. Regular oversight of management accounts, a lack of over optimistic thinking and an ability to benchmark means that the right financial strategies are in place. The Trust is more secure and better insulated against national scale changes.**

**The Trust's central team supports all schools to be highly effective through their oversight of finance, HR, estates and IT to enable leaders and teachers to concentrate on educational delivery**

<sup>1</sup>The original list is found in 'Leading Academy Trusts', David Carter with Laura McInerney, John Catt Educational, 2020, p.48-49

**The Trust builds the culture to operate as a single organisation but with the recognition that each school is at a different stage of development**

**There are a number of agreed educational strategies across the Trust that are common, aligned or standardised and everyone understands why this happens**

# Six arguments *making the case* for joining a ‘thriving academy Trust’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>‘Thriving Trusts Think Piece Series’, Forum Strategy, published January 2023, [Forum-Strategy-Thriving-Trust-Thinkpiece-1-Making-The-Case-.pdf](https://forumstrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Forum-Strategy-Thriving-Trust-Thinkpiece-1-Making-The-Case-.pdf) ([forumstrategy.org](https://forumstrategy.org))

- “As a collective, we have the opportunity to **[bring] people together around serving the next generation**”
- We have a “strong sense of place” and we aim to generate ‘pure accountability’ involving our “schools, staff, pupils and communities on a regular basis through genuine participation”
- **High quality governance** expertise is ‘pooled’ and thereby trust governance holds a substantially enhanced capacity and potential for positive impact
- “We can potentially generate greater support, accountability, and professional- and social-capital”
- “Getting improvement at scale right is at the heart of the academy trust model”
- “Our ability to create the culture, capacity, and system for **school-to-school improvement** at scale, means the expertise, support and opportunities available to individual schools becomes even greater”

# Six arguments *making the case* for joining a Trust<sup>2</sup>



- “With scale and diverse central expertise, alongside the ability to work together and co-ordinate support across schools, we have even greater opportunities to be **an employer of choice**”
- “Thriving Trusts...are able to mitigate workload and create a culture of...mutual support”
- “We can do more to maximise public funds, generate income to the benefit of pupils, and work towards a more environmentally sustainable future that pupils and communities wish to see”
- “**Collective investment generates savings and quality over time**”
- “Where our local identity and the scale of our reach meet, we can be at the heart of our communities, providing **a focal point for strategic partnerships that maximise opportunities for children, staff and schools across an area**”
- “Areas such as enhancing the curriculum and learning, supporting mental and physical wellbeing and fundraising” are boosted through the Trust’s capacity to develop and sustain key local, regional and national partnerships



Some key strands that would seem to mark out a Trust that is attaining greater 'maturity'...

- Has a central capacity that 'lends' everyday support to enable every school and leader in its family to focus on its core purpose
- Has a structured / well-developed curriculum offer
- Has a carefully considered succession and talent development plan
- Has an elaborate system that supports the management and effective communication of data

**A Trust's level of maturity (as indicated) appears to be more significant than the Trust's overall size when it comes to 'benefits'**

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# Articulating the case: *in practice*

## Compiling the evidence base...

- raising **your voices** as maturing Trusts, alongside **our voice** as the SDBE (from our role as *landscape overseers*)...to testify to the non-convertors with conviction

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# The Five Advantages

1. The Collaborative advantage
2. The Improvement advantage
3. The Holistic advantage
4. The Resilience – Protective advantage
5. The Civic advantage

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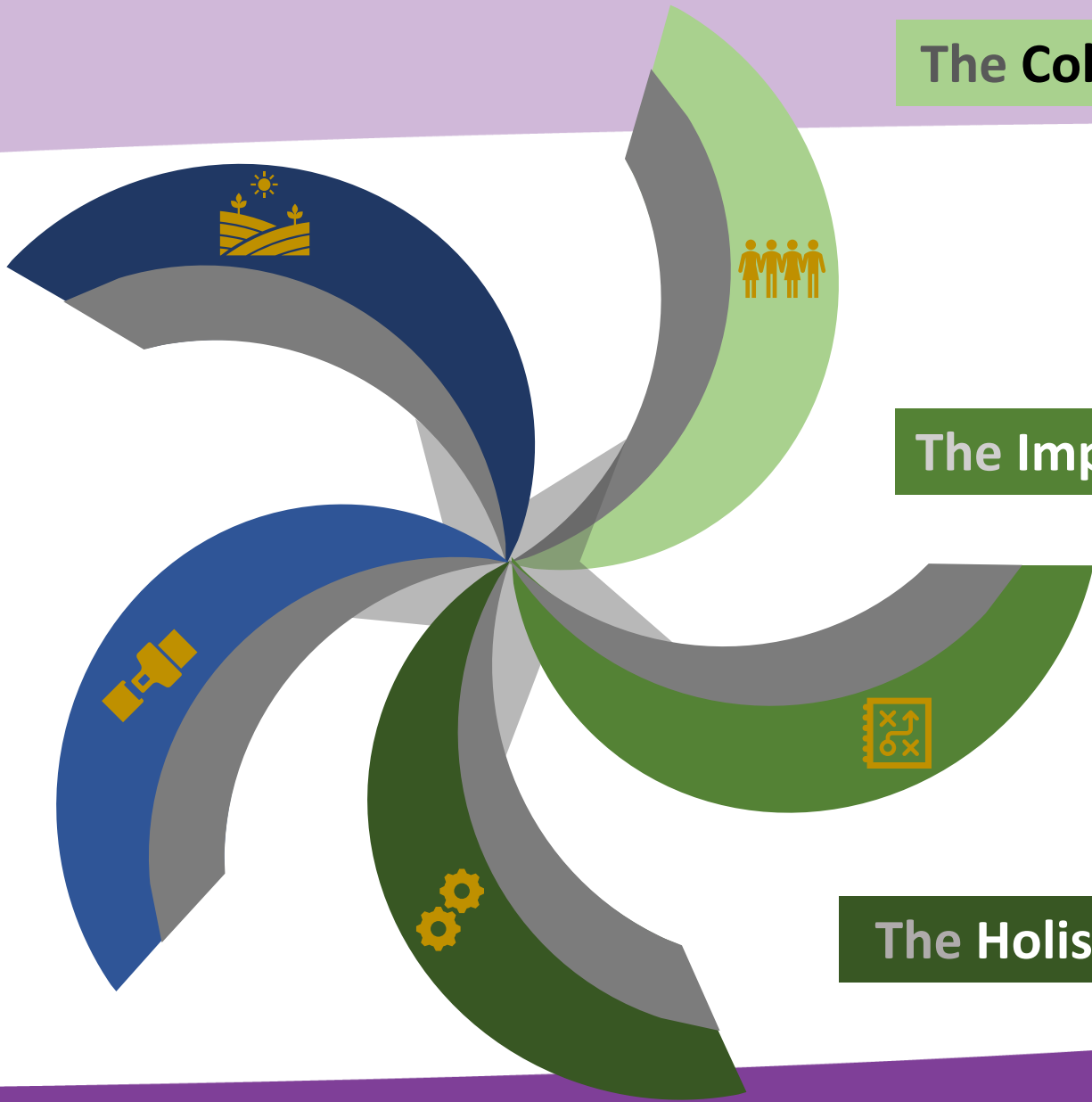
**The Collaborative Advantage**

**The Civic Advantage**

**The Resilience-  
Protective Advantage**

**The Improvement Advantage**

**The Holistic Advantage**

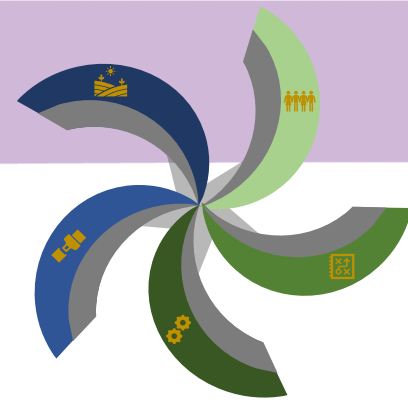


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# The Collaborative Advantage



We believe **we** will be **better together**

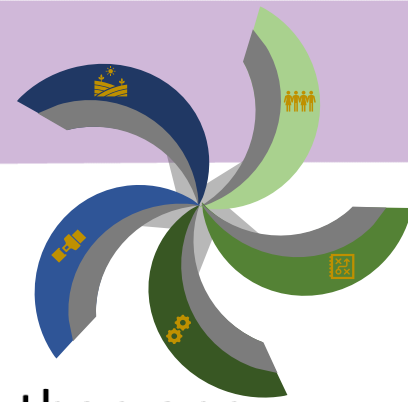


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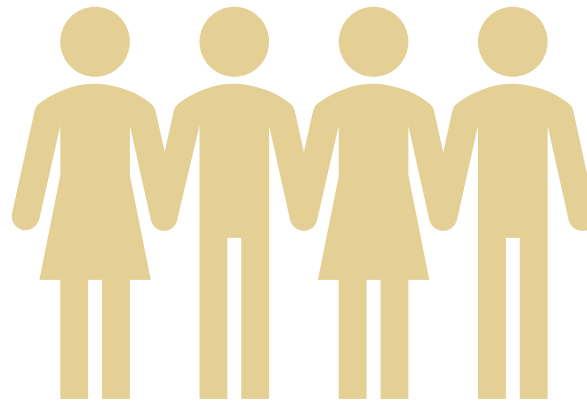


# The Collaborative Advantage



“To **collaborate** is to commit to the possibility of producing an outcome greater than one that would be developed in a silo...**Collaboration** which creates a greater outcome must be engineered and invested in by school leaders. Realising that working together really does mean ‘being in it together’ not only has the outcome of better chances for children – but also supports and nurtures teachers’ own sense of well being.”

From a CST blog post entitled ‘Collaboration’, published in July 2023, written by Alison Lawson, Director of Education, Weaver Trust

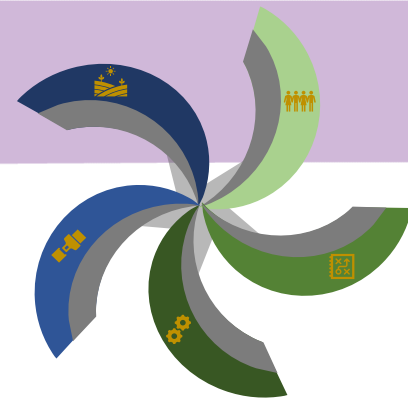


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# The Collaborative Advantage



“Alongside the ability to develop leaders at scale, Trusts also have a great opportunity to build frameworks...that offer staff benefits and opportunities that could never be the case in a stand-alone school.”

[The role of trusts as talent architects: Creating schools as great places to work \(cstuk.org.uk\)](https://cstuk.org.uk), CST, November 2021, p.8

“Strong governance of the legal entity of the Trust hardwires **collaboration** and shared accountability in a way that no other school structure does.

‘What is strong trust?: A CST discussion paper’, CST, January 2022, p.6 [What is a strong trust? A CST discussion paper \(cstuk.org.uk\)](https://cstuk.org.uk)

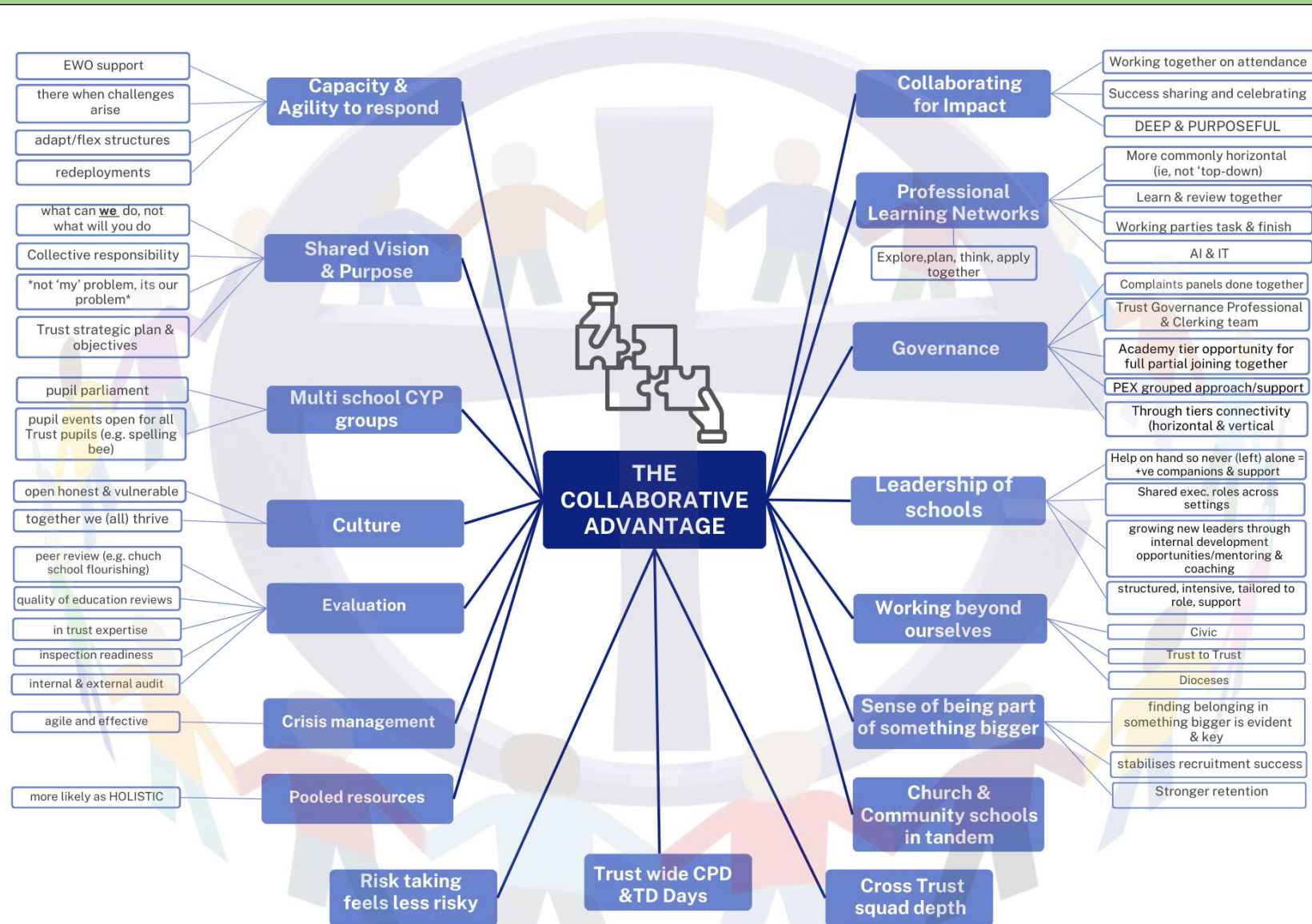
Trusts are particularly well placed to leverage their capacity and resources to ensure professional development is shaped around evidence-informed mechanisms that offer the best chance of making a difference to teachers and students.”

[Leveraging trust capacity to deliver effective professional development \(cstuk.org.uk\)](https://cstuk.org.uk), CST, May 2024, p.11

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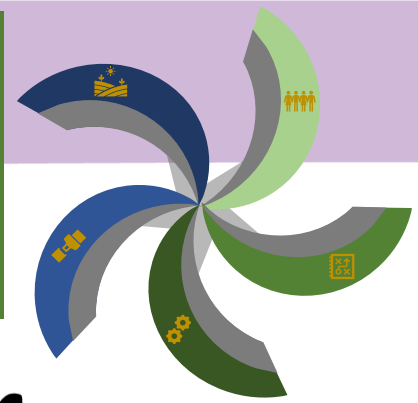
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# Giving The Collaborative Advantage its voice...

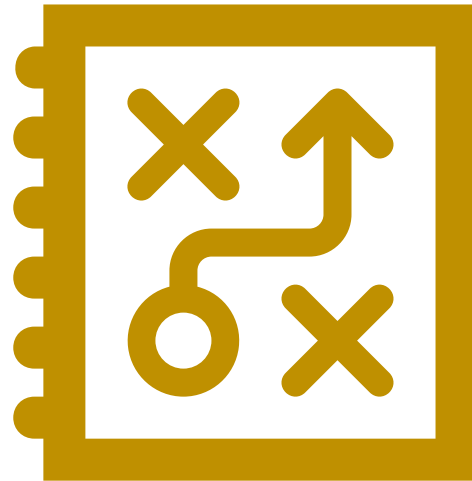




# The Improvement Advantage



We believe by **being together**  
we will **improve together**

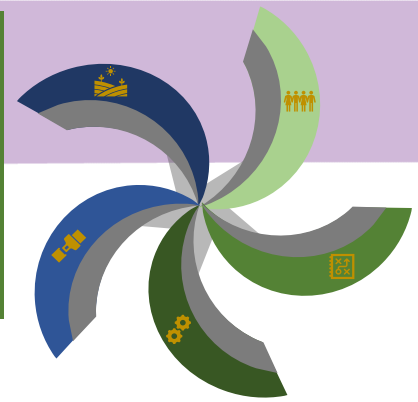


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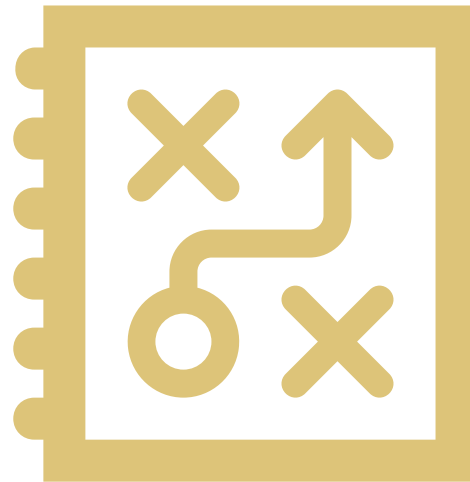


# The Improvement Advantage



“Trusts...bring professionals together in ways that have the potential to go beyond what can be achieved in individual schools. This potential is not only about the ability of trusts to share effective practice, but to create, debate and renew knowledge about professional practice.”

From ‘School Improvement architecture: Building an intelligent, proportionate, and connected system of improvement’, published by CST, January 2024.

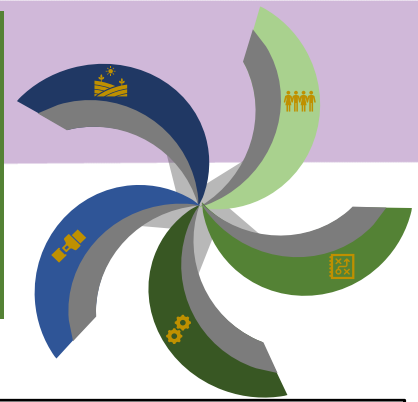


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# The Improvement Advantage



“The strongest Trusts facilitate knowledge building through professional development, with a view to improving curriculum, pedagogy and the quality of teaching. They bring professionals together in ways that are supported by proper strategic oversight and accountability.”

[Knowledge-building: School improvement at scale \(cstuk.org.uk\)](https://www.cstuk.org.uk/knowledge-building-school-improvement-at-scale), Cruddas, L. and Bauckham, I., CST, February 2021, p.3

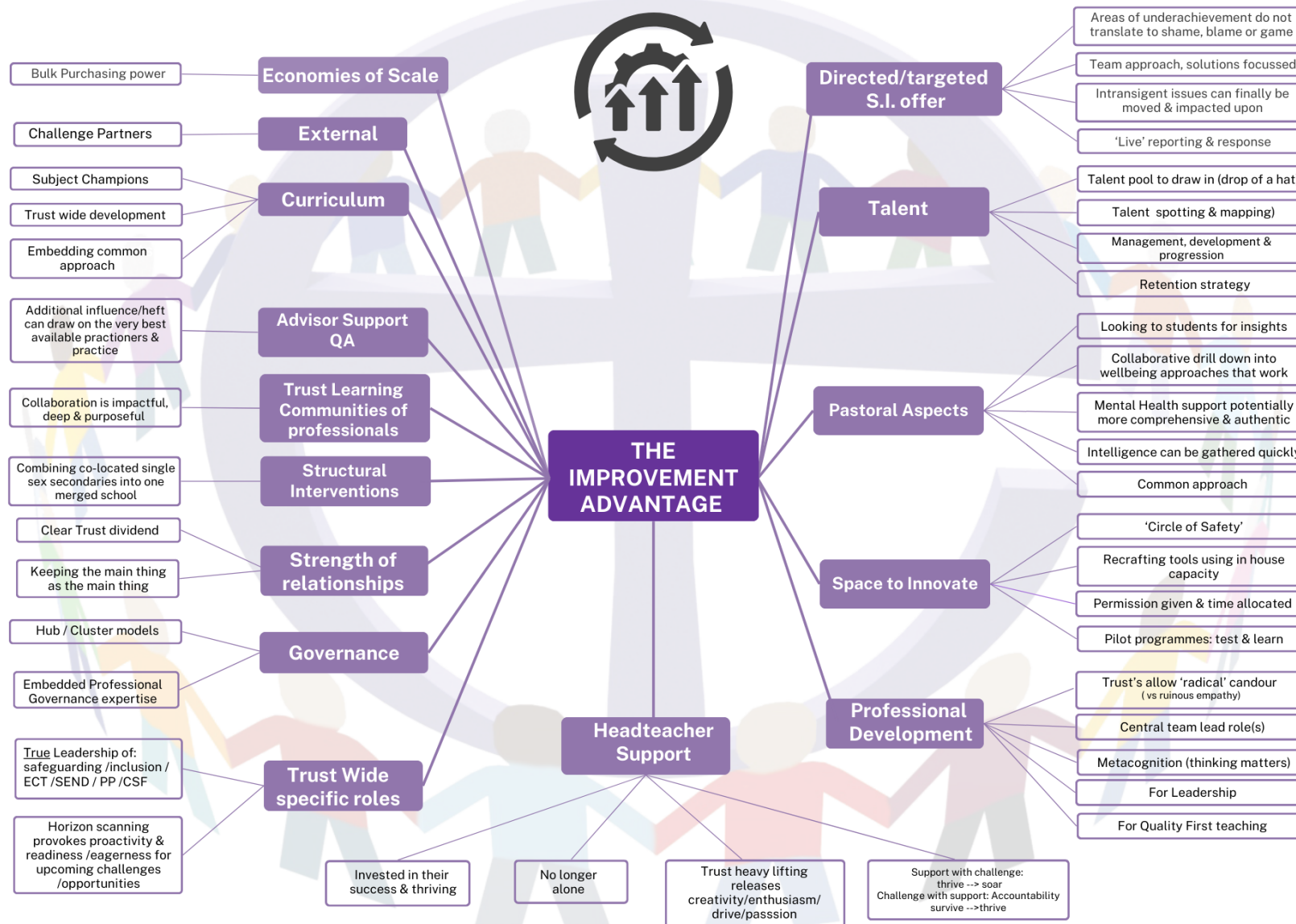
See also:

- 1) [SI in MATs TSAs LAS and feds FINAL report 211118 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/671118/SI_in_MATs_TSAs_LAS_and_feds_FINAL_report_211118.pdf), UCL Institute of Education, published December 2018
- 2) [Communities of improvement: School Trusts as fields of practice \(cstuk.org.uk\)](https://www.cstuk.org.uk/communities-of-improvement-school-trusts-as-fields-of-practice), CST, published November 2021

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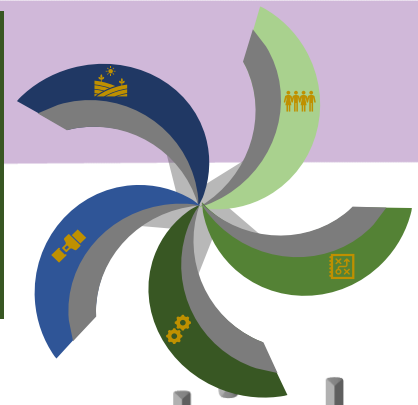
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# Giving The Improvement Advantage its voice...

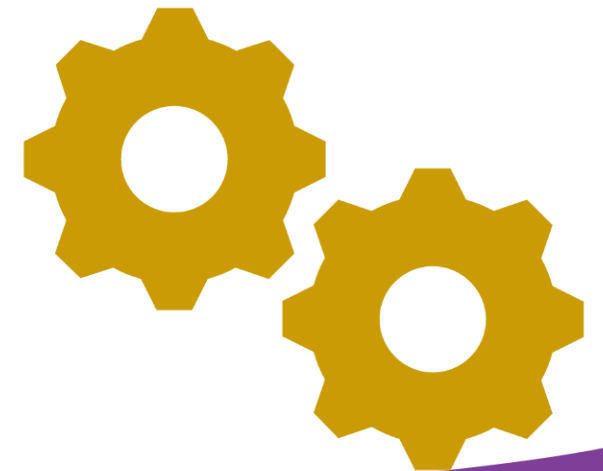
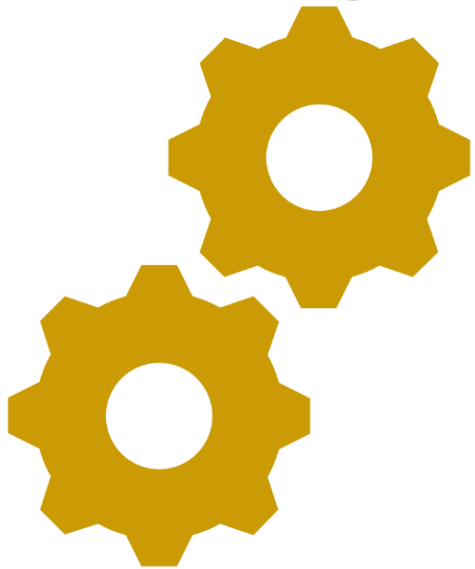




# The Holistic Advantage



We believe we achieve our full potential  
through being strongly **interconnected**

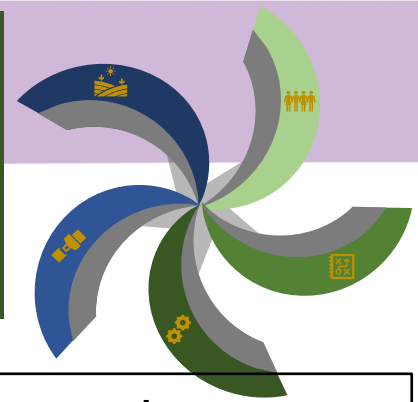


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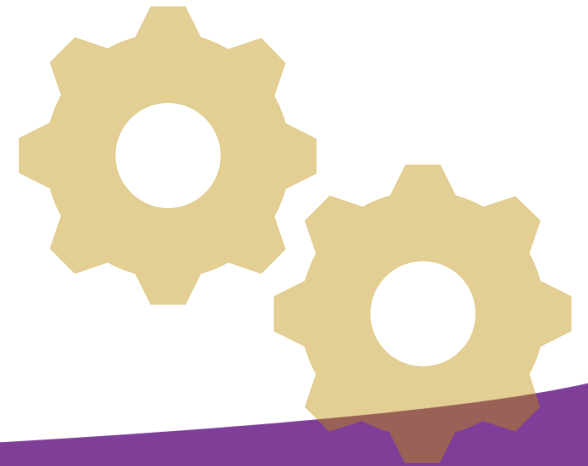
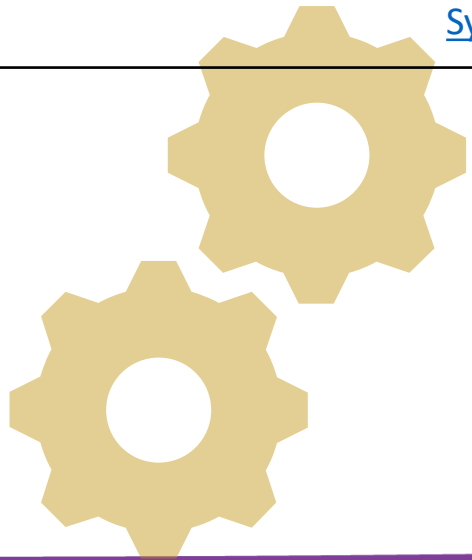


# The Holistic Advantage



“Trust leaders are not heroic visionaries, but rather people with a deep knowledge and understanding of the substance of education, including schools (and how to improve them), organisations (and how to build them), people (and how to develop them) and finances (and how to manage them).”

[Systems of meaning: Three nested leadership narratives for School Trusts \(cstuk.org.uk\)](https://cstuk.org.uk/systems-of-meaning-three-nested-leadership-narratives-for-school-trusts/), CST, first published January 2020, p.5

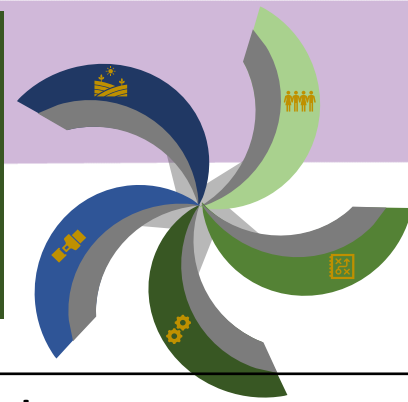


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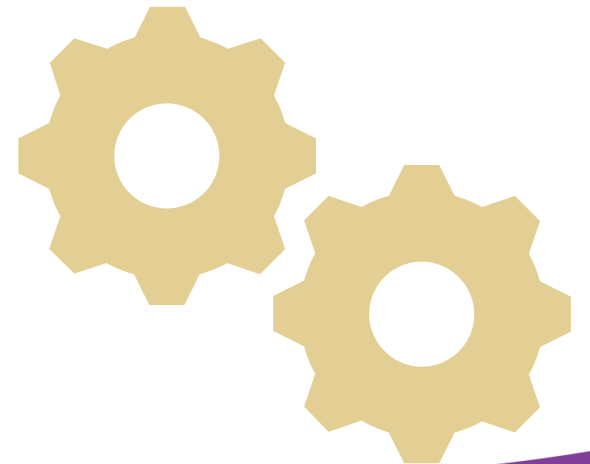
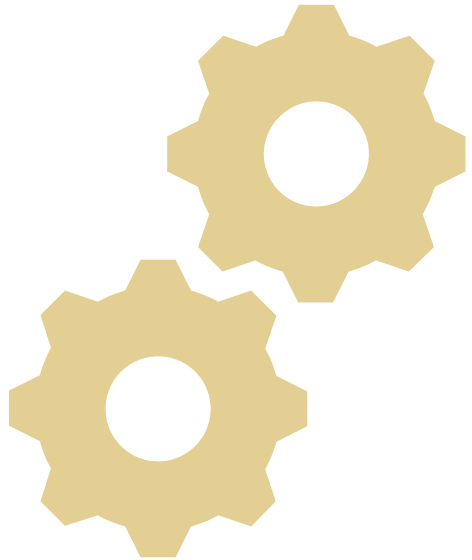


# The Holistic Advantage



“Trusts are becoming more sophisticated in how they manage safeguarding at scale - particularly with the use of data - and as trusts mature and grow, their approaches will improve further.”

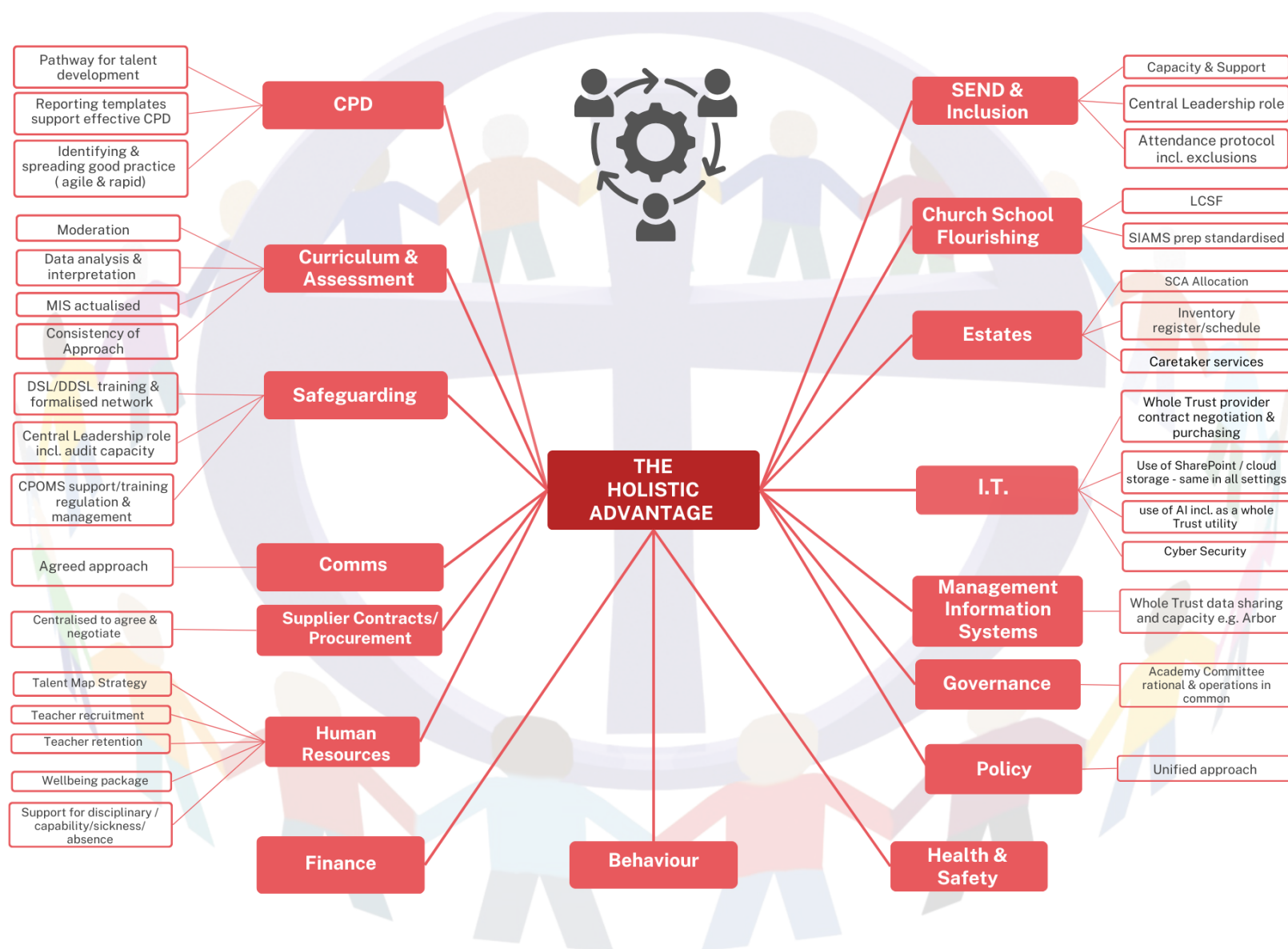
[Safeguarding at scale](#), CST, first published January 2024, p.12



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# Giving The Holistic Advantage its voice...

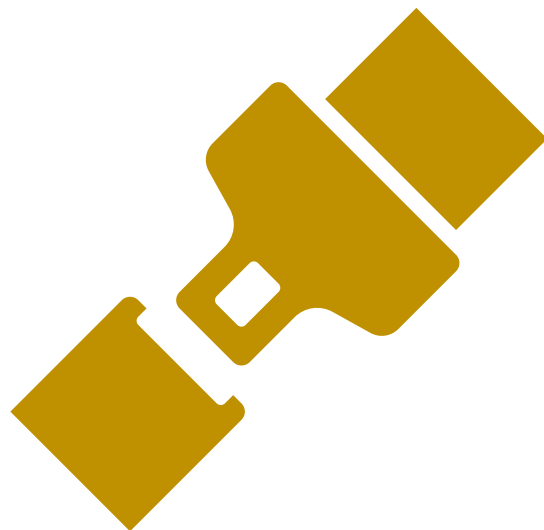




# The Resilience - Protective Advantage



**Together we will ride the waves better.**



**Together we are safer.**

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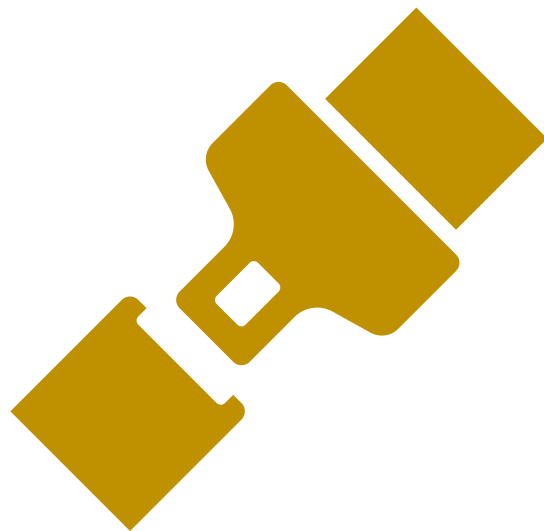


# The Resilience - Protective Advantage



“It is the single governance structure [*of a Trust*] that binds schools together in an enduring partnership with an obligation to work through challenges, rather than to separate at times of difficulty.”

‘Starting with Why: Why join a trust – and why a trust-based system’, Cruddas, L., CST, published January 2023, p.4



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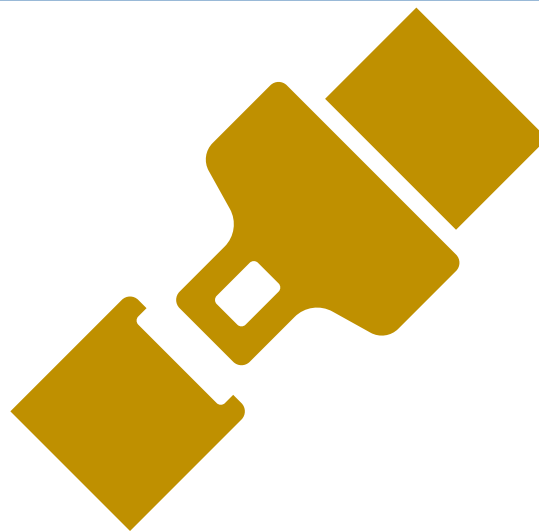


# The Resilience - Protective Advantage



“The evidence suggests LA maintained schools that have not changed status have tended to experience sharper declines in primary pupils on average when numbers are falling compared to schools that have been academies since 2017/18..”

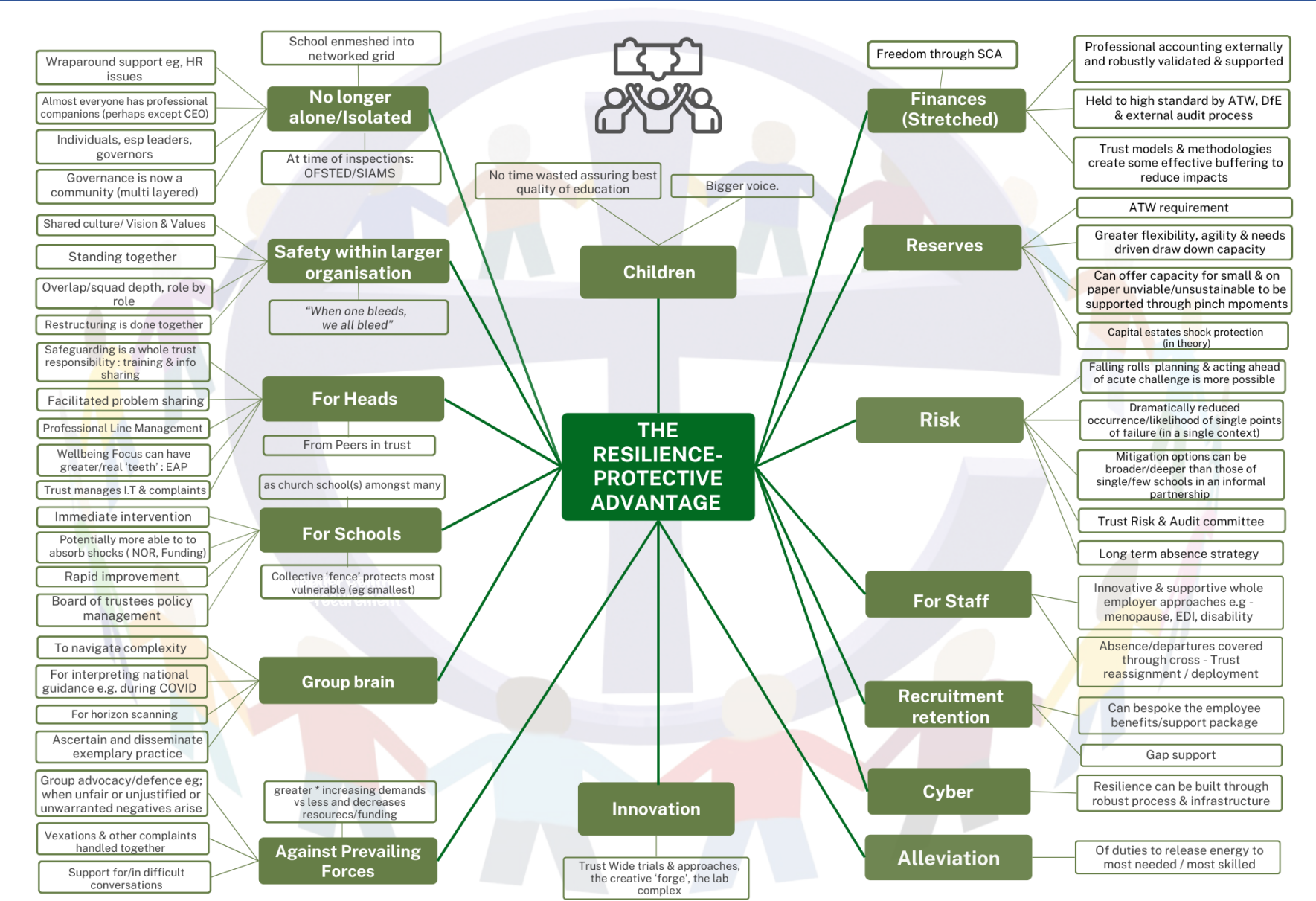
[What happens when pupil numbers fall? - NFER](#), NFER blog post, published 25<sup>th</sup> September 2024



**MAKING JESUS KNOWN**

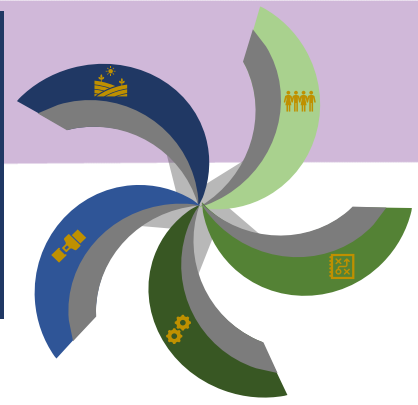
BEING PRESENT, WE WILL SHOW COMPASSION, SPEAK TRUTH AND OFFER HOPE

# Giving The Resilience-Protective Advantage its voice...





# The Civic Advantage



**Together** we can **be the change** we want  
to see...

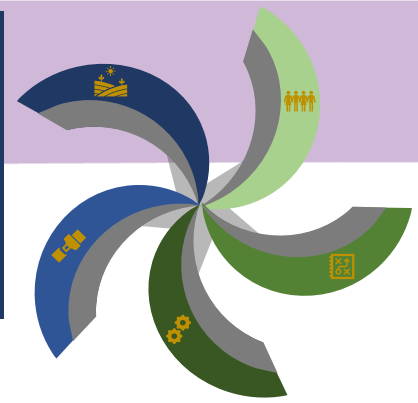


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# The Civic Advantage



“Trusts are frequently the cornerstone of their communities, and over the last years, we have heard many examples of schools and trusts taking up a broader social role beyond providing a good education. This work exists in the context of community needs and the pressures they face; schools and trusts cannot act alone.”

CST National School Trust Report 2024, p.50-52

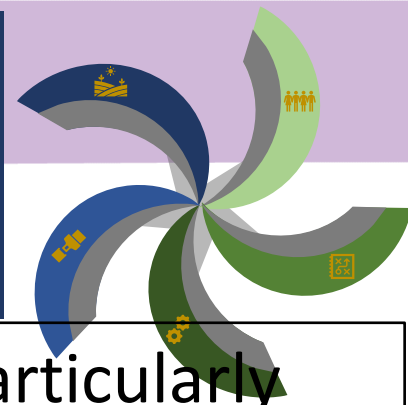


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# The Civic Advantage



“There are three features of school Trusts that...allow [*them*] to be particularly effective community anchor institutions; 1) long lasting relationships with children and families, 2) [*those*] long-lasting relationships enable us to think broadly about outcomes we want for children, 3) school and Trusts leaders’ moral purpose...”

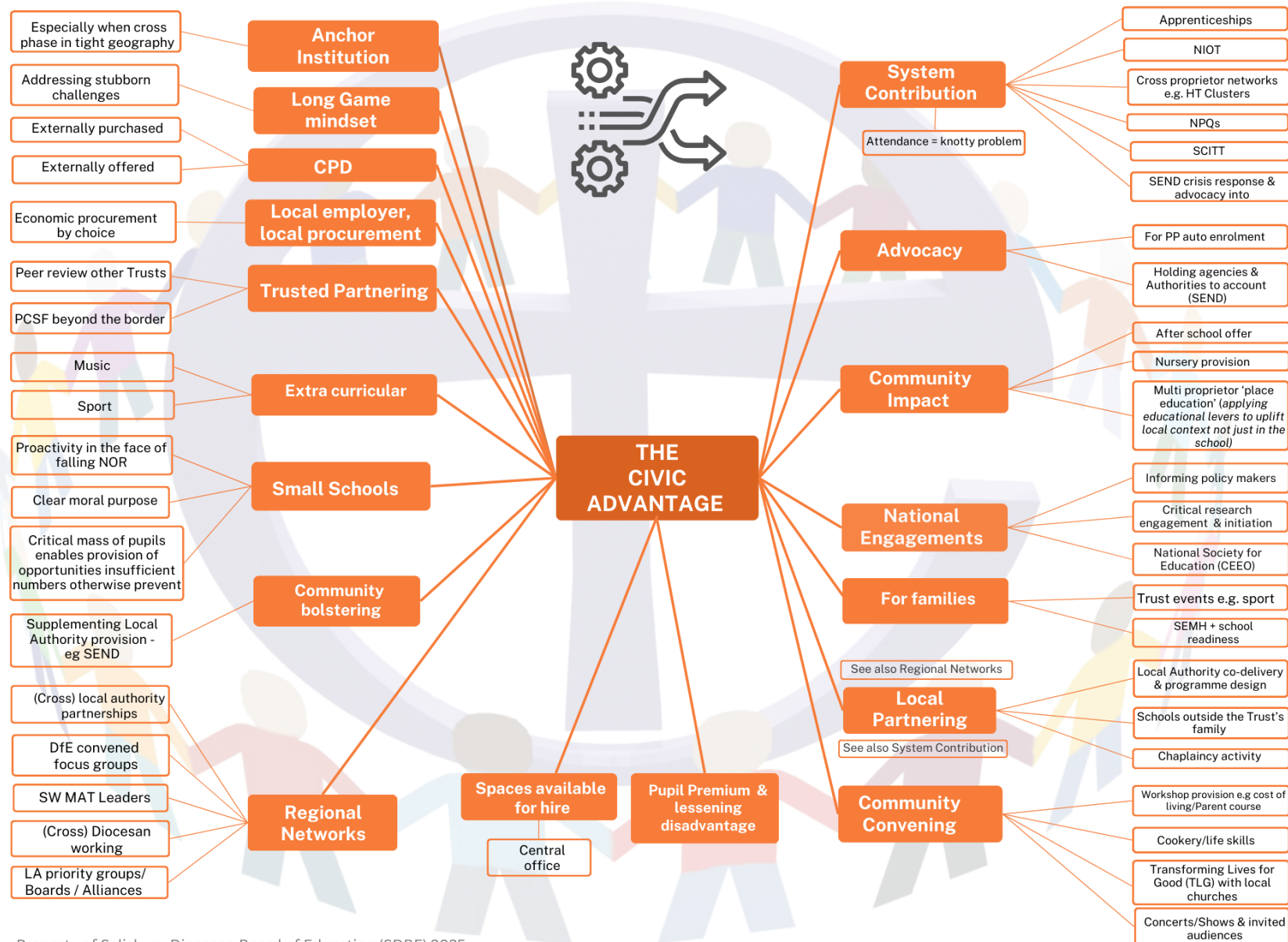
“Civic trusts acting as anchor institutions in their communities create the conditions for purposeful collaboration...with a particular focus on supporting children and families experiencing disadvantage.”

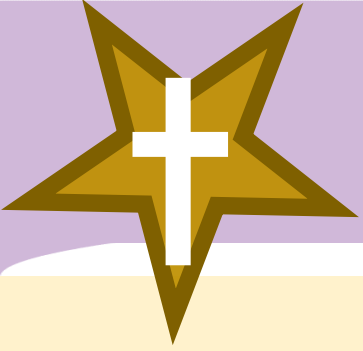
[Community Anchoring – School Trusts as Anchor Institutions \(cstuk.org.uk\)](https://cstuk.org.uk), CST, published December 2022, p. 6-8 and 18

**MAKING JESUS KNOWN**

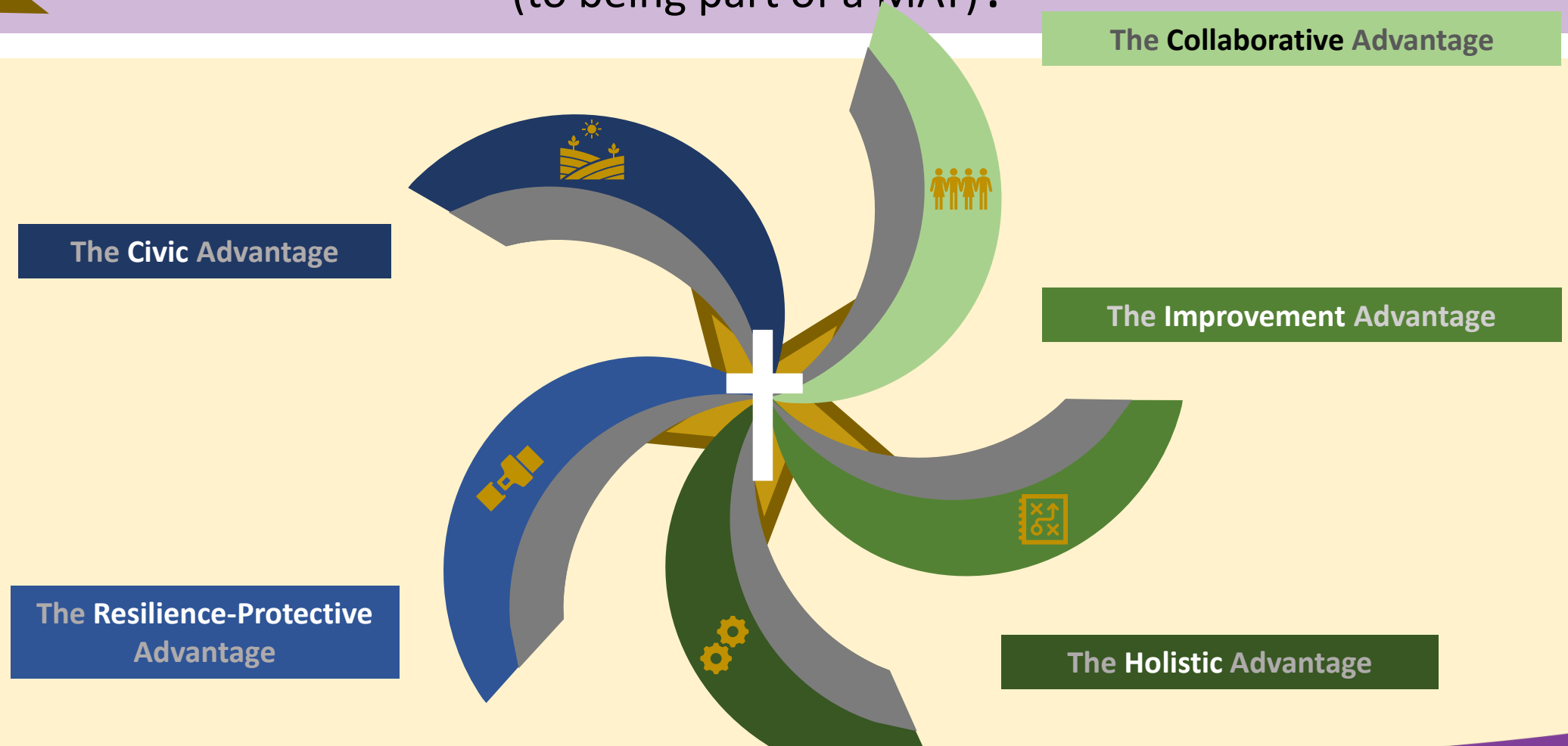
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# Giving The Civic Advantage its voice...





# Is there a further specific advantage for **church schools** (to being part of a MAT)?



Does a Trust that includes **church schools** have a further specific advantage?